Message from the Department Head, Brenda Austin-Smith

What timing, stepping back into the Headship four months into a pandemic. Like everyone else, I had time to stuff only a few files and books and some dvds from my office into a couple of bags and get them home before the lights went out on campus. Now we all shimmer and pixelate in our online boxes, go suddenly silent mid-sentence, or realize that everyone in the zoom meeting can hear us swearing at the wobbly wifi. Cats are everywhere, and that’s a good thing.

But one pandemic has been closely attended by another: that of racism against Black and Indigenous people, whose deaths and answering resistance came through our screens as well over the summer and into the fall. Scholar Strike Canada, and the All Out September 30 actions connected students and teachers across the country with that energy. Our department can play a part in efforts to dismantle racism, and I hope we will have many opportunities to discuss how our service, teaching, and research has made, and can make, a difference.

One such avenue for exchange will be a loose series of presentations, on-line panels, and discussions beginning this fall called “Unmuted.” Over the next few months I look forward to hearing colleagues share news and ideas about the range of activities in which we are all engaged, from book launches to community-based service commitments and creative activities. Prepare to be contacted! In a later newsletter we will take time to acknowledge and celebrate colleagues who have retired or received other forms of recognition since we last met in person. But in this special COVID edition you’ll find a mix of department news, along with pictures and accounts of pandemic projects.

I join with so many in thanking everyone in the department for their unbelievably hard work last spring, over the summer, and now in the fall term. Our sessional colleagues especially have done work over and above the hours for which they have been contracted. And without the professional support of Marianne, Darlene, and Anita, I can’t imagine how we’d have got through the past several months.

Give Me This

--Ada Limón

I thought it was the neighbor’s cat back
to clean the clock of the fledgling robins low
in their nest stuck in the dense hedge by the house
but what came was much stranger, a liquidity
moving all muscle and bristle. A groundhog
slippery and waddle thieves my tomatoes still
green in the morning’s shade. I watched her
munch and stand on her haunches taking such
pleasure in the watery bites. Why am I not allowed
delight? A stranger writes to request my thoughts
on suffering. Barbed wire pulled out of the mouth,
as if demanding that I kneel to the trap of coiled
spikes used in warfare and fencing. Instead,
I watch the groundhog closer and a sound escapes
me, a small spasm of joy I did not imagine
when I woke. She is a funny creature and earnest,
and she is doing what she can to survive.

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"Sundry jottings, stray leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings.”
- Robert Browning
Hi everyone! So…what’s new? Usually I start off these notes by talking about the geese outside the window in Fletcher Argue. That view has been replaced of one of our noisy and elderly cat, sitting on top of an unbalanced stack of books (because I have nowhere to put them), a chaotic sprawl of papers (because I have no way of organizing them), and a heating pad (necessary because I have no proper desk chair and my back is giving out). “But Alison” (you may say), “surely the UM Administration is providing instructors and staff with the basic tools they need to do their jobs…why are you laughing?” I realize I’m one of the lucky people who have their own space and a door they can shut when they’re trying to teach via Zoom, and I just want to acknowledge that this term is hard and that we are being asked to make do and mend more than ever. Recognition is owed to everyone who’s fighting their way through this term.

Since we are making our way through full-scale remote teaching (with an on-campus component for Theatre folks) for the first time, I’m not sure what issues will arise. As you know, UM enrolment is up this year and many of our courses are bursting at the seams. This may partly be a function of us teaching fewer courses this year, as we are particularly affected by the retirement of two instructors. It will be interesting to see what happens to enrolment next year, assuming that we’re able to fill all three of the positions for which we’re allowed to hire. This year, we’re going to try to clean up the course calendar, coming up with better descriptions for the courses we’re teaching, and fixing “broken” calendar entries that list out-of-date prerequisites and so on. This all has to go through CPAC, so watch for requests to revise calendar entries. Once again, the Chairs of FYPC and UCPC, David Watt and Erin Keating, have provided help and stability in what seems to be a very unstable term and made it easier for many of us to put our classes together. Big boxes of chocolates for both of them!

Massive thanks to Darlene, Marianne, and Anita for keeping us on course, and particularly to Darlene for coping with form after form after form, none of which can be signed in the same way.

