

# Classics News

Spring/Summer 2011

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Our last Newsletter was capped with the splendid accomplishments of our graduates recognised at both Dalhousie's Convocation and the King's Encaenia. The following year has been filled with so many good things that I can only title it *Annus Mirabilis*. You will discover many of its joys celebrated in other parts of this letter; here I give an incomplete list starting with new beginnings.

### Our Population Explosion.

Classics and Religious Studies are young and full of new life evinced first in three births: Abraham to Keiva and **Eli Diamond**, Anna to Ksenia and **Sasha Treiger**, and Caius to Luba and **Jack Mitchell**. Our graduate students have announced two engagements and two married couples among them are expecting new Classicists. Our future is assured.

### Appointments.

Another assurance of our future came in the appointment of **Dr Emily Varto** to the chair in Greek History. Emily first came to us as a graduate student with an outstanding BA from Queens and went on, after taking an MA here (2004), to complete a PhD in record time at UBC. Her attractive excellence as a teacher, pro-

ductivity and imagination as a scholar, and her intellectual influence in the Department while holding two successive temporary appointments made her success in the search a happy event for us all. Hers was the only tenure track appointment made in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences this year, a sign of how valued the Department is within the University.

Another of our graduates, **Michael Sampson** (BA 2001, MA 2003), took one of the few other tenure track posts in Classics in Canada this year. Michael will be teaching Greek Literature at the University of Manitoba where he will join **James Chlup** (MA 1998) who teaches Ancient History, Roman culture and Latin.

Hearty congratulations go to another graduate, **Michael Fournier** (BA 1999, MA 2001), who has gained tenure with promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Michael returned to Dalhousie-King's in 2005 from doctoral studies at Boston College, first with a Teaching Fellowship in the Foundation Year Programme and then to take Robert Crouse's chair in Philosophy, Religion, and Culture in late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Michael's contributions to teaching and administration in the Department and to scholarship in his field in less than five years gained him universal support. Michael has a seemingly endless capacity for work which matches the most generous of good wills in taking it on. He is simply the best imaginable colleague and we all rejoice in his success.

**Eli Diamond** (BA 1999, MA 2001), who came back to us after gaining a PhD from Northwestern University and teaching philosophy at the Grenfell Campus of the Memorial University of Newfoundland and at St Thomas University in Fredericton, has been reappointed to Dr Dennis House's chair in Ancient Philosophy.

### Religious Studies.

**Alexander Treiger**, who came to us with



**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**  
*Inspiring Minds*

## Annus Mirabilis

### A message from the Chairman continued...

an MA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a PhD from Yale University to give such a successful start to our new Programme in Religious Studies, was also reappointed. His first book, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazali's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation*, will be published by Routledge in August. I heard one of its central theses, when the two of us and six other present or former members of the Department gave papers at the "Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Authority and Theories of Knowledge," Conference in Istanbul during December 2010, a Research Workshop organized by Marmara University and McGill University. The Istanbul conference was presided over by our own **Dr Torrance Kirby** (BA 1977, MA 1977), Professor of Ecclesiastical History at McGill. Dr Treiger's book challenges popular assumptions about one of the greatest Muslim theologians of all time and will make a major scholarly impact.

The other core member of our new Programme in Religious Studies, **Dr Christopher Austin**, was one of only eight recipients in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of a major grant from national Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada this year. His project title is "Vasudeva Krishna's Family in Early Sanskrit Traditions: Divine Incarnation and Human Descent in the Mahabharata and Harivamsha Period." With the new emphasis on attracting research funding as a criterion of academic success, this is an important accomplishment.



While I am talking about Religious Studies, I must let you know that Dalhousie is now committed to fundraising for our three convivencia chairs—Jewish Studies, Islamic Studies, and Eastern Christian Studies. There is much to be done to make this great project a success, but our

course is set and considerable progress has been made.

#### Three Passings.

One of our outstanding students doing Joint Honours in Religious Studies and Classics, **Gerjan Altenburg**, from rural Nova Scotia, was honoured with an award donated by the Dalhousie Faculty Association. The **Tom Faulkner** Memorial commemorated Tom's twenty-five year service to Dalhousie and its students especially as Chairman of the former Department of Comparative Religion and as President of the Faculty Association. Tom passed away suddenly last summer while on the Faculty of the University of Winnipeg, where he moved after heading seminaries in Alberta and Saskatchewan. I first worked with Tom when we were both in student government at the University of Toronto. He had a Canada-wide academic career, but Tom will always be remembered for helping establish the study of religion at Dalhousie.

You will be aware of the great loss to the Department, international scholarship, the church, music, and Nova Scotia with the passing of the **Reverend Professor Robert Crouse**. He came to the Department as a student in 1947, the year James Doull began teaching in it, joined the faculty in 1963 and, although he became an Emeritus Professor in 1996, he continued to serve us as one of the Editors of *Dionysius* almost until his death. Obituaries have been published by Dalhousie University, the University of King's College, the *Living Church*, and, most recently, *Dionysius*, whose last issue was dedicated to him. I shall not repeat them here but instead invite you all to an Academic Celebration of his life on Friday October 14th and Saturday October 15th which we plan to hold both in the Chapel of King's College and in the Department. Details of the programme are not yet complete but will certainly include papers on his academic work by Dr Gary Thorne (MA 1983, supervised by Professor Crouse), by one of our graduate students, **Benjamin Lee**, and by me, an appreciation of his character as a teacher by **Roberta Barker** (First Class Honours and the University Medal in Classics, 1996), Chair of Theatre at Dalhousie, and the unveiling of a portrait by an alumna, **Andra Striowski** (MA 2008), matching the one she painted

of James Doull. Contributions to the cost of the portrait and to a memorial fund supporting Robert's work in Ancient, Patristic, and Mediaeval philosophy, religion, and literature in the Department will be welcomed. They may be sent to Ben McIsaac, External Relations, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, B3H 4R2 and should be marked for the Robert Crouse Memorial. You will be sent details of the Celebration nearer its date. One of the speakers will be **Dr Neil Robertson** (MA 1987), Professor at King's College. His participation brings me to another passing.

**Ronald Neil Robertson**, Q.C., Neil's father, over the last decades has been the most generous contributor to the Annual Fund for the benefit of the Department. He departed this life at the same time as Robert. Neil has told me that his birthday celebration would have been on October 14th when he will be helping us to remember Professor Crouse. A great hearted giant of a man, Ronald Robertson's generosity was owed to his appreciation of the education we helped provide for his children. We are grateful for his encouragement of the humanities and teaching in general, and of his special interest in our work over many years. May his goodness continue to shine in Glory.

#### Gold.

For the second time in less than a decade, a student of our Department has taken the Governor-General's Gold Medal for Dalhousie University awarded to the best MA. **Timothy Riggs**, from Pictou County, captured the Gold in 2010 with his 2009 thesis on "Eros as Cosmic and Hierarchical Principle: Christ and the Socratic Hierarchy in the Thought of Dionysius the Areopagite," which I had the pleasure of supervising; **Dr Hans Feichtinger** had taken it in 2003 for "*Mediatorem ergo Quae-runt: A Comparative Study of Iamblichus and Augustine on the Human Need for Mediation*," which I also supervised. **Dr Anitra Laycock**, received the Dalhousie Doctoral Thesis Award in the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2005 for a dissertation, "The Essential Polis: Bridging the Tragic Divide", supervised by **Dr Dennis House**. A new MA student, **Emma Whitney**, from British Columbia, who at last year's King's Encaenia took First Class Honours and the University Medal

## Annus Mirabilis A message from the Chairman continued...

in Classics and the University of King's College Medal for the highest graduate in Arts and Science, has this year been awarded Dalhousie's A.S. Mowatt prize, which goes to an outstanding first-year Master's student in any discipline. She returned from giving an invited paper at a scholarly conference in California in time to deliver a fine presentation to the CAC Congress. Her MA with us is being funded by the Killam Trust and by a Canada Graduate Scholarship, a distinction she shares with **Ben Manson**, who also graduated last year with First Class Honours in Classics.

### Guests.

Eight invited guests delivered seminars or public lectures to the Department, its students, or, on its behalf to the CAC Congress: **Stephen Gersh** from the University of Notre Dame; America's leading Neoplatonic scholar, **Robert Wisnovsky**, who has just served as head of the Islamic Institute at McGill; **Christian Wildberg** of the Classics Department of Princeton University, who directs its programme in Ancient Philosophy; our own **Vernon Provençal** of Acadia's Classics Department; **Jeffrey Henderson**, William Goldwin Aurelio Professor of Greek at Boston University, General Editor, Loeb Classical Library and President-Elect of American Philological Association; **Patricia J. Johnson**, Associate Dean of Humanities at Boston University; **Anne Carson**, Giller Prize Winner and Distinguished Poet in Resident at New York University, and **Robert Currie**, "the Randomizer". They were impressed, and sometimes simply astonished, by the size and demands of our language classes, the high level and numbers of graduate and undergraduate students, their capacity for sustained intellectual work in the age of the sound bite and the three minute attention span, the quality of the discussion their presentations provoked, the variety of our student's work, and their intense commitment to what they are doing combined with liveliness and sheer enjoyment. The **Pythian Games** have increased this fun and you can read about their extraordinary success elsewhere in this letter.

### New Classes.

None of this is achieved without our constant efforts to find new ways to present and publicise our work. I am told that

some years our Department submits as many proposals for new classes as the rest of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences put together. **Rodica Firanescu**'s "Cultural Introduction to the Arab World" is a very successful way of attracting and introducing students. As a new programme, Religious Studies, which is full of new faculty and new classes. Selection is hard to make but I cannot fail to mention and praise **Sasha Treiger**'s "Christianity in the Land of Islam", and his seminars on Al-Ghazali and John of Damascus, and **Chris Austin**'s classes on Buddhism and Hinduism which fill up almost on the first week they are announced. Like his colleague in Religious Studies, Dr Austin is an outstanding teacher and it gave me great pleasure to offer with them a new seminar for those doing majors or honours in Religion. We had fine students, intense discussions, and many excellent examination papers. **Leona MacLeod** has invented very popular classes on myth and film which draw students to her work on Greek literature. Next year, **Jack Mitchell** will offer "Roman Legions and the Barbarians" which aims to attract military historians. **Michael Fournier**'s classes on Catholicism and "Magic, Religion and Philosophy" bring a new group of students to the study of late Antiquity. My own "Philosophy and God" gives large numbers of a whole new kind of student an introduction to the origins of philosophy in mythopoetic Hellas. **Eli Diamond** will lead them on with his "Plato and the Case of Socrates: Philosophy on Trial" and "Gods, Beasts, and the Political Animal: Plato, Aristotle and their Legacy." Drs **Peter O'Brien**, **Eli Diamond**, **Michael Fournier**, **Alexander Treiger**, and I offered a class designed for students in the College of Sustainability: "Nature, the Human, Community and the Divine in the Pre-Modern West"; the number enrolled for next year's version indicate a successful launch. Most of our classes for undergraduates are advertised in splendid multicoloured leaflets designed by Professors **Jack Mitchell** and **Chris Austin**. These leaflets were paid for by contributions to the Annual Fund for Classics. We thank you. If you drop by the Department, please take one for yourself and several more to help spread interest in Classics and Religious Studies.

### Two Queens and Two Awards.

**Ellen Shaffner**, who came to us from Wolfville and graduated with Honours in Classics at the King's Encaenia in May, exercised such a measure of leadership among us that she inspired a new award. The Department created the **Pius Aeneas Award** for a student giving outstanding service. Ellen's contribution took so many forms, including head of *Res publica*, our student organization, that the citation also named her "alma mater". You will find a profile of Ellen of page 6 this Newsletter.

**Donna Edwards**, our indefatigable Administrative Secretary, was honoured on June 7, 2011 with Dalhousie's **Rosemary Gill Award**. Established as a memorial to Dr. Rosemary Gill, long Director of University Health Services, it is awarded annually to a member of the faculty or staff,

who has provided outstanding service, other than teaching, to students. It is a measure of how much we depend on

Donna that her surprise at getting the award was only matched by her astonishment that we could organise our nomination without her finding out!

Donna's service to the University is long and distinguished, beginning in the Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology before passing by way of the Dean's Office to us. As result of this experience, Donna has excellent connections everywhere and is a mistress of diplomacy. Consequently, she is everyone's best guide to getting things done. She knows where to go, whom to ask, and how to ask them. She is really a co-administrator of every post in the Department. Its officers constantly seek and take her advice. What makes Donna



Donna Edwards visits Jantar Mantar, Jaipur, India, Spring 2011.

## Chairman's Message continued...

especially suited to the Rosemary Gill Award is her care for and mentoring of students.

The operation of our Department depends on student assistants assuming critical and frequently confidential responsibilities. We have been served exceptionally well by these students and, indeed, none has failed us. Besides the quality of our students, there is one and only one reason for this, Donna's mentoring. Those who work with her leave Dalhousie and our Department with skills of a kind they will learn in none of our classrooms, some of them will be more useful than those our curriculum promises to convey. They have an increased confidence in their abilities, a sense of having been trusted with and being able to take responsibility. They will have earned some of their way here and have an especially deep gratitude to the University. Donna is the salt of the earth. Her deep experience and generous character give savour to our Department, our Faculty, and our University.

## Outstanding Graduate Students.

Professor Eli Diamond has written elsewhere in this letter about the outstanding class of graduate students who entered the Department last September. Our 2011 class is now taking final shape and I am pleased to tell you that once again it is dominated by students coming to us with external awards testifying to the recognition of their merit. All three of the students coming to the Department or back to it for graduate study will have Canada Graduate Scholarships; they will join two returning MA students and one returning PhD candidate with Killam Scholarships, the highest Dalhousie offers.

Wayne Hankey  
May 29, 2011.

## Classics welcomes (back): Dr. Emily Varto



This year the Classics department has been delighted to welcome Dr. Emily Varto in her new capacity as Assistant Professor in Ancient Greek History (with special emphasis on politics, society, and culture.) Although this is certainly not her first connection with the department, the department is delighted to introduce her here.

Dr Varto was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and grew up in Bracebridge, later moving to Kingston to study at Queen's University. She began as a student in the Bachelor of Music programme (performance and composition) but, upon becoming interested in specifically historical aspects of music, she switched into the Music History programme. These studies awakened her ongoing interest in the cultural aspects of history, especially the relationship of art to its time and the time to the art – a fundamental question which runs through much of her subsequent research. She eventually became more interested in classical history than musical history, graduating with an honours BA with a major in Classical Studies and a minor concentration in Music History. From there she travelled to Halifax to take an MA in Classics, which she completed in 2004 with a thesis on the funeral legislation of Solon. This achievement was swiftly followed with a PhD earned in the Department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies at the University of British Columbia, where her research dealt mainly with early Greek ideas of kinship and the cultural expressions thereof - subjects which continue to motivate and inform her current work examining relationships between state and family in their political, social, and economic contexts. "I'm a cultural histo-

rian," she explains, "drawing on all aspects of the culture: textual, material, artistic – everything." She is currently working on ancient genealogy and historiography, descent and kinship networks in early Greece, and the influence of classical scholarship and theories of ancient kinship on 19th-century ethnography.

Returning as a faculty member to a department where one has studied can be a curious and sometimes disquieting experience, but not in this case. "It was oddly easy to slide back in here!" she says. "The transition to teaching here was quite easy: there were some familiar faces [on faculty] and some new ones." Dr Varto brings to the Department not only a passionate commitment to good teaching but also considerable experience for a relatively newly-minted doctor; she has taught at Dalhousie for the past two years and previously taught classes at UBC and Corpus Christi College in Vancouver during her PhD studies. Her students at Dalhousie can testify to the range of engaging and enriching activities that crop up during her classes: decoding fragments of Linear B in the "Palace to Polis" class, following Xenophon's march in second year Greek, exploring through ancient comedies a surprisingly modern dissatisfaction with some of the workings of democracies, hunting for classically-influenced art and architecture in Halifax, thinking through historical ideas not only from ancient sources but also from modern science fiction (Arthur C. Clarke's "A History Lesson"), and even preparing a choral ode for live performance in this year's Pythian games. The latter delighted not only the students who participated but all who had the privilege of attending, and Dr Varto's Greek class garnered top honours at the Games. "The real credit," she says, "has to go out to the students – for the music, the costumes, the acting. They took my little idea, ran with it, and made it into the awesome spectacle it was!" She looks forward to introducing her Greek students to further texts by Thucydides and Herodotus, and anticipates having the sort of engaged, attentive students who have made her experience of teaching thus far so enjoyable.

We are most fortunate to have Dr. Varto here in Halifax. Like her, we anticipate very good things to come from her teaching and research. Welcome, Emily!

## STUDENT PROFILE: Bruce Russell

Bruce Russell had his interest in antiquity piqued relatively early in his education. Few junior high school students are encouraged to read Suetonius and Marcus Aurelius; one can only hope that if they are, they would find these authors as engaging as Bruce did.



Photo Credit: Bruce Bottomley

Bruce credits his teachers at Halifax's Armbrae Academy with inspiring his curiosity through courses in ancient history and archaeology. Given the careful fostering that his interests received under the tutelage of Mr. John Stone (MA Classics, 1967), Dr. Jonathan Fowler and Ms. Meghan, it was a natural next step for him to enroll in the Foundation Year Programme at the University of King's College. He says the ancient and medieval sections of that course were particularly attractive to him and he was especially intrigued by the philosophical texts that they read during that year. His experience in the Foundation Year Programme prompted him to take classes in the Departments of Philosophy and Classics, and eventually decide to major in Classics.

He recalls Dr. Eli Diamond's introduction to ancient philosophy with particular fondness. "I was sad at the prospect of working during the summer," he remembers. "I would rather have read Aristotle!"

The study of ancient texts is not the only interest which followed Bruce from Armbrae Academy to Dalhousie: he is an accomplished cross-country runner and track & field athlete. After playing on various sports teams throughout his high school years, he trained with the

Dalhousie cross-country team in his first year (while still a student at King's.) After improving greatly in his second year, Bruce transferred officially to Dalhousie in order to be able to compete on the varsity team.

Although running and studying are obviously quite different pursuits, there is some common ground between the two. "Because of the individual nature of the sport, performance is directly linked to effort and work ethic," Bruce notes, adding that the cross-country and track & field teams often

boast an unusually high number of academic All-Canadians among their members.

Another continuing interest is student government: Bruce served as treasurer of *Res publica*, the undergraduate Classics society, during the past year. In politics as in running, races may be lost by the narrowest of margins, as Bruce recalled while recounting how he lost the election for DASSS treasurer by a single vote. *Res publica*, however, will welcome him back as treasurer in 2011-12, which will be the final year of his BA. Although his plans thereafter are not yet certain, Bruce is considering the possibility of an MA, perhaps focusing on the ethical ideas of Aristotle.

Watch and see...if you can catch up!

Classics undergraduate Bruce Russell is a man of many talents. At left, he hurls the thunderbolt as Zeus at this year's Pythian Games (see p. 9!) Below, he competes for Dalhousie on the varsity cross-country team.



Photo Credit: Nick Pearce

## STUDENT PROFILE: Ellen Shaffner

Ellen Shaffner grew up in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. After graduating from Horton High School in 2007, she came to Halifax to take the Foundation Year Programme at the University of King's College. Although she had initially planned to pursue a degree in journalism, she found herself fascinated by the ancient section of the Foundation Year, particularly by the works of Plato and Homer. "They were new and interesting; I had had no prior exposure to them and I wanted to learn more," she remembers. The myth of Er in Plato's *Republic* caught her imagination, as did the striking encounter of Achilles and Priam (whose son Hector has been killed in battle by Achilles) in Book Twenty-four of Homer's *Iliad*. These texts, which she describes as "challenging and beautiful" and "profoundly moving", moved her to learn Greek and transfer into an arts programme.

Some of her most memorable moments in Classics have arisen in the study of the literature of Greek and Rome, such as 5th-century Greek drama, Plato's *Symposium*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Classical languages haven't been her only linguistic interests: she has become increasingly fascinated with Russian. Over the last two years, she has studied the language first in English translation and then in the original Russian. Ellen's foray into Russian was partly motivated by the connections between Russian literature and the Classical world, such as the Homeric allusions found throughout the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, one of her favourite Russian authors.

Ellen, however, is no retiring reader. She has found time during the past two years to be deeply involved in *Res publica*, the Classics undergraduate society, of which she has been President during the past year. Organizing such varied functions as the Pythian Games, visits by guest lecturers, programme fairs for undergraduates, and social functions have given her ample opportunity to serve her fellow students and to become well acquainted with students and faculty alike. She has also been involved with wider initiatives on campus: last year she served as the Classics representative on the Dalhousie Arts



and Social Sciences Society (the association of all students in the entire faculty), and this year won the FASS Peer Mentor of the Year award from Dalhousie's Peer Partnership Programme. *Res publica* has been most fortunate to have her able and enthusiastic leadership, which was recognized by the faculty of the Department at the year-end social with the presentation of a newly-minted prize, the "Pius Aeneas" award for leadership by a Classics student.

Through all of this, she somehow still manages to find time to return to Wolfville to enjoy horseback riding. Although her horse Streak (pictured with her above) is unwilling to be ridden, he is nevertheless good equine company. For Ellen the goal in studying Classics was

never to secure a particular job. "Having the knowledge, and the experience of acquiring it, has been wonderful. Remembering that there is a past helps keep one sane; humanity keeps going." And so does Ellen. Upon completing her degree this term, she will plunge into an intense Russian immersion programme at Middlebury College in Vermont, followed by a year in the workplace. She is considering possibilities for further study thereafter: perhaps an MA in Russian literature, focusing on neglected classical references in Mandelstam's poetry, or perhaps in business. Whatever she does, those around her will be sure to benefit from her cheerful enthusiasm, hard-working dedication, and extraordinary leadership abilities.

## UPDATE: Graduate Studies Programme

The graduate programme in the Classics Department is as thriving and vibrant as it has ever been. Our current crop of graduate students is remarkable both for its size (14 students) and quality. The quality has been recognized by the fact that exactly half of these students have received the prestigious Canada Graduate Scholarship from SSHRC, and three of these students (Benjamin Manson, Emma Whitney and Benjamin Lee) are Killam Scholars, the highest distinction for a graduate student at Dalhousie.

Upon returning from Utah where she presented a paper on Lucretius entitled “The Philosophy of Poetics in the *De Rerum Natura*” to the Ancient Philosophy Society, Emma Whitney received news that she has been awarded the A.S. Mowat Prize in recognition of outstanding achievement by a student in the first year of a Master’s programme in any discipline at Dalhousie University. Besides these individual distinctions, every single one of the distinguished scholars who participated in our Visiting Speaker seminars this year expressed amazement at the intellectual rigour and energy of our graduate students. It is this intellectual energy that makes graduate teaching in the Department such a joy.

Our graduate students have been busy over the past year presenting their research at regional and national conferences, including many students who presented at the Classical Association of Canada Annual Meeting hosted by Dalhousie this year (see Classical Association of Canada Congress and Updates on Alumni and Friends). Many of our graduate students have published in the Department’s student journal *Pseudo-Dionysius*, co-edited by MA students Emma Whitney and William

Cochran. Our students continue to produce theses of the highest quality on all aspects of ancient and medieval philosophy, literature and history. Just last year, Timothy Riggs (MA 2009) received the Governor General’s Gold Medal for his thesis “Eros as Cosmic and Hierarchical Principle: Christ and the Socratic Hierarchy in the Thought of Dionysius the Areopagite” supervised by Dr. Wayne Hankey. Tim’s is the third Classics graduate thesis to receive such a distinction in the past decade. We have every reason to believe that our next decade of graduate students will continue to produce this kind of first-rate, cutting-edge research.

After ten years of distinguished service in the position, Dr. Peter O’Brien stepped down in January as Graduate Coordinator for Dalhousie Classics. In recognition of this service, he received the 2009-2010 Outstanding Graduate Advisor award at Dalhousie. The health of the graduate programme is due in no small part to Dr. O’Brien’s tireless

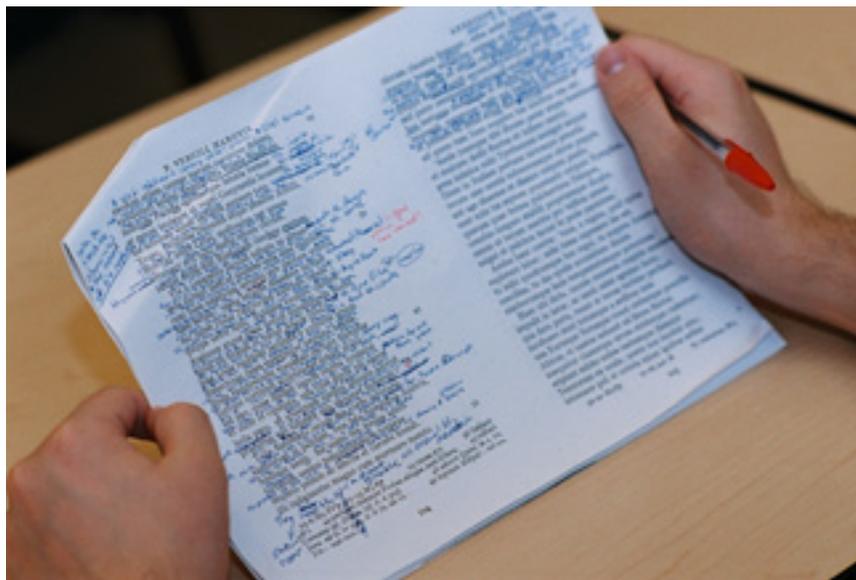
efforts, for which he was honoured by a wonderful surprise party organized by the current graduate students.

- Eli Diamond



Above: PhD student, Benjamin Lee

Below: A student’s colourfully marked page of translations



**Giving goes a long way.** Our alumni are among our most generous supporters. This year, thanks to dollars generated through our annual fund, Classics was able to provide travel awards for graduate students to present research papers at various academic conferences. Such evidence of academic engagement helps our graduates become more competitive in their applications for further study, funding and employment. Thank you.

## UPDATE:

### Simon & Riva Spatz Chair in Jewish Studies

The Simon and Riva Spatz Chair in Jewish Studies will create new opportunities for student learning, expand current knowledge on ancient culture and continue Dalhousie's long standing commitment to diversity.

Fundraising for this endowed Chair was announced in March 2010, propelled by a \$1-million donation from Dalhousie Board of Governors Chair Jim Spatz. It will be the first of its kind east of Montreal.

The gift is dedicated to Spatz's parents, Riva and Simon, who were both holocaust survivors. The Chair be housed in the Department of Religious Studies. (see box)

Since Spatz's donation, movement on this project has been rapid and exciting, says Dr Rob Summerby-Murray, who began as Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) Dean in July 2010. Summerby-Murray's excitement for the initiative is contagious, as he and FASS Development Officer Ben McIsaac trade information and progress on the Chair before the outset of this interview. It is clear much has happened since their last meeting, not even two weeks before.

Named Chairs are a Dean's priority, says Summerby-Murray, whose strategic direction for the Faculty also includes fostering interdisciplinary research and forging international collaborations. A geographical historian, Summerby-Murray is personally interested in how the classical tradition of Judaism influenced – and continues to influence – culture, religion and world events.

Spatz's donation came at a fortuitous time, says Summerby-Murray. The Chair has been named a FASS fundraising priority for the university's campaign, *Bold Ambitions*.

Once fully funded, the Chair will have three focuses: teaching, research and outreach. He or she will help re-shape the curriculum to reflect the connections between ancient traditions and the modern world. New classes related to Jewish Studies will be created and existing ones will be modified to provide the greatest depth of content.

The Chair's research goal will be to

expand the frontier of knowledge about Judaism, with particular emphasis on ancient and medieval times, and how this history still plays out in contemporary society. This research will complement the work currently being pursued in the Faculty.

Outreach activities will be an important component of the Chair's role, says Summerby-Murray, who participated at the unveiling of the project to the Atlantic Jewish Council in Fall 2010. Sharing knowledge and research findings with local, national and international Jewish communities will be the primary purpose of these activities. Students and the local community, Jewish and non-Jewish, will benefit from participating in conferences, seminars, workshops and various programs the Chair will identify and develop.

Dalhousie has a long tradition of acceptance. The school's founders wanted an institution that was open to all and since its inception, Dalhousie has repeatedly proven its commitment to upholding the principles of equality and inclusiveness. The Chair will continue this work.

It is part of a larger project of the Faculty: one of convivencia. By bringing together three major Western religions – Judaism, Islam and Eastern Christianity – Dalhousie will create a place of cultural sharing, creative interchange and scholarly discourse among Jews, Christians and Muslims – a place that breeds religious tolerance and where different cultures flourish. Dalhousie is the only university in Canada that is currently looking at this package, a prospect Summerby-Murray finds extremely exciting.

"In creating a space for dialogue with scholars of Islamic and Eastern Christian traditions, the Chair in Jewish Studies will play a leading role in advancing scholarly and cultural understanding. I am pleased to be involved and look forward to the day when we can put the Chair and its important programming in place."

Ben McIsaac is optimistic that the fund will hit its target in the next five years.

"Jim's gift took the Chair from the visionary to the reality stage. Potential donors strongly recommended making the program relevant to today and what's

happening on the world front. We have approached many people, locally, nationally and internationally, to support the program. The response has been excellent"

To make a donation or to learn more, contact Ben McIsaac at [ben.mcisaac@dal](mailto:ben.mcisaac@dal).

The movie *Defiance* recounts a little-known story of courage and persistence in the face of the Holocaust. Starring Daniel Craig of James Bond fame, the movie tells the story of Jewish people who survived WWII by retreating to the woods, where food was scarce and the cold was bitter.

But Jim Spatz was well aware of the story—it was lived by both his parents. His mother, Riva, belonged to a partisan group in the Jewish resistance movement and lived out the war in the woods of Poland. His father, Simon, also Polish, was interned at a labour camp and fled with his younger brother to the forest just a day before the camp was "liquidated" and all the occupants murdered.

Spatz honors the courage and resilience of his parents in helping to create an endowed chair in Jewish studies. Dr. Spatz is forever inspired by what his parents went through to give him and his sister opportunities in life. "It makes you more tolerant. The freedom and opportunity represented by Canada makes you want to give back," he says.

After the war, Riva and Simon met and married in Munich and immigrated to Canada where they built a successful business in property management. In Halifax, they joined a small, close-knit Jewish community.

Spatz says he's proud to be a graduate of Dalhousie University, which was founded on the principal of inclusiveness, "its doors open to all." Unlike other universities, Dalhousie never had a quota on the number of Jewish students it would accept. Today, Dalhousie has approximately 800 Jewish students which is five per cent of the student body.

## Pythian Games 2011

When a man, even a junior professor in his first year at Dalhousie, finds himself tucked into a heavy full-sized Roman toga and pouring forth Homer's own "Hymn to Apollo" over the corpse of papier-mâché snake in front of a packed room of zealous undergrads, he owes the world some explanation. So here is the true history of the Pythian Games, a competition in the recital, declamation, and performance of texts (ancient and modern) that took place in the Classics Department on March 18, 2011.

Two legendary figures are responsible for our revival of the Pythian Games. The first is Emperor Theodosius the Great, who ruled from 379 to 395 AD and who shut down the original Pythian Games in 394. These original Pythian Games had been one of four quadrennial festivals (along with the Nemean Games, the Isthmian Games, and of course the Olympic Games) of pagan Greece, held at Delphi in honour of Apollo the Snake-Killer. Their pagan character did not please Theodosius, so it took another 1617 years before Dr. Wayne Hankey, a second legendary figure, vowed to revive them. Knowing my enthusiasm for poetic performance, my research into public poetry in the Roman Empire, and my sincere belief that today's students are just as keen on literature as they've ever been (if only they're given the chance to show it), Dr. Hankey commanded me to revive the Pythian Games on a grand scale, ideally making up for 1617 years of neglect.

Here I must admit, in all frankness, that at any other university Dr. Hankey and I might have wound up looking pretty

foolish. But not at Dalhousie, where a belief in the importance of literature cuts across disciplines and departments and faculties.

No sooner had I posted a notice and put up a website than the enthusiastic email started pouring in. By the evening of March 18th, no fewer than nineteen separate performances had entered the lists, bringing to life works from around the world in no fewer than nine different languages (Ancient Greek, Latin, Middle English, Old Norse, German, Russian, Welsh, Quenya and Modern English) by authors from Homer to Virgil to T. S. Eliot. For two hours in the Classics Library, to a standing-room-only crowd that refused more than once to take a break, students held their peers and profs spellbound. Judging was difficult, but in the end Ms. Greta Landis won the Dalhousie *Res publica* Prize for her brilliant performance of Woody Allen's "The Whore of Mensa"; the Chair's Prize was split by Ms. Katie Middleton (for a terrific performance in Latin from Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*) and Mr. Dominic Lacasse (who built his own Homeric lyre and sang Homer's Greek like Phemius himself); the Howard Murray Prize went to the Dr. Emily Varto's Intermediate Greek Class, which performed a full chorus in Greek



from Euripides' *Ion*, complete with choreography, music, and costumes; and the Alumni Prize went to Mr. Luke DeWeese for his moving and original performance of Catullus' "Hymn to Diana" (in Latin), of a passage from Chaucer (in Middle English), and of a satirical poem by a friend. So many other performances deserve mention, as the talent was all so fresh and enthusiastic, but that would take a small volume in itself.

Overall, one was left wondering not why a grown man would wear a grown man's toga but why the Emperor Theodosius would ever have cancelled such a marvelous literary event. If he had been there in Dalhousie Classics on March 18th and seen the warm glow on faces young and old, he would surely have rescinded his unhappy edict. Meanwhile we all look forward keenly to the Pythian Games of 2012.

- Jack Mitchell

Photo Credit: Bruce Bottomley



Dominic Lacasse with lyre in the chorus of Euripides' *Ion*. Mr. Lacasse was later awarded a Chair's Prize of \$100 for his performance from the *Iliad* (in Greek).



Dr. Emily Varto (in the mask), Kristan Newell and Jacob Glover perform a chorus from Euripides' tragedy of the *Ion* (in Greek).



Marie-Clare Klassen and Erik TarBush, imprinted with Surtitles during the performance of a chorus from the *Ion* (in Greek).

# Classical Association of Canada Congress

## May 9 - 12, 2011

Between May 9 and May 12, owing to the initiative and Herculean labours of Professor Peter O'Brien, our Department hosted the Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of Canada ([cac-scechalifax2011.classics.dal.ca/index.php/CAC2011/CACHFX](http://cac-scechalifax2011.classics.dal.ca/index.php/CAC2011/CACHFX)). Primarily a venue for academic papers, this year's event, split between the Dalhousie and King's campuses, introduced several innovations. Among the most obvious was its sheer size: with between 230 and 240 registrants from Canada, the US, Europe and Australia, and with some 190 papers, it was the largest such meeting of the organization to date. Dalhousie's special contribution to the programme was its "host-sponsored" colloquium panels on "The Self" and "Praying and



More than 230 classicists from North America, Europe and Australia convened on Dalhousie campus in May for the 2011 CAC Congress.

Above: a detail of *The School of Athens* fresco by Raphael.  
Right: *Iliad*, Book VIII, lines 245–53

Thinking," organized by professors Wayne Hankey and Michael Fournier, and drawing on a host of current and former faculty and students, as well as distinguished visitors.

In addition to those participating in our host-sponsored panels, the conference programme boasted a score of familiar Dalhousie Classics names from our present roll of students and faculty as well as from those of alumni in various stages of their careers at other universities. Dr. Eli Diamond organized and presented in a special panel on "Politics and Metaphysics in Ancient Greek Philosophy," which also featured MA students Will Cochran and Ben Manson. Alumna Dr. Carol King (now teaching at the Grenfell

campus of MUN) participated in a special panel on the novels of Mary Renault, and Emeritus Professor Rainer Friedrich in a special panel on the authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Graduate Alumni Andra Striowski and Matt Wood, both now pursuing doctorates in Ancient Philosophy at the University of Ottawa, appeared along with MA student Luke Togni in a panel on Aristotle and his successors. This panel was chaired by our most recent PhD, Dr. Seamus O'Neill, who holds a tenure-track position in philosophy at MUN. A companion panel on "Socrates, the Sophists, and

Plato" included papers by MA student Chris Gibson and alumnus Colin Webster (now a doctoral student at Columbia) and was chaired by Dalhousie PhD Vernon Provençal, head of Acadia University's programme in Classics and Ancient History. Dalhousie's newest faculty member, Dr. Emily Varto, presented a paper in a panel on "Individual and Community in Greek History" along with MA alumnus Nic Thorne, who is pursuing his doctorate at the University of Pittsburg. Dal BA(Hons) alumna and Rhodes Scholar Florence Yoon returned to present a paper on Aeschylus in a panel chaired by former Killam Postdoctoral Fellow David Mirhady, who teaches now at Simon Fraser University. Florence will begin teaching at UBC this fall, where she will join fellow alumnus and faculty member David Creese, who came to Halifax to speak on Lucian and Homer. Recent MA graduate Carolyn MacDonald, now working towards a PhD at Stanford University, presented in a Greek Poetics panel chaired by another MA graduate, Michael Sampson, who has just been appointed to a tenure-track position in Greek Literature at the University of Manitoba. In Winnipeg, Michael will have as his colleague fellow alumnus Dr James Chlup, who also chaired a panel at this year's conference, as did Dr. Catherine Feeley Tracy, Assistant Professor of Classics at Bishops University. Finally, in separate panels on Latin Literature, Elizabeth Baxter (now in doctoral studies at Boston University) presented a paper on Sappho and Catullus, and Emma Whitney (current MA student) on Ovid.



The Congress assumed more the character of an intellectual event than a professional event at the Fournier-Hankey panels which ran continuously for two and a half days in the Library of the Classics Department. One colloquium focused on "the Self;" discuss-

# Classical Association of Canada Congress

## May 9 - 12, 2011

ing the status and transformations of subjectivity and the self in Antiquity, Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages up to the threshold of European Modernity. Considerations of interactions between the Greco-Roman world and Eastern, Hebrew and Arabic worlds were welcomed and duly appeared. The colloquium on “Praying and Thinking” discussed the relations between religion and philosophy in the same period and in terms of the same interactions. Scholars from Greece, the USA, Quebec, and Alberta took part, but the papers and discussion came mostly from past and present members of the Department: professors Hankey, Fournier, and Diamond, alumni Gregory MacIsaac, Simon Fortier, Martin Sastri, Jennifer Otto, Torrance Kirby, Emily Parker, Timothy Riggs, Matthew Robinson, and Seamus O’Neill, and present graduate students Martin Curran, Benjamin Lee, Marc Vollebekk, Brian Lam, Evan King and Peter Bullerwell. The alumni rejoiced to see that the intellectual activities and standards of the Department had not altered (unless for the better,) and the present students had the opportunity to draw on the depth and breadth of the knowledge of former members. All participants expressed enthusiasm for the experience and hoped that other occasions of such interchange would be forthcoming.

A highlight of the Conference was the keynote event delivered by renowned Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson, currently Distinguished Poet in Residence at NYU. Along with her collaborator Robert Currie, she presented two pieces. The first, a lecture on translation called “Cassandra Float Can” was accompanied by moving-placard pictures carried by faculty and students. The second, “Bracco” (an amalgam of “Sappho,” on whose fragments the presentation is based, and “Bracket,” an inevitable typographical feature of published fragments) conveyed, audibly and with back-projected images, the process of reading an incomplete antique text and

the interpretative possibilities encountered in the endeavour. Dr. William Barker, President of the University of King’s College, hosted a reception after the event.

The whole conference could not have been accomplished without the financial support of numerous Offices at King’s and Dalhousie, including those of the Presidents, the Vice-Presidents Academic and Research, the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences and Graduate Studies, as well as the Departments of History, Philosophy, Spanish and Latin American Studies, and German. We were especially grateful too to the Department of Modern Languages and Classics, the Dean of Arts, and the President of Saint Mary’s University, who put on a marvellous reception for delegates, which included Greek dancing and the endowment of a special scholarship named for Dalhousie PhD alumna Dr. Geraldine Thomas, a long-time faculty member at Saint Mary’s.

The conference came to a jovial end with a lobster dinner in the Small Craft Gallery of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, with music provided by violinist David Greenberg. As with any departmental event, the organisation was made infinitely smoother by the minute attentions of Donna Edwards, Departmental Administrator. Assisting Dr. Peter O’Brien, Conference Organizer, were colleagues and students at both the graduate and undergraduate level. We are grateful to them all. Leading roles were played by Manager of the King’s Co-op Bookstore, Carolyn Gillis and Christopher Grundke, who set up the book display, Brian Lam, who set up and manned the *Dionysius* and *Pseudo-Dionysius* display, Eli Diamond, who did the French translations, Michael Fournier, who compiled the book of abstracts, Luke Togni, who managed the website, and Will Cochran, who with Donna ran interference for it all.

An Enormous Success.



Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson gave this year’s CAC keynote address.

### NOW IT’S YOUR TURN

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

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please send all comments, suggestions, ideas or inquiries to [fassalum@dal.ca](mailto:fassalum@dal.ca)

## ALUMNI Q&A

### Msgr Dr. Hans Feichtinger, MA '03

**1. Where were you born, and where did you grow up? What was your background before coming to study Classics at Dalhousie? What previous studies had you undertaken?**

I was born in the Bavarian town of Passau on the Danube. There I attended the "Humanistisches Gymnasium Leopoldinum," a classical grammar school which taught me Latin and Greek from early on. After school I decided to study for the priesthood and I received degrees in theology from the University of Passau (2005) and in patristics from the Augustinianum in Rome (Licentiate 2007.)

**2. How did your theological interests and expertise lead into the philosophical research that you undertook at Dalhousie?**

After some years of parish work, I returned to the Augustinianum in 2001 for the doctoral programme. Only then did I find out about its connection with the Dalhousie Classics Department, mainly the work of Professors Crouse and Hankey on your side of the Atlantic and of Professors Robert Dodaro and Salvatore Lilla on ours. Through the latter two, I developed an interest in the topics and methods dear to the Classics Department. Both sides were extremely helpful in getting me accepted at Dalhousie and organizing my one year at the Department in such a way as to make it most productive, both academically and personally. In this regard, I am also still grateful to the Archdiocese of Halifax (then Archbishop Terrence Prendergast) and to St Theresa's Parish (then pastor Thomas White) on North Street where I was allowed to live and help in pastoral work.

**3. Of what use has the MA been to you, in terms of intellectual interest or your subsequent career?**

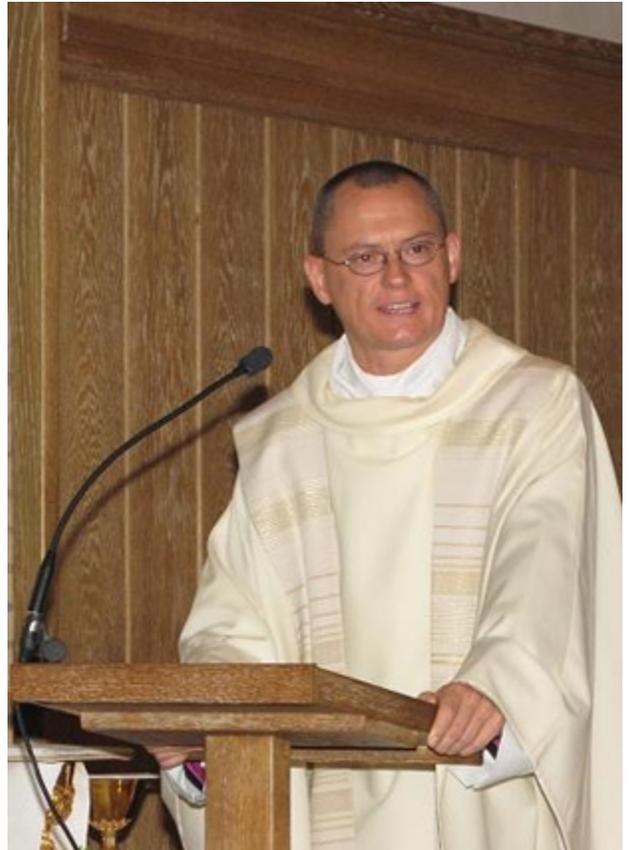
Before coming to Canada I had only known and experienced European and ecclesiastical universities. So from a simply institutional point of view, coming to Dalhousie for me meant a real change, challenge and broadening of mind. What and how things were done there was new to me and made me aware of things and interrelations of which I had up to then been ignorant. I read more Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonists than before, and I read them differently; something similar could

be said about Thomas and Bonaventure. I even "met" the Arabic philosophers whom before I had generally only known by name. These interests have not left me ever since. Even for my doctoral thesis on an author like Leo the Great, much of this proved immensely useful and added to the fundamental education I had received at the Augustinianum. For my work now at the Holy See, this academic work in particular and the more general Canadian experience are a real advantage, as they give me the opportunity to speak from firsthand knowledge about topics connected to Canada or to the topics I was able to learn something about while I was there, including the language.

Also, friends and contacts that I gained during my time at Dalhousie have remained very much alive and have been helpful in many occasions.

**4. What have you done since completing the MA? Are there connections between your studies and your subsequent work? Have there been interesting surprises along the way?**

I completed the MA in 2003 and in 2004 I started to work for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, one of the central offices of the Catholic Church at the Vatican. In 2005, I defended my doctoral thesis on "Christ's presence in the Church according to St Leo," which was published in 2006. I was also able to publish part of my Master's thesis for Dalhousie and a translated and elaborated version of another paper I had written for a class given by Professor O'Brien. At the Congregation, much of what we do is working with texts of varied natures and purposes. Many of these texts have to do with questions that are not so far removed from those examined at the Classics Department. The method(s) of reading and interpreting which I learnt there are valid and can often be applied fruitfully in



what I do.

Outside my work at the Holy Office, I kept or developed further an interest in philosophy, not least in the work of H.G. Gadamer, himself not unknown at Dalhousie. In him and in many other authors I discover time and again, how they follow (or, which is generally bad, violate) be it unconsciously, the teachings of our "school." For this being a "school" with its own tradition and "Gestalt", including its inevitable limits, in my view makes the Dalhousie Classics Department what it is and distinguishes it positively from the all too often amorphous Classics of Philosophy Departments out there. I take it as a good sign, that many colleagues from Haligonian times have found their way and the time for a Roman visit over these last years. And the sense of belonging that most of them - *we* - share is not only the usual nostalgia for the good old college years, but based on an intellectual communion which I find quite unique and for which I am perennially grateful

- Interview by Chris Grundke

## ALUMNI PROFILE: Emily Parker, BA '07

Emily Parker, until recently a lifelong resident of Halifax, found her way into the study of Classics via two classes at the University of King's College. The Medieval section of Foundation Year Programme, which she found challenging and particularly interesting, and second was an introductory course in the History of Science and Technology (HOST), which prompted her to consider taking a BA degree with Combined Honours in Classics and HOST. She eventually settled on Classics alone after taking a second-year class in medieval philosophy and becoming fascinated by the writings of Dionysius and Bonaventure.

Acquiring knowledge of the relevant ancient languages was not easy ("They absorb lots of time"), especially when these classes occurred close to the waitressing job by which Parker made ends meet. However, she found the disciplined study most rewarded not only for reading Greek and Latin, but also for enriching her understanding of English. Parker completed the BA with Honours in Classics in 2007.

Another of the philosophers whom Parker encountered during her undergraduate days became the focus of her

MA research. During Dr. Hankey's course on medieval interpreters of Aristotle, the readings from Philo of Alexandria intrigued her, despite Philo's reputation for being difficult and obscure. "Philo isn't the illogical, incoherent mess that he is sometimes made out to be," she says. Her presentation on Philo in a Neoplatonism class led to the subject of her MA thesis, namely Philo's doctrine of mediation in *De Vita Mosis*. While pursuing her own research and coursework, she also worked very capably as a teaching assistant in the Classics Department in classes on philosophy, Greek history, mythology and religions of the Eastern and Western worlds. Of all of these learning experiences, she found Philo provided particularly fertile ground for reflection, for he was steeped in his own Jewish traditions as well as in the philosophical tradition of the Platonists; his influence on subsequent thinkers, especially early and medieval Christian writers, was deep and lingering. Parker's activities during her MA were by no means exclusively academic; in her own words, "Philo and yoga are probably my two main interests." She both practices and teaches yoga, which she finds a happy complement to philosophical inquiry, because she understands yoga as a practical and physical expression of disciplined thought.

Parker is currently having adventures at Trinity College in the University of Dublin, Ireland, where she is an interdisciplinary PhD student in Jewish Studies at the School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics and at the Centre for the Study of the Platonic Tradition. Her research is being supervised by Dr. Zuleika Rodgers and Emeritus Regius Professor of Greek at Trinity College, John Dillon, who visited the Department in 2008. Alongside the research work, she is working part-time in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities and gaining further teaching experience. She is pleased that there is still a little time left for yoga and some travelling, too!



Photograph courtesy of Ashtanga Yoga Shala

## ALUMNOTES

**Elizabeth Helen Baxter** (BA 2005, MA 2007) returned home from Boston University to deliver a paper on Horace and Sappho at the Classics Association of Canada Congress hosted by the Department this May.

**Michael Bennett** (BA, with First Class Honours in Classics and Contemporary Studies, 2007) is studying for a PhD in the Philosophy Department at McMaster University under the direction of Dr. Barry Allen.

**Stephen Blackwood** (BA 1997, MA 1999) has successfully completed PhD studies at Emory University. He has joined his sister **Naomi Blackwood** (MA 2009) and brother-in-law **Patrick Graham** (MA 1993), in Toronto where his wife has a post-doctoral fellowship. Stephen served as Chapel Theologian for 2010-11 at the University of King's College. His brother, **Jesse Blackwood** (BA 2004), is back in Halifax heading Youthnet St George's Round Church

**James Bryson** (BA 2005, MA 2007), finishing a PhD in Divinity at Cambridge University under the supervision of Douglas Hedley and pursuing research in Munich, delivered a paper on Renaissance Platonism to the Collaborative Research Workshop organized by Marmara University and McGill University, presided over by Dr Torrance Kirby in Istanbul in December 2010. There, he joined seven other present or former members of the Department giving papers, including Professors Hankey, Tom Curran and Alexander Treiger. The eight papers presented by our alumni and faculty made up almost a third of those delivered. The Istanbul conference was one of four recently dominated by the Department; others have been held in Quebec, Steubenville, and Halifax. We get around.

Congratulations to **David Butorac** (BA 1999, MA 2001), who successfully defended his thesis last autumn at the University of Leuven, earning a doctoral degree in Ancient Philosophy. He has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in Philosophy at Fatih University in Istanbul, Turkey, where he will teach ancient and medieval philosophy and ancient Greek.

**Dr. Barry Craig** (MA 1985) became Vice-President Academic of St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB, in February of 2010. We congratulate him on this success!

## ALUMNI PROFILE: Tim Riggs, BEng '02, BA '07, MA '09

There must be something in the water in Nova Scotia's Pictou County. In addition to being the home of philosophical great, the late Professor James Doull, it is also the home to alumnus Tim Riggs, a man who's blazing a trail of classical and philosophical scholarship

It was engineering, however, that brought Tim to Halifax in 1996 in order to begin studies at Saint Mary's University. After completing two years of introductory study, he switched to Dalhousie University, graduating with Bachelor of Engineering in 2002. Upon leaving Dalhousie, he worked with the Canadian air force as an airfield engineer, but found it necessary to leave the forces for medical reasons. When he learned that he had the option of leaving the military and return to university, he made up his mind decisively and rather suddenly: "I woke up in the morning and decided to do it."

Tim had been reading in the Classics for years and wanted to gain a better understanding of the literature. He set to work on the languages immediately, starting with Greek and Latin, in which he excelled. He didn't stop there: he took classes in French, German, Italian, and Arabic during the next few years. "I was always interested in the languages, in reading and decoding texts. Some of my happiest moments occurred when I could understand a Greek text!"

Tim turned his newfound understanding of the languages to good intellectual use right away. One of his reasons for studying Classics was to learn more about ancient philosophy, and was delighted by his first forays into Neoplatonism. "Something turned on in my head, and I thought, 'You can't stop now! There's a hard kernel of truth in there, good not only for understanding ancient thought but for informing our lives today.'" He eagerly continued through the rest of the Classics course, noting that there are few other places in Canada where one can study Neoplatonism as one can at Dalhousie. He speaks particularly appreciatively of Dr. Hankey's "Meetings" class: "It was a great introduction to the subject, taught by an engaging and dynamic scholar. I discovered Dionysius, Proclus, and al-Fārābī there. Almost everything that I have done since in some way began in that class!" After completing the BA

with First Class Honours in 2007, Tim undertook an MA in the Department, writing his thesis on aspects of Proclus and Dionysius. His labours earned him not only a degree: he was also the 2009 recipient of the Governor-General's Gold Medal for best MA thesis.

Well before the MA thesis had even been completed, plans for the next stages of Tim's academic work were already well-formed. He accepted a doctoral position with the SSALT (Subjectivity and Selfhood in the Arabic and Latin traditions) project, led by Dr. Taneli Kukkonen at the University of Jyväskylä in Jyväskylä, Finland. This project, funded by the European Research Council, studies the development of conceptions of selfhood and consciousness throughout the medieval period, considering both the Arabic and Latin streams together as a single 'Western' tradition, and emphasizing the effect of these conceptions of selfhood and consciousness on the moral and political theories of the era. Tim's contribution to the project focuses on the influence upon the Arabic philosophical tradition of the conceptions of selfhood in the political philosophy of al-Fārābī.

Working simultaneously on Hellenic Neoplatonism (especially Proclus), its Christian devel-

opment (especially with Dionysius the Areopagite), and the Arab philosophers, (especially al-Fārābī.) Tim is now a leader in international scholarship. His work combines philological and linguistic mastery, exceptional historical precision, and intellectual grasp to a very rare degree.

Quite apart from the intellectual adventures of the PhD research, Finland itself is proving to be an enjoyable place for Tim: a beautiful country full of friendly people, even if the ceaseless midsummer sun can be somewhat exhausting! He and his family are flourishing there in mind and size, respectively. For his most recent work, see Alumnotes at right.



Tim Riggs and baby outside of Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral

**Dr. David Creese** (MA 1997), recently promoted to Associate Professor of Greek and Latin Literature at the University of British Columbia, has just published a book, *The Monochord in Ancient Greek Harmonic Science*, part of the Cambridge Classical Studies series. He returned home to participate in the CAC Conference hosted by the Department in May, delivering a paper on a musical reference in Lucian.

**Simon Fortier** (BA 2007, MA 2009) has received funding for his doctoral degree from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; he is writing a thesis on Proclus which will lead to a PhD from the University of Laval. He returned home to deliver a paper on Proclus for, and join in the discussions of, the Praying and Thinking Colloquium in the CAC Conference hosted by the Department in May.

**Carol J. King** (MA 1995) came home from the Grenfell Campus of the Memorial University of Newfoundland to deliver a paper on Mary Renault at the CAC Conference. She was one of five of our alumni representing their heads at the council of Chairs of Canadian Classics departments.

**Carolyn MacDonald** (BA 2007, MA 2009) returned from her PhD studies in Classics at Stanford to deliver a paper on Philostratus' *Imagines* at the CAC Congress.

**Gregory MacIsaac** (BA 1992), now Associate Professor in the College of the Humanities at Carleton University, returned home to give a paper on self-knowledge in Proclus for the Self Colloquium organized by Professors Fournier and Hankey at the CAC Congress. In the panels, Greg joined two of his former students, Martin Sastri (MA 2006) and Marc Vollebakk. Marc is now successfully finishing the first year of Master's study in the Department. Greg also delivered a paper on Dante to the Collaborative Research Workshop organized by Marmara University and McGill University presided over by Dr Torrance Kirby in Istanbul during December 2010.

**Jennifer Otto** (BA with First Class Honours in Early Modern Studies and Classics, 2006) is pursuing a PhD in Church History at McGill University, where she holds a prestigious Vanier Fellowship. She delivered papers on Philo of Alexandria both at the "Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions" Workshop in Istanbul and at the Praying and Thinking Colloquium organized by

Professors Fournier and Hankey at the CAC Congress.

**Dr. Andrew Porter** (MA 2000) has become Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Seamus O'Neill** (PhD 2009) now Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the St John Campus of Newfoundland's Memorial University delivered a paper on Demonic Agency in Augustine for the Self Panel at the Halifax Congress of the CAC.

**Emily Parker** (BA 2007, MA 2010) continues her PhD studies at Trinity College Dublin. She delivered papers on Philo of Alexandria both at the "Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: 'Scriptural Authority and Theories of Knowledge'," Conference in Istanbul and in the Praying and Thinking Colloquium organized by Professors Fournier and Hankey at the CAC Congress. Here, she joined Jennifer Otto and new MA student Brian Lam in a session devoted to Philo.

**Vernon Provençal** (BA 1981, MA 1994, PhD 1992), now Professor in the department of History and Classics at Acadia University, delivered a paper on the riddle of the Sphinx at the CAC Congress. In the Winter Term, he served as a guest speaker for *Res publica*

**Timothy Riggs** (BA 2007, MA 2009) continues his PhD studies and research at Finland's University of Jyväskylä. He is currently a doctoral member of the Subjectivity and Selfhood in the Arabic and Latin Traditions (SSALT) project funded by the European Research Council. With Dr Hankey, Tim delivered a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science at Fordham University in October, 2010. He returned home to participate in the Colloquium on the Self at the CAC Congress organised by Drs Fournier and Hankey, with a paper entitled "Elements of Selfhood in al-Fārābī: Between Alexander and Proclus."

**Matthew Robinson** (BA 2000, MA 2002) now completing a PhD in Philosophy at Boston College, delivered a paper on Bonaventure in the Self Colloquium at the CAC Congress in May.

After completing his PhD at the University of Michigan, **C. Michael Sampson** (BA 2001, MA 2003) has enjoyed short-term positions at St. Olaf College, Minnesota, and a research fellowship held at Rutgers, the State University of New

Jersey. He has just been appointed to a tenure track position in Greek Literature at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg where he will join Dr James Chlup (MA 1998.) Both men participated in the CAC Conference hosted by the Department, with a paper on Euripides.

**Andra Striowski** (BA 2005, MA 2008), now finishing a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Ottawa, delivered a paper on Aristotle at the CAC. She painted the much admired portrait of James Doull which hangs in the Department; she will return to the Department in October for the unveiling of her much anticipated portrait of Robert Crouse.

**Nicholas Thorne** (BA 1999, MA 2001), now finishing a PhD in Classics at the University of Pittsburgh, delivered a paper on the battle of Plataea at the CAC Congress. There he joined Professors Diamond and Fournier and Matthew Robinson, who were students together in the Department.

**Geraldine Thomas** (PhD 1981) was honoured by the establishment of a scholarship in Classics at Saint Mary's University where for three decades she kept the Classics flame alight.

**Colin Webster** (BA 2005, MA 2007), now finishing a PhD in Classics at Columbia University, delivered a paper on "Guts and Gutters," at the CAC Congress.

**Daniel Wilband** (MA 2007) has completed two years as a Teaching Fellow in the Foundation Year Programme (FYP) at King's and will move on to the highly selective course in International Law at McGill University. After three years as a FYP Teaching Fellow, **Michelle Wilband** (MA 2008) will move with Daniel to Montréal.

**Matthew Wood** (BA 2003, MA 2005), now beginning his second year of a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Ottawa, returned home to deliver a paper on Aristotle and Plotinus at the CAC Congress to a panel organized by Dr Eli Diamond.

**Florence Yoon** (BA, with First Class Honours; University Medal in Classics; King's Medal, 2002) returned from lectureships at Trinity College and Worcester College with a DPhil from Oxford University, funded by the Rhodes Trust, to deliver a paper on the *Pro-metheus Bound* at the CAC Congress. She will be taking up an appointment in the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies at the University of British Columbia.

*“Ave  
atque  
pro  
tempore  
vale”*



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### Alumni Relations

Visit [www.alumniandfriends.dal.ca](http://www.alumniandfriends.dal.ca) to update your contact information and stay connected with Dalhousie University.

For information on events within the Faculty or to plan a reunion, visit [www.dal.ca/fass](http://www.dal.ca/fass) or email [fassalum@dal.ca](mailto:fassalum@dal.ca)