

2008



## Department of English Language and Literature

### Message from the Chair

Greetings—



2008 has been a busy year for the Department of English Language and Literature. We have a new undergraduate Associate Chair, **Kate Lawson**; we are about to welcome **Ken Hirschkop** as the new graduate Associate Chair; and **Margaret Ulbrick** has joined us from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering as our new Administrative Assistant. **Lara Varpio** (PhD '07) has won another award for her dissertation on Healthcare Communication; **Cathy Schryer** and her research team were ranked number one in their SSHRC grant category this year; and **Shelley Hulan** and **Sarah Tolmie** were approved for tenure. You will find more about these and many other exciting developments in the Department throughout this Newsletter.

But perhaps the most significant development, and the biggest news, this year is the growth of the graduate program. Spearheaded by the former Chair, **Kevin McGuirk**, and the outgoing graduate Chair, **Victoria Lamont**, over the last two years the Department has seen its incoming PhD candidate numbers grow by nearly 300%, and it has also experienced dramatic increases in enrollment at the MA level. This year competition for admission was fierce; in the end the Department welcomed 36 new MAs and 11 new PhDs. In the midst of this growth, our MA and PhD students continue to make important contributions to research, graduate life, and undergraduate instruction at Waterloo. And with the arrival of PhD candidates such as **Pamela Mansutti** from Italy and **Danila Sokolov** from Russia, the graduate study of English literature and rhetoric at Waterloo has an increasingly international inflection.

Looking ahead the Department is at a bit of a crossroads. This is partly for external reasons. We are all aware of the tremendous financial storm that has overtaken the world's economies; this will certainly affect Canadian universities. Yet despite this adverse context, the Faculty of Arts at Waterloo has new initiatives on the go, such as the Balsillie School of International Affairs and the proposed Stratford campus. And there are also internal reasons: after the early retirements of so many senior faculty in 1996, English is finally back up to a more reasonable faculty complement and seeing its research and teaching accomplishments grow. New initiatives include celebrating the English Department's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, reaching out to our wonderful alumni, and finding more and better ways to tell the exciting story of this Department. I look forward to hearing back from some of you at [enqlalum@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:enqlalum@uwaterloo.ca): about your news, about fellow students, and about things you'd like to see this Department do.

#### Inside :

- ◆ St. Jerome's
- ◆ Our New PhDs
- ◆ Department News
- ◆ Guest Speakers
- ◆ Faculty Conference Trips
- ◆ Interviews
- ◆ Alumni News

## Across the Creek

It's "all change" in the English department at St Jerome's these days. Partly, this is a time of reinvigoration as we look forward to inviting a new Canadianist to join our ranks; additionally, numerous members anticipate well-deserved research leaves in the near future. Congratulations go to **Carol Acton** and **Stan Fogel**, who were recently awarded theirs. Sadly, we will also need to adjust to the loss, over the next few years, of several esteemed colleagues to retirement. The first of these will be **Gary Draper**, who will retire this Christmas after making an inestimable contribution to the flourishing of the department in the decade or so he has been a member of it.

Still, we are quite used to dealing with change. After all, we negotiate change every time we wrestle with how various literary voices express and engage questions of the human condition within the unique particularities of their own times and places. We do so as well as we refract those questions through our own circumstances and those of our ever-changing students. As (new) chair, I am grateful for all those at St Jerome's who share in the paradoxes of this enterprise, including the part-timers who help us achieve the desired depth and breadth in our commitment to undergraduate teaching. We also share in the excitement of the flourishing graduate studies program on the main campus. This year (W'09) **Tristanne Connolly** will lend her expertise with a course entitled Romantic Reproduction: Sex, Birth and Nature in Poetry and Science.

Every year we invite writers who are busy shaping contemporary Canadian culture with their own distinctive voices (and affording us many pleasurable reading experiences in the process) to visit and read to us and anyone who wants to join us. You're invited! This year the department hosted Nathaniel G. Moore and Emma Donoghue in the Fall term, and welcomes Lawrence Hill (date TBA) and a Spring Festival line-up including David McFadden (March 11), K.V. Johansen (March 16) and Camilla Gibb (March 25). For the full line-up and times, please visit [www.sju.ca/reading\\_series.html](http://www.sju.ca/reading_series.html).



**Norm Klassen**  
Chair, Department of English  
St Jerome's University

## A Note from the Editor

As many of you already know, the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo is thriving: we have an important, new senior position being advertised again this year; an intensified and growing graduate program with new initiatives in place to further graduate student development and professionalization; and a group of popular undergraduate degrees, including a literature and rhetoric honours degree.

Please let us know what you think about our programs, courses, and this newsletter. Would you like to see further interviews in future newsletters? More about faculty research activities? Would you like to learn about undergraduate achievements and activities in English? Alumni: send us an update on you and your families for the alumni news section of the newsletter—we love to hear from you. And thanks for your financial support too: your donations help us as we seek to deliver the best student scholarships and awards, the best learning environment, and the best new research in Canada.

Thank you to **Maureen Fraser** for her great ideas on newsletter content for this issue, and to **Jenn MacSporran** and **Margaret Ulbrick** for their invaluable assistance in launching it.

Sincerely, Heather Smyth

---

## Our New PhDs

The English Department continued its expansion this year with a total of 36 incoming MAs and 11 PhDs. Our incoming graduate students are arriving from across the US and Canada.

**Ashna Bhagwanani** did a Master's degree at York University and an undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto. She intends to examine the interplay between American Literature and the Social Sciences by applying sociological criminology theories and Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Self-Reliance* towards a reading of American texts from 1880 to 1960.

**Charles Boyes** transfers to our department from York University, where he began his PhD studies. He did a Master's degree at Carleton University and his undergraduate degree at York. His dissertation will explore the importance of different media in the dissemination of the Orpheus myth in 20<sup>th</sup> Century American literature.

**Robert Clapperton** received MA and undergraduate degrees in English from the University of Waterloo and a Political Science degree from Wilfrid Laurier University. He intends to research the narrative structures found in social network websites such as MySpace and Facebook to develop a taxonomy of narrative types.

**Islai Cote** did her MA at Lakehead University and her undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo. She is interested in the intersection of the body and the supernatural in contemporary lesbian erotic fiction.

**Jennifer Doyle** received her MA from Wilfrid Laurier and her undergraduate degree from Mount Allison University, NB. She will draw from her background in Fine Arts to study American environmental literature and visual art and the connections between modern sacred spaces, the capacity for wonder, and the natural world.

**Emily Freeman** received her BA from the University of Detroit and her MA from Michigan State where she did a double major in English and Electronic Critique. She is interested in literature, critical theory, and technology.

**Michael Hancock** did his MA on adult fantasy literature at the University of Saskatchewan, and is interested in the influence of Old English epics such as Beowulf on modern literary genres, especially modern fantasy, hard-boiled detective novels, and police procedurals.

**John Roscoe** received his MA from the University of Victoria. He proposes to trace the relationship between fiction and administrative policy in the last two hundred years of English prison and public school systems, and intends to connect the Canadian residential school system to Victorian public school and prison systems.

**George Ross** did his MA and undergraduate degrees at Carleton University. He is interested in genre, rhetoric, and discourse studies, and proposes for his dissertation to do an in-depth study of multimodal discourse in internet news media.

**Stephanie Swinamer** received MA and undergraduate degrees from the University of Waterloo, where she specialized in Speech Communication and Rhetoric and Communication Design. She will apply her work term experience on information technology projects towards a dissertation that explores opportunities for improvements in health care through improved communications.

**Karen Ward** received an MA degree from Wilfrid Laurier and an undergraduate degree from the University of Toronto. She will explore the effects of globalization on Canadian cultural nationalism through a study of the use of metafiction over the past 65 years in Canadian writing.

For more profiles of our MA and PhD students,  
<http://english.uwaterloo.ca/gradstudents.html>.

---

## Department News



### FACULTY

**Kenneth Graham** spent February through July doing sabbatical research at Cambridge University. While in England, he participated in celebrations of John Milton's 400th birthday and presented a paper on "Milton and the Disciplinary Sphere" at the Ninth International Milton Symposium at the University of London.



Reviews of **Randy Harris's** 2005 *Rhetoric and Incommensurability* finally started to come out, one of which called his introduction "a real *tour de force*," adding that "the book is worth buying for this essay" (Struan Jacobs, *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*). His 1994 *Linguistic Wars* was quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in an article on George Lakoff. He was interviewed on voice-interaction design for *Customer Management Insight*, gave a paper to a special session on Wayne Booth at the 2008 Congress in Vancouver, wrote a long review article on rhetoric of science and the work of Alan Gross for *Perspectives on Science*, and co-authored an article with Stefanie Stiles on Hunter S. Thompson for *College English*. On the teaching front, outside the department, he offered CogSci 600, the keystone course of the Graduate Diploma in Cognitive Science, in which **Marcel O'Gorman** generously participated. And he began developing a workshop in cognitive allegory with **Sarah Tolmie**, getting lots of additional help from **Robert Clapperton** and **Kate Dawson**, and some valuable discussions with **Craig Love**.



This year **Norm Klassen** expanded upon a point made in *Notes and Queries* about Chaucer's poem *Parliament of Fowls* (June 2006). "Surprised by Joy: Chaucer's tonal achievement in *Parliament of Fowls* 92-292" will appear in November 2008 in a Festschrift for Peter Erb (WLU) entitled *Tradition and Formation: Claiming An Inheritance. Essays in Honour of Peter C. Erb*, ed. Michel Desjardins and Harold Remus, Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009.



**Kate Lawson** delivered a paper entitled "A Domestic Invasion: The Army in Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Clever Woman of the Family*" at the May 2008 ACCUTE conference held at the University of British Columbia as a part of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences.



Thanks to a grant from St. Jerome's, **Ted McGee** had the opportunity to spend several weeks in the summer in London reading the Thynne family papers, excerpts from which will appear in *The Records of Early English Drama: Wiltshire*. Another spin-off of this project, a paper on gender stereotypes in libelous poetry, appeared in *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*. And the long-awaited *Thomas Middleton: the Collected Works*, including Professor McGee's edition of Middleton's masque "The World Tossed at Tennis," has arrived.



In 2008, **Kevin McGuirk** completed four years as chair of the Department and published "'no arranged terror': Ammons after the New Americanists," an essay on poetry, history, and politics, in a special issue of *Comparative American Studies* called "Transnational American Studies—For What?"



**Marcel O'Gorman** completed a number of publications and research/creation projects in the past year. Examples include a co-edited book entitled *New Media / New Methods* (Parlor Press), an article on digital media and Detroit (CTheory), and a video installation called "Border Transmission" at the Art Gallery of Windsor. He is currently very busy establishing the Critical Media Lab on campus, which will enable Arts faculty members to develop new media projects that explore the impact of technology on society and the human condition.



**Cathy Schryer's** research group won another SSHRC grant in 2008 (\$179,000) entitled "Trajectories of Collaborative Care: Case Studies of Communication on Interprofessional Teams," ranking first in their SSHRC category. This is her team's third win: on the first two Schryer was PI; on this one Lorelei Lingard (another rhetorician) from U of T is PI, and Schryer is co-applicant along with Marlee Spafford, Bonnie Fleming-Carroll, Lynne Sinclair, and Susan Tallet. The grant is interesting in that it is truly collaborative—most of the other researchers are in fact healthcare professionals. Schryer's team is doing case studies investigating and tracking the kinds of information and communication that surround complex medical cases. One of the most innovative parts of this research program is that they are conceptualizing the patient as also part of the "team."

---



**Heather Smyth** wrote three articles forthcoming or accepted for publication in 2007-2008: "Mollies Down Under: Crossdressing and Australian Masculinity in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*" in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, "The Being Together of Strangers': Dionne Brand's Politics of Difference and the Limits of Multicultural Discourse" in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, and "Indigenizing Sexuality and National Citizenship: Shyam Selvadurai's *Cinnamon Gardens*" in *ARIEL*. She presented material from these papers at conferences in Savannah, Georgia, and the University of British Columbia.



In 2007-2008 **Sarah Tolmie** published "The Book of the World as I Found It: Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" in *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, "The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve" in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, "Sacilege, Sacrifice and John Barbour's Bruce" in *International Review of Scottish Studies*, and "Langland, Wittgenstein and the Language Game" in *Yearbook of Langland Studies*. She won the *Grain Magazine* Award for Dramatic Monologue in 2008, and earned a UW/SSHRC Travel grant to attend the 20th Triennial Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Literature and Language at the University of Edinburgh (see **Faculty Conference/Research Trips**, below). Sarah Tolmie was approved for tenure in 2008.



**Linda Warley** has recently co-edited, with Jeanne Perreault and Marlene Kadar, a special issue of the journal *ARIEL*, "Life Writing in International Contexts" (2008).

#### **STAFF**

This has been a year of big events and comings and goings for Department staff. First, **Maureen Fraser** has moved to Religious Studies, after 11 years with the English Department. Maureen started as Undergraduate Secretary in 1997 and moved to the position of Chair's Assistant in 2007. Aside from being very good at her job, Maureen Fraser brought a good deal of enthusiasm, energy, and personal warmth to her work, which made it a pleasure to be her colleague. Her positive spirit and infectious laughter will be very much missed around the department. We wish Maureen all the best in her new position.

If you visit Hagey Hall these days you'll find that all three staff members now have offices across from the mailroom by the Chair's office, which makes for much more efficient communication and centralization. Our Graduate Secretary, **Jennifer Lehman**, is currently on maternity leave after giving birth to Aidan Christopher on June 14, 2008, weighing 8 lb 14 oz. We welcome **Sarah Morse** who is acting as Graduate Secretary during Jennifer's maternity leave. **Jenn MacSporrán**, our Undergraduate Secretary, is engaged to Kevin Basler with a wedding date of July 4, 2009. They will be married in Kevin's family home in Linwood and the reception will be held at the Grey Silo Golf Course in Waterloo. **Jennifer Dyck** was acting Administrative Assistant while we searched for a permanent replacement, and is now teaching part-time at a school in Elmira, covering planning time coverage in the primary grades. The department's new Administrative Assistant is **Margaret Ulbrick**, who joins us from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, where she was the Supervisor of Undergraduate Records and Communications.

#### **GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS** (by **David Shakespeare**, SAGE President)

As SAGE looks forward to another great year of combining student development with social events, we can also look back with satisfaction on a year gone by. Special thanks go to everyone who assisted in the June Colloquium, which was the first time UW's English department opened the forum to accept papers from our neighbouring universities, Wilfrid Laurier and the University of Guelph. The papers were presented over two days and included talks given by faculty and students from all three institutions. Thanks especially to **Diane Jakacki** and **Jessica Antonio**, who co-ordinated the colloquium and made it as successful as it was. This year, SAGE looks forward to showcasing more of what UW students are working on by having a one-day event with student and faculty presentations. Student and faculty papers are also going to be welcomed at the continuing and ever-popular Research Discussion Groups, which take place every other month this year. We would like to extend an invitation to any student and faculty member to speak at these meetings. With assistance from the department, SAGE also anticipates instituting the speaker program, where the graduate students of the department will host an important literary/cultural theorist for a few days. Finally, when the schoolwork's over (or we need a break), we look forward to holding a number of social events throughout the year. Good luck to everyone with your studies!

---

---

### PhD defenses include:

**Sara Humphreys**, PhD'07 (Supervisor: **Victoria Lamont**): "The Expendable Citizen: Patriotism, Sacrifice and Sentiment in American Culture"

**Mark Wallin**, PhD'07 (Supervisor: **Andy McMurry**): "An Eurhythmic Response to Adaptive Accrual: A Rhetoric of Adaptation"

**Julia Munro**, PhD'08 (Supervisors: **Kathy Acheson** and **Kate Lawson**): "Representations and Receptions of Photography in Britain, 1839 to 1853"

### Other News:

**Veronica Austen** (PhD '07) is teaching at UW this fall and at Wilfrid Laurier for Fall-Winter semesters.

**Sara Humphreys'** (PhD '07) Limited Term Appointment at Trent University was renewed another year.

**Craig Love** is the winner of a SSHRC doctoral fellowship and **Stephanie Bell** and **Cara DeHaan** have won Ontario Graduate Scholarships.

PhD candidate **Morgan Tunzelmann** has been profiled on the UW Arts website:

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/gradres/gradstudentprofiles/MorganTunzelmann\\_Profile.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/gradres/gradstudentprofiles/MorganTunzelmann_Profile.html)

**Lara Varpio** (PhD '07) is an Assistant Professor in the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Medicine, and her dissertation has won the 2008 Conference on College Composition and Communication Outstanding Dissertation Award in Technical Communication. Read her story in Arts and Letters:

[http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/alumni/documents/arts\\_letter\\_fall08.pdf](http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/alumni/documents/arts_letter_fall08.pdf)

**Note:** In 2008-2009 the English Department is offering its first full program of Graduate student professionalization seminars, organized by Professor **Aimee Morrison**. Topics include grant writing, teaching, applying for academic and non-academic jobs, giving conference papers, applying to PhD programs, and writing a dissertation.

### Guest Speakers

The English Department Speaker Series, organized by Ken Hirschkop in 2007-2008 and now organized by Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, brought a number of accomplished visitors to the Department in the past year. Our own Professor Randy Harris "visited" us as a speaker (from his sabbatical) in October 2007 to deliver a paper entitled "Knowing Mendel, Mendel Knowing." In October 2008, Cary Wolfe came to the Department of English to speak on the topic "Before the Law: Animals in a Biopolitical Context." Wolfe is Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English at Rice University, and he publishes scholarship on postmodernism, American studies, and ecocriticism. His books include *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and the Posthumanist Theory* (2003). In November, 2008, Professor Audrey Jaffe from the University of Toronto delivered a paper on "Market Character(s): from the 1801 Stock Exchange to (almost) the Current Crisis." Professor Jaffe specializes in Victorian literature and visual culture. Her books include *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (1991) and *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (2000).

One of the Department's new initiatives for Graduate students is the creation of a graduate-student organized visiting speaker event. Graduate students will select and invite a distinguished visiting speaker and organize all events pertaining to the visit, with funding provided from a graduate fund within the department. Next year's newsletter will report on the inaugural Graduate student visiting speaker event.

---

## Faculty Conference/Research Trips

### Folger Shakespeare Library and Bodleian Library: **Kathy Acheson**

I was on sabbatical this past year, which means that I got to do research in a few of the best research libraries in the world. In October and November I held a short-term fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library, which is in Washington, DC, right on Capitol Hill. How it got there is a curious story. To read the full story, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.



### Ecopoetics in Brussels: **Andy McMurry**

Before I traveled there in June, I knew Brussels for four things: chocolate; beer; mussels; and its status as the capital of the new Europe. To this list I will now add Franca Bellarsi, the Free University of Brussels professor and dynamo who organized a very enjoyable conference on North American poetry and ecocriticism, which is the field of literary criticism devoted to the interplay of words and natural world. To read the full story, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.



### Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Literature in Edinburgh: **Sarah Tolmie**

As part of ongoing research on the fifteenth-century Scots poet Robert Henryson, I attended the twelfth triennial conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Literature and Language in Edinburgh in July 2008 to present a twenty-minute paper called "Henryson and the Practice of Poetry." The paper, which discussed competitive strategies used in the short (and rude) poem *Sum Practysis of Medecine* pitting poets against the emergent professional class of medical doctors, was well received by a mixed audience of literary, historical and linguistic scholars . . . To read the full story, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.



### Auto/Biography in Hawai'i: **Aimée Morrison and Linda Warley**

In June of this year we traveled to the University of Hawai'i, Honolulu to attend an international conference of auto/biography scholars. The conference is the signature event of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA), and it attracts scholars from around the world. Canadian scholars who do research on various genres of life writing make up a significant contingent. To read the full story, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.



## English Department Alumni Interview



An excerpt from: An Interview with **Peter McLaren** (for the full interview, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>)

**Peter McLaren** (BA English 1972) is an internationally renowned scholar who teaches in

the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. His commitment to social justice and radical pedagogy takes him around the world, from the slums of Brazil to the policy think-tanks of Europe. He is a prolific author and editor of some 45 books, many of which have been translated for international audiences. His textbook, *Life in Schools*, is in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition, and is a mainstay in most education programmes, having been voted by an international panel of experts as one of the top twelve educational textbooks ever written. His latest collections (*Pedagogy and Praxis in the Age of Empire* [with Nathalia Jaramillo], *Capitalists and Conquerors* and *Red Seminars*), as may be obvious from their titles, are powerful indictments of American imperialism. In Latin America, a Peter McLaren Chair has been established at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, and a Peter McLaren Foundation has been created in Tijuana to help spread his ideas and those of other critical educators.

Peter McLaren was honoured at the **2008 Arts in Academics Homecoming Event** on September 26, where he gave a talk on his work. Afterward, he spoke with English department professors **Andrew McMurry** and **Kevin McGuirk**.

**KM:** How did you choose Waterloo? **PM:** Well, I had to leave U of T. And I just thought it would be a good place to get away from life in Toronto. Slower pace, Mennonites driving by in horses and buggies, big barns and snow-covered fields, the intoxicating smell of burning wood wafting from stone fireplaces, I very much liked the surrounding area but don't remember too much about Kitchener or Waterloo as cities. I was happy to be a country boy at the time. I made some very good friends. My roommates taught me how to shop and to cook, and to drink good Canadian lager. Everyone posed in those days as a poet or a writer, and I wondered at that time how I would make a living once I left Waterloo. ☐

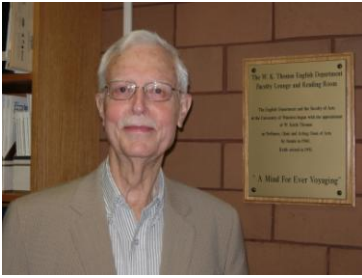
**Andrew McMurry:** Do you remember at all, that time here in Waterloo, the kind of political atmosphere, the kind of culture of the university? What was it like in those days? You know, now I could say that everyone recognizes it as the engineering-tech school: that seems to be its reputation. But was it the same sort of thing then?

**PM:** Well, I didn't really feel that; I went to anti-war events here, I wouldn't call them rallies, but I remember large groups of students would attend when speakers from the U.S. would come, and they'd talk about the war in Vietnam, or they'd talk about the politics of youth culture, or they'd speak about social injustice, or they'd want to talk on themes related to civil rights, and the places were packed. The venues were packed. Completely packed. That was tremendously exciting for me to learn about exercising political agency and to find writings that contested dominant modes of subjective awareness. I was interested in finding out how the production of the self was historically bound up with an exchange economy of commodity production and how that economy was linked to imperialism and the war in Vietnam and I was engaged in cultivating *Bildung*, and my life was developing into some kind of *Bildungsroman*, where I tried to fashion a crude type of protagonistic agency, but this was all very haphazard. I was becoming aware that it was people who made history, but as Marx pointed out, "not in circumstances of their own choosing." What I was beginning to realize at that time was that the preconditions for the society I was becoming less loathe to confront were, in reality, the historical results of men and women either struggling for a better future or acquiescing to the conditions in which they were immersed. I had not yet arrived at Freire's critical consciousness but I was heading in that direction. I found a few bohemian denizens with whom I could spend some time, and I felt comfortable. I needed to be in another city, far from Toronto, and settled in Waterloo because it felt like I could have a fresh beginning.

To read the whole interview, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.



## English Department Emeritus Interview



An excerpt from: An Interview with Distinguished Professor Emeritus **Warren Ober** (for the full interview, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>)

Professor **Warren Ober** joined the Department of English as its second Chair in 1965, and during his two terms as Chair (1965-69, 1973-79) and Acting Dean of Arts (1969-1970) oversaw the first major expansion of the Department's faculty complement and the addition of a Master's degree, Distance Education program, and Co-op program in the Department. He received the Distinguished Teacher Award in 1992 and the status of Distinguished Professor Emeritus in 1995. Professor Ober's career is especially notable for his commitment to teaching and to collaborative research, especially with his

colleagues in the Department of English, including Professors **W.K. Thomas**, **W.R. Martin**, **Neil C. Hultin**, and **Helen B. Ellis**. This research is ongoing after retirement, and includes a book and an article published in 2008. Professor Ober was interviewed on October 1, 2008 by Professor **Heather Smyth**.

**Heather Smyth:** The Department of English started in 1960, and you were hired by the Department in 1965. What drew you to Canada and the University of Waterloo?

**Warren Ober:** I came in 1965, after receiving a phone call from one of the administrators here. I was a professor of English at Northern Illinois University, and my wife and I were just settling the babysitter with our three sons and heading out that evening to a concert on campus when I got a phone call from Waterloo. The administrator said my name had been mentioned by one of my former professors who was a friend of people here, and he said he heard I was interested in administration, and was recommended very highly. I was looking at my watch and wanting to get to the concert, and all the while I was thinking about Waterloo, *Iowa*. I knew Waterloo, *Iowa* had a flourishing junior community college, but I thought "oh my goodness, I've lost touch, Waterloo is becoming a university." So I talked for about five minutes, and he said "we in Ontario speak of Waterloo as an instant university, and we have great plans, and would love to invite you up to talk about it." So I didn't betray my surprise I think, and made it clear that I was settled in Illinois and had no idea of moving, least of all to a foreign country. My boys were in school, and we loved it there. So he said, "Bring your family up and we'll interview you all!" So the short story is, to our complete surprise and delight, we found this offer irresistible and we came up the next year. In due course we became Canadian citizens, and we've never regretted it. As a southerner after I finished my graduate work in Indiana I went back to a little state college in Arkansas to teach near where I was born in Smackover. I went back down there because I wanted to give something to people who were raised like me down there. But with the turmoil and problems that were going to eventuate in the Little Rock standoff, I decided when an offer came from Northern Illinois that I should take it. And we were quite happy in Northern Illinois because as a southerner I found that the southerner can't go home again as Thomas Wolfe said. So, the first time I really felt at home after I left rural Arkansas as an eighteen year old to go into the US Navy was when we came here to Waterloo. We just loved the people and the university, the vision and the energy, and the willingness to revolutionize things that characterized the University of Waterloo.

**HS:** You were hired as Chair when you joined the English Department: what was the Department like back then?

**WO:** The Department was really congenial and welcoming. The previous Chair, Professor Keith Thomas, was wonderfully helpful as was everybody else in the Department. In fact, Keith became one of my dearest friends and collaborator in a book and an article. Walter Martin was there, and also became a dear friend and frequent collaborator of books and articles. Keith and I wrote on Wordsworth and Keats, and with Walter I wrote on Henry James and Alice Munro. At the same time I joined the Department Professor Helen Ellis joined and she and I collaborated on an article on Beowulf and John Gardner's *Grendel*. My big task as Chair was to recruit: I think I was told I had to hire 10 or 12 people. We managed to have somebody behind the desk in every class by the next year, and by 1967 we had doubled the size of the department. I'm very pleased with the way the Department developed after that. I was Chair for several years and later became Acting Dean of Arts for a year. I got interested in the inter-faculty program board and became Director of that for a couple of years, all the while retaining contact with English, because no matter where I was I always insisted on teaching at least one course for two of the three terms.

To read the whole interview, <http://english.uwaterloo.ca/2008NewsletterLinks.htm>.

## Alumni News

### Theresa Cheung (BA '93)

I earned a degree in English, Rhetoric and Professional Writing at UW. After I graduated from UW in 1993, I completed Law School at Queen's University. In 2005, I earned a Master's of Law in Intellectual Property Law at Osgoode Hall Law School. In 2006, I married Winston Young with whom I share Andrew, our five month old son. Currently I practice law, specializing in commercial and civil litigation in downtown Toronto. I remember my UW days fondly and would love to get in touch with old friends: [teresa\\_cheung@sympatico.ca](mailto:teresa_cheung@sympatico.ca).

### Norman Hodge (BA '65)

Many thanks for news of the Department; things are certainly different from the 1960s during my student days. I keep in contact with Larry Cummings of SJU, now retired in Texas; with Jim Carscallen who taught us Renaissance Literature, still with Victoria College although retired; and Paul Beam, who was a year ahead of me. I would like to find Dave Nimmo and John Sider, who also graduated with Honours back in 1965, to say "hello" after so many years.

Hope you have a Merry Christmas with lots of snow. We are now in summer and school holidays are just beginning. I am mostly retired but do relief and replacement work from time to time at a private school attended by my grandchildren.

### John Lofanco (BA '01)

I read the newsletter with great interest. Sounds like things are good at Waterloo English. I've always felt that English was a good choice of degree. Right now I am studying law at McGill University. I had been teaching composition and creative writing at Concordia for four years before I decided to make a career change. You can mention my book in the newsletter:

<http://www.froghollowpress.com/catalogue.html#lofranco>.

It's a small book of poems about running. I was captain of the UW cross-country team from 1997 to 1999, and now I'm the head coach of the Concordia University cross-country team.

### Kevin McGowan (BA '95)

I was in the RPW program from 91-95, and have been off working 'the man' ever since in a variety of technical writing jobs, between doing more interesting things like getting married and backpacking. More recently, a friend and I have started our own archive of 'long-lost and well-loved Canadian music' called

[www.itcamefromcanada.com](http://www.itcamefromcanada.com). It's a fun project and has been growing slowly but surely for the past year. We should have our first segment on CBC Radio here in Ottawa this Fall as well.

I'm glad to hear what's happening at the school. I have many fond memories of hanging out with the English Society (I was President for my last term, in the Winter of 1995), and with the long-defunct *The Sphere*, the ASU newspaper

**ALUMNI! Let us know what you are doing. Keep in touch by mail, fax, or email:**

Department of English Language and Literature  
Hagey Hall of the Humanities  
University of Waterloo,  
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1

Email [enlalum@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:enlalum@uwaterloo.ca) or FAX 519-746-5788