Onward!

Associate Head’s message - Alison Calder

Graduate Chair’s message - Luke Tromly

Taking up a new administrative position is always daunting, particularly for people like me who are chronically disorganized and easily distracted. To step in as our department’s graduate chair, knowing that this year’s teaching would be done remotely, certainly caused some passing moments of dread. So far, my apprehensiveness has been replaced by a low-grade sense of wonder about how many things have been going well. The summer saw a number of successful Ph.D and MA thesis defences. Our seminar courses are decently full, despite a number of international students having to defer entry. I constantly feel a sense of appreciation for people involved with the graduate program. I’m grateful to Dr. Mark Libin and Dr. Vanessa Warne who, like me, are teaching seminar courses this term, and who have been very generous sharing their creative course designs. Graduate Program Assistant Anita King is cheerful and indefatigable. Most of all, I’m grateful to the students in our graduate program. Graduate work can be difficult and alienating at the best of times, and our students are having to work without being able to gather in person to support each other. Regardless, the students in my current seminar, and throughout our program, have been engaged, resilient, and alert to the possibilities of remote learning, not just its limitations. To think of people who learn and teach together in terms of community has always seemed a little dubious to me as a perspective that downplays issues like undercompensated or contingent labour, problems endemic to all universities, ours included. Right now, though, I do feel a sustaining sense of community in our graduate program, and I hope our students do too. Despite the possibility that my myriad blunders with Zoom may well be a recurring point of discussion, I hope that there are lots of group chats winding among our graduate students, keeping them connected in sustaining ways until we can all meet again in person.
Sincere congratulations to EVERYONE for their hard work and dedication midst the incredible challenges in recent months. Even though the pandemic eclipsed many traditions, celebrations and rituals, we especially wish to recognize here some very special milestones and achievements for excellence in past years of service.

Professors Emeritus designations: **David Arnason** and **Dennis Cooley**

Retirements: **Diana Brydon** and **Faye McIntyre**.

A special edition of the newsletter is planned to honour and celebrate our recent retirees for their work and contributions to our department.

**Brenda Austin-Smith** returned from administrative leave on July 1. During her leave she read and watched and wrote. In early 2020 her essay "Cult Film and Gender" appeared in The Routledge Companion to Cult Cinema, edited by Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton. The domestic pandemic project was the front porch. The painted floor was stripped, sanded and sealed, and the grey walls, ceiling and shingles were given four coats of Chantilly Lace paint. It took weeks but was worth it. During the spring lockdown Brenda scored a huge jar of yeast, which she hasn't yet opened. She also killed beans and lettuce from scratch.

**Katrina Dunn**'s dissertation defense took place on Friday 13 March 2020 – that ominous day when universities across Canada shut down. She was one of the last people at UBC to defend in person, and while it was a wonderful experience, there was a nagging feeling throughout that at any moment the doors would fling open and public health officials would break up the whole affair. Back in Winnipeg, reeling from the pandemic, she spent time recovering and experimenting with placing "Dr." before her name. Over the summer she wrote a book chapter for Routledge's upcoming volume, *Theatre Pedagogy in the Era of Climate Crisis*, part of a new series, Research and Teaching in Environmental Studies. Her chapter, "Coproducing Mimesis," explores coproducing with the nonhuman and she co-wrote it with her backyard crabapple tree (see photo). Late summer was taken up with her contribution to *The Drama Review (TDR)* Special Issue on Peripeteia, "Liquid Apocalypse: Peripeteia as warning and rehearsal in two contemporary Canadian theatre works."

**Katrina Dunn** was the recipient of Creative Works funding on behalf of the Theatre Program to support commissioning and workshopping fees for Winnipeg-based disability playwright (and recent sessional instructor in playwriting) **Debbie Patterson** to work with them on the creation of a Devised Zoom Play to premiere online as part of the Theatre Program’s 2020/21 output. Part of a two-year overlapping research and pedagogical model for the development of new plays and the training of new playwrights, directors, and dramaturges, working with Debbie allows the collaborators to introduce a new creation methodology into the Theatre Program, to increase the reach of our performed offerings, and to maintain our profile as a Theatre Program while standard productions are curtailed because of COVID-19. This project will perform online in the early new year of 2021 and will involve Katrina in her Winnipeg premiere as a director, William Kerr as dramaturg, Debbie Patterson as playwright, and a group of student actors, designers, and technicians.

**Michelle Faubert** Working with Katrina Dunn as my co-applicant, I won a Creative Works Grant ($5,000) this year to develop my play on the court case in London that followed the Zong slave ship massacre. Katrina and I are working on having an international reading of the play via Zoom with actors from Ghana, Jamaica, and Manitoba.

I was supposed to deliver my first-ever plenary lecture for a conference (“Writing Doctors”) in Newcastle, UK, this summer, but, alas, the pandemic happened. That also put the kibosh on my vague plans to go to Greece for the first time, as well as a conference in Toronto. However, I did visit Kenora and Clear Lake (Wasagaming) for the first time, where rental cabins and lots of hiking and biking trails helped to assuage the pain of the travelling cancellations. I also grew a real tomato garden in good earnest (usually not a possibility because I’m travelling all summer) and have enjoyed it immensely! See photos attached. Yum! I may never travel during the summer again!
**More staff news**

**Serenity Hee-Jung Joo** It's hard to summarize this hard summer, of Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter and ravaging climate change. So my contribution is a deliberately trivial one. A summer without research travel resulted in the inevitable for me: fostering cats. Here's my temporary pal, Clarence, whose expressions mirror my initial emotional journey regarding my own asynchronous lectures: 1) curiosity piqued, 2) curiosity waned, 3) just stop talking already. I'm happy to report Clarence has since been successfully adopted. Less trivially, our incredibly bright Gen Z students, who are critical of all the right things right now, are helping to make remote teaching something bigger and better than I could have imagined.

![Curiosity piqued...](image1.jpg) ![Curiosity waned...](image2.jpg) ![Just stop talking already.](image3.jpg)

**Faye McIntyre** led a film criticism workshop for the Freeze Frame Film Festival youth jury on March 8, 2020.

**Dana Medoro** was awarded the Faculty of Arts Teaching Excellence Award in the Established Faculty category.

**Judith Owens**

In June, I received copies of my book from the publisher; in July, I avoided—by mere seconds and thanks to my quick-eyed daughter—coming face to face with a mama black bear and her cubs; in August (and July and June and May), I endeavoured to get up to speed with the technology needed for teaching in the current setting.

That about sums up my summer!

**Vanessa Warne** led a hands-on hair art workshop for colleagues across Canada in August. Using wire and hanks of synthetic hair that Vanessa mailed out in admittedly creepy bundles, participants created simple versions of the kinds of flowers featured in nineteenth-century hair wreaths. Thanks to the generosity of her daughter Alice, who donated several locks of hair to the cause of creativity, Vanessa was able to make the leap from synthetic to real human hair (see photo). Exploring this craft has helped a group of academics (now, aspiring hair artists) to better understand a Victorian-era art form and the material culture of family life, friendship and memorialization. This workshop was also a great excuse for Vanessa and fellow Victorianists to stay connected. A second iteration of the workshop is tentatively proposed for this Winter as part of a Crafting Communities series. A set of virtual events created to lessen losses brought about by Covid 19, this series will (if funded; fingers crossed) create stand-ins for the kinds of collegial exchange and connection made possible by conferences and travel to archives and museums for research. Vanessa and fellow members of the Crafting Communities group (led by Mary-Elizabeth Leighton of the University of Victoria) look forward to connecting with colleagues around the world while learning new skills and hearing from experts, including museum curators and artists, at home. High on the list of exciting possibilities is an online embroidery workshop to be led by Dr. Sabrina Mark. If you're interested in participating, please let Vanessa know.
Congratulations to the following graduating students, and their advisors:


Annah Coleman MA (Vanessa Warne) “Apocalyptic Disability: Mass Disability and Fear in Apocalyptic Narratives”

Sabrina Mark PhD (Pam Perkins) “To “make things move, somewhere”: Mobility and the Public Roles of Girls and Women in Popular Girls’ Novels, 1900-1920”

Timothy Penner PhD (Brenda Austin-Smith) “Based On (A Work By) Ernest Hemingway: The Author as Fictionalized Celebrity”

Liam Rockall MA (Michelle Faubert) “Gothic Literature and the Recontextualization of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Moral Philosophy”

Jeremy Strong PhD (Diana Brydon) “Anthropocene Entanglements: The Novum, Policy, and Environment in Science Fiction by Wyndham, Atwood, and Liu”

Convocation Oct.22.2020 watch it online Check out our department’s “Congrats ETFM class of 2020 grads” on video here!

Hello everyone,
Here are some Nature paintings I made recently. I do hope they will cheer you all up. Nature truly is rich, replete, resplendent! Amidst the darkness and fret of these our turbulent times, let us remind ourselves that “the earth has music for those who listen.” I hope you enjoy the hope and colours of these paintings. If you would like to own one, let me know. They are very much for sale. Wishing you all the very best, Lulu Akhanamoya


Melanie Braith was awarded the Faculty of Arts Teaching Excellence Award in the Graduate Student category.

Grace Paizen was featured in an article in UM Today, The Magazine.

Melanie Unrau was awarded the University of Manitoba Distinguished Dissertation Award by the Faculty of Graduate Studies; she was also recommended by the Faculty of Arts for the Governor General’s Gold Medal.

Alexa Watson (she/her, they/them), Honours student, was awarded one of the UM’s Undergraduate Research Awards for summer 2020. Over the summer she worked and still works on a project she created under the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Keating. Focused on Aphra Behn, the project investigates how Behn and other female authors navigate discourses of sex and desire to legitimize their voices as authors and expressions of same-sex desire in a highly masculinist writing culture. Arguing that Behn imagines female relationality outside a heteropatriarchal structure, creating “rebellious epistemologies.” Using a modern feminist, queer, and transgender theory lens, she hopes to engage in a feminist and queer reparative reading.

When she wasn’t researching or working on her manuscript she would go down to the Red River near her apartment and feed a menagerie of birds! Including geese, ducks, and crowned sparrows. Other creatures seen but not fed include carp, bald eagles, and a solitary beaver.

Antony Zhang’s research project titled “Becoming Indigenous to Place, Not Becoming-Nomad: Toward a Kimmererian Indigenous Ecological Perspective” was awarded the C.D. Howe Memorial Foundation Fellowship.

Welcome to post-doctoral fellow, Celiese Lypka. Celiese is a Métis scholar from Treaty 1 territory. She holds a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Calgary, specializing in women’s writing, modernist literature, and feminist and critical theory. She is currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Manitoba researching Métis literature. The project analyzes the innovation of Métis women writers that trouble, unravel, and reconfigure the uneasy space of their Indigenous/settler womanhood to decolonize the various frameworks that attempt to stratify them as racially liminal.

Celiese is a graduate of our department (BA, 2006) and will be supervised by Serenity Joo.
Student Awards

SSRC CGS-Masters: **Nicole Burns**
UMGF/Pollard: **Jessie Krahn**
AGA (Arts Graduate Award): **Sasha Braun, Gina Dascal**
**C. D. Howe Fellowships**: Virginia Page-Jähne 2019-20, Antony Songtao Zhang 2020-21

Departmental Awards, Graduate
- Aaron Jenkins Perry Memorial Scholarship: **Nicole Burns**
- Caroline Berbrayer Graduate Fellowship: **Ifeoluwa Adeniyi**
- Dane Nordheim Memorial Award: **Jessie Krahn**
- DEFT Graduate Fellowship: **Heidi Malazdrewich, Emily Maggiacomo, Natalie Lovetli, Lauren Dietterle**
- Dr. W. John Rempel Memorial Scholarship: **Joyce Okoye**
- Dr. Vernon B. Rhodenizer Graduate Scholarship: **Golnaz Heidar Jamshidi**
- John Meredith Robinson Memorial Scholarship 2020: **Jessie Krahn**
- John Meredith Robinson Memorial Scholarship 2019: **Nicole Burns**
- Lyla May Guest Hugill Scholarship in English: **Jessie Krahn**
- Margaret H. Tyler Award in English: **Sasha Braun**
- Nancy Moncreeff Scholarship in English: **Jessie Krahn**
- Weil Fellowship: **Amy-Leigh Gray**
- Drummond Fellowship: **Heidi Malazdrewich**
- Cheryl Lamoureux Memorial Prize: **Antony Songtao Zhang**
- Professor Sidney Warhaft Memorial Award: **Annah Coleman**

Departmental Awards, Undergraduate
- Aikins Scholarship in English (1) Language & Literature: **Maddy Wery**
- Aikins Scholarship in English (2) Language & Literature: **Cailly Wiebe**
- Aikins Scholarship in English (3) Language & Literature: **Alexa Watson**
- Alexander, Pauline, and Sybil Shack Scholarship in English (2): **Cailly Wiebe**
- Alexander, Pauline, and Sybil Shack Scholarship in English (3): **Alexa Watson, Ruby Chijioke-Nwauche**
- Andrew Young Scholarship: **Trixie Maybituin, Alexa Watson**
- Anna Matas Prize: **Alexa Watson**
- Caroline Berbrayer Memorial Award: **Owen Schalk**
- Charles Birkett Rittenhouse Memorial Scholarship: **Emily Stark**
- DEFT Undergraduate Theory Prize: **Sabrina Campos**
- Doris Benson Scholarship in Drama: **Robbie Poyer, Sophie George, Mary Maranan, Emily Stark, Keanna Caguioa, Sophie Guillais**
- Dorothy I. Jones Memorial Honours Award: **Owen Schalk**
- English Speaking Union of Canada Prize: **Stephanie de Souza**
- Esther Leckie Memorial Prize: **Ashley Penner, Sophie Guillais**
- Florence Kanee Scholarship: **Tayah Vanstone**
- John Angus Prescott Memorial Book Prize: **Cole Thomas**
- Kathy Windsor Memorial Scholarship: **Ariella Gunn**
- Leah and Sidney Sheps Scholarship: **Sophie George**
- M. Charles Cohen Prize: **Lynette Bonin**
- Olafur Bjornson Prize in English: **Owen Schalk**
- Rosa Brook Scholarship: **Kinnon Hnidy**
- Roscoe R. Miller Scholarship: **Alexa Watson**
- Rose Toles Prize: **Sabrina Campos**
- Ross Robinson Award: **Koreen Ngo**
- The Hirsch Memorial Scholarship: **Lynette Bonin**
- Victor S. Cowie Memorial Scholarship in Performing Arts: **Stephen Gatphoh**
- Walter E. Kroeker Memorial Prize in Samuel Johnson Studies: **Natalie Lovetli**
- Walter E. Kroeker Memorial Scholarship in 18th Century Literature: **Alexa Watson**

Congratulations to all award recipients, and thanks to all faculty members who served on nominating committees.
**EFTSA NEWS - English, Film, and Theatre Students Association (Undergraduate)**

Warm greetings from the English, Film and Theatre Students’ Association (EFTSA)! We hope you are all keeping safe and staying positive through these uncertain times. It is not the traditional start to the school year that we are used to, but nonetheless, we hope it has been great for all of you. EFTSA’s goal for the 2020-2021 term is to provide you all with academic and social resources that you can access from the comfort of your home. We will be hosting various academic workshops over Zoom as well as social events such as Paint Nights over Instagram Live. We will also be hosting Netflix and Chill nights for you to watch and discuss films with fellow students and meet new people. Be sure to follow us on Instagram @eftsauofm to hear about upcoming events and to learn ways that you can get involved. Submitted by Mercy Shwaykosky, President of EFTSA

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**pAGES NEWS - Association of Graduate English Students**

As strange as this year has been thus far, pAGES had another successful year. January saw the annual pAGES Colloquium, “Human, Animal, Liminal,” co-hosted once again with EFTSA. And the summer months were incredibly successful for graduate students in the department with several defending their thesis or dissertation and graduating this fall. Bravo!

As for pAGES this 2020-21 year, the executive will be pared down as graduate students focus on their studies and their health. Ademola Adesola and Chris Wyman will represent pAGES at all department meetings as PhD rep and MA rep respectively, and Amy-Leigh Gray will represent pAGES at all GSA meetings as GSA rep. Amy-Leigh will also be graduate students first point of contact as she will be running the email account. However, graduate students should know that the past pAGES executive including me! - will be happy to be work behind the scenes, helping and nurturing graduate students through the chaos of 2020, as well as continue to participate in the department’s graduate community.

I wish all graduate students a productive academic year and hope no graduate student hesitates to reach out as we will all need our community for support during these unprecedented times.

Submitted by Grace Paizen, outgoing pAGES co-president

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**CCWOC NEWS - Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Culture - Warren Carlou**

Things are different for us at the Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Culture this year, as is the case for so many other units at the U of M, but we are very happy to be able to continue offering programming and support for creative people in the U of M community and beyond. Congratulations to our two recipients of the C. D. Howe Fellowship in Creative Writing and Oral Culture, Sehar Mushtaq and Songtao (Antony) Zhang. Sehar is a Phd Candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies, and her research explores Indigenous processes of peacemaking and peacebuilding among the Kalash people of Pakistan. As many of you will know, Antony is an MA student in our department, working on a thesis that focuses on “becoming Indigenous to place” in the works of Potawotami writer Robin Wall Kimmerer. Congratulations to Sehar and Antony, and all the best to both of you in your studies.

Our twenty-fourth writer-in-residence, Lindsay Wong, is working via the internet because of the coronavirus, but nonetheless she will still be offering all of the programming that our other resident artists have done. Lindsay is an award-winning writer with a great deal of experience as a mentor and creative writing teacher. She rose to prominence quickly with the enormous success of her first book, a best-selling memoir which has one of the most memorable titles in Canadian Literature: The Woo-Woo: How I Survived Ice Hockey, Drug-Raids, Demons, and My Crazy Chinese Family. The Woo-Woo won the 2019 Hubert-Evans Prize for Nonfiction, was a finalist for the 2018 Hilary Weston Prize for Nonfiction and was defended by Joe Zee on Canada Reads in 2019. Lindsay has also just released a brand new book, a novel for Young Adults called My Summer of Love and Misfortune. She has a BFA in creative writing from the University of British Columbia and an MFA in literary nonfiction from Columbia University. We had a good turnout for Lindsay’s online welcome event, which also featured a wonderful reading by ETFM student Jessica Bound. Lindsay is leading a non-credit workshop on memoir writing this term via videoconference, and she is also available for videoconference consultations with writers. To book a consultation with Lindsay, email ccwoc@umanitoba.ca.
Remembering Robert Finnegan
(link to Winnipeg Free Press obituary)

The news of Robert Finnegan’s passing came just before Christmas 2019. Here are just some of the tributes and comments from friends and colleagues, shared with their permission:

From Mark Libin
This is terribly sad news. I began my life at U of M with a 6 credit graduate seminar in Chaucer with Robert. It was an amazingly demanding class where each of us were required to do four seminar presentations and four responses over the course of the year, two essays and a massive take home final. It was a small but strikingly diverse group of students and Robert managed to energize us with his love of Chaucer and was respectful and supportive of each of our theoretical or spiritual perspectives. It almost finished us all but we loved it. I had avoided Chaucer to this point in my academic career and was glad I held out for his class. I also met Meira in this seminar, and we have always credited him for making a love match.

When I returned as a colleague, Robert and Joan welcomed Meira and I as friends. They hosted all of the new arrivals for an elaborate dinner and were gracious and hospitable. I team-taught, at his invitation, 2640 with him, and so got to experience again his unruly, raucous but ultimately wise teaching style. To my mind, no one could make Longinus seem actually interesting except Robert. Robert was always a gentle and benevolent mentor to me and a warm friend. Meira and I will miss him, and his great thunderous laughter, terribly.

From Phyllis Portnoy
This is indeed very sad to hear. I also began my UofM life with Robert’s Chaucer. I had to get special permission and he met me with a thunderous and terrifying: “not everyone can withstand my courses.” I had never even heard of Chaucer, but I was hooked. But listening to Robert recite Chaucer was nothing compared to studying Beowulf in Old English with him; he made the language pure music and we were all magically transported back to the mists of Anglo-Saxon times. It was the ultimate escape and, as it turned out, perhaps the least practical but most interesting field for doctoral study. Somehow he even managed to excite his tiny following to study Wheelock in our (and his!) spare time. This had a remarkable unforeseen outcome for me. Robert could be tough and temperamental and we almost came to blows a few times, but I owe him 100%, not only for my long and happy (if not lucrative) career as a scholar, but also, like Mark, for making a love match: he ordered me to go on to study Latin seriously – “get over to Classics to see my friend Rory Egan, he said, “you’ll like him.”

Rory and I were so sorry to hear of his illness this fall. There was no one like Robert – beneath the raucous bluster, he was:

manna mildust ond monðwærust,
leodum liðost ond lofgeornost!

Mildest of men and most gentle
Kindest to his people and most [deserving of] fame!

From Arlene Young
The news of Robert’s passing is sad indeed. Robert was always a supportive and encouraging colleague and friend. Shortly before we both retired, we team-taught a 1200 course. He was a dream to work with and an inspiration as a teacher, both for the students and for me. His dedication to his students and his absolute love of teaching were truly remarkable and his students adored him. When one young woman in that class heard that she couldn’t take another course with him because he was retiring, she cried. Robert was larger than life and will be sorely missed by family, friends, and colleagues. My heart goes out to Joan and the family.

From Shelley Mahoney
I had only just gotten used to our department hallways not echoing with Robert’s booming laugh. It seems inconceivable that the entire world is now without it.
Sad indeed.

From Brenda Austin-Smith
I can’t do much more than echo other voices attesting to the combination of exuberance and care demonstrated by Robert, especially in the classroom. Traveling west now, on the deck of the Navigamus.
When Pam Perkins introduced me to Cliff Eyland, decades ago, at an English Department gathering, I swiftly concluded that he was Peter Pan, minus the vanity—the spirit of eternal youth and joy. I had performed the role of Peter as a child in three different neighborhood garage productions of the play. After meeting Cliff I realized that for all my devotion to the character, I hadn’t come close to getting him right. If only I had had Cliff Eyland around to study and imitate. But of course Cliff was impossible to imitate, or duplicate: his magnetic social ease, his appetite for pleasure and stimulation of every kind, his remarkable balance of fully engaged listening and Neverland farawayness, his singular, wholehearted laugh which made everyone around him try harder to be amusing, his appreciation and support of everyone’s creative drive, however messy, un-themed, or perplexing. Like so many others who spent time with Cliff, I aspired to be his “best friend.” I suppose all the eager aspirants had similar reasons for hoping that might be the case. He instantly made you feel welcome and valued whenever you encountered him. He was not merely glad, but excited to see you. It was as though he’d been secretly hoping that you (precious you) would show up, and he was prepared --the feeling was unmistakable-- to be delighted by whatever course the ensuing conversation took.

Cliff seemed to take an interest in every topic that was brought up in his presence, and had something to say about that topic without ever needing to dominate. His knowledge of art history, to cite only the most obvious example, was staggering. Every time I read about an obscure painter whose work was completely unknown to me and mentioned him to Cliff, he revealed an intimate acquaintance not only with specific paintings but the artist’s influences. But Cliff never used this knowledge as a wedge to establish a sense of superiority. He was instantly curious to learn what I had discovered about the painter, and what impressions I had formed. The talks we had about art were the sort that one dreams of having with University colleagues who have an equivalent eagerness to be “carried away.” In addition to being an enthusiast of the first magnitude, Cliff was as modest, unpretentious, undefensive, and generous as any artist or teacher that I have ever known. The focus was always on the ideas, the shared discoveries, the inestimable value of art experience.

I love the fact that Cliff’s creative imagination was going at all times and in all settings. He invariably had file cards with him to “do some art on” when he came over for a visit. He needed to draw while he was watching a film or a TV show, and could persuasively listen intently to conversation and actively participate in it while he was making pictures. There was no special place Cliff needed to go to do his work. Every environment was equally felicitous and inspiring. Doing art was as habitual, ongoing and necessary to him as breathing—and, I should add-- less onerous (much of the time) than breathing.

I did several evaluations of Cliff’s senior level students’ work at the U of M Fine Arts Faculty as an external examiner. I was amazed at how he could state his reservations and suggestions in a way that was not the least bit high-handed, bruising, or punitive. He never seemed to wield his authority at the students’ expense. He believed in their potential as artists and communicated that forcefully through his respectful, exhilarating attitude, not through some pre-digested verbal bromides. He could be funny, appreciative, and alert to student difficulties and impasses all at once. Cliff was also an outstanding writer about art. His art criticism put me in mind of John Ashbery’s, Lawrence Weschler’s, and Julia Blackburn’s. It was conversational but compressed—ever-astute, precise and surprising, with no waste motion. He wore his erudition lightly. Cliff’s writing voice closely, and enviably, resembled his best speaking voice. It should be mentioned that Cliff read all of the supremely talented Pam Perkins’ critical writing in early and late drafts and offered valuable editorial advice. She returned the favor with his own pieces. As a result of so much reading about eighteenth century Scottish women writers, Cliff acquired yet another area of expertise.

As he did with so many of his friends involved in creative projects, Cliff collaborated on work with me when he found the right opening. Since 2009, I have written daily micro-narratives on Facebook to refresh the desert air in this deeply compromised social medium. Cliff became intrigued by the novelty of the bite-sized, ephemeral storytelling. Nearly any of the stories could fit comfortably onto one of his three by five art frames—what
George Herbert said once about his stanza lengths: “a strict but welcome size.” Initially he offered to do art responses to a small number of them, but he allowed himself to become deeply embroiled in the process and eventually supplied images for every “status update” I posted over a five year period: more than 1800 in all. A small selection of these—100—will be published by At Bay Press toward the end of this year. The publication date was selected to coincide with the Winnipeg Art Gallery's planned major retrospective of his art. I was able to visit another exhibition of Cliff's art (this one permanent and a masterpiece) in the Halifax public library. Row after row of Cliff's mysterious, varied, achingly lovely images, painted on small blocks that fill a large section of the library's walls. I was overwhelmed by my encounter with this prodigious display of Cliff's imaginative and emotional power. He contained multitudes. I wept then and again now, thinking of all he has meant to me and his host of other “best friends”, and how keenly I miss him.

In Memoriam

Arthur Adamson, 1926-2019
by Robert O’Kell

Those who knew our longtime colleague, Arthur Adamson, will be saddened by the news of his recent death at the age of 93. Arthur joined the Department of English in 1968 and taught here, where he had once been a student, until his retirement in 1995. He had the unusual qualification that his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin was in French literature, but he nevertheless joined the English Department, where he taught courses in Romantic literature and Creative Writing. His special academic interest and great enthusiasm were the poetry, drawings, and etchings of William Blake, which formed the inspirations of his own accomplished visual works of art. A retrospective book, Arthur Adamson: A Celebration was published in 2006 by J. G. Shillingford Publishing. It contains photographs by Ernest Mayer of the Winnipeg Art Gallery; an essay on Arthur’s technique and his religious and natural themes by Pat Bovey, a former Director at the WAG; and an introduction by his friend, colleague and fellow poet, George Amabile. The book is dedicated to his renowned artistic work in painting, printmaking, drawing, and watercolour. Arthur also published three books of poetry, for which he had provided illustrations.

In the early days of his teaching, the newer, younger members of the Department also learned of Arthur’s great talents as a hockey player and recreational skater. It was rumoured that he had played Junior A hockey in his youth, and once you had seen him on skates, the rumour was taken as fact. For over most noon-hours during the winter, he was the tallest and most graceful person on the ice among the crowd of faculty and students getting exercise at the old wooden arena on MacLean Crescent. In his relationships with his colleagues, Arthur was (like his beloved Blake), by- and-large a gentle and genial soul, but on occasion he could be roused to wrath by those who would impose their false reason on his joys and liberty. Those students and colleagues who remember him fondly would agree that this was as it should have been.
THE WINTER SUN
a poem by Ademola Adesola

The winter sun smiles appealingly;
but its appeals butter no parsnips.

The winter sun vaunts proudly;
it claims the frigid cold is its minion.

The winter sun fibs inveterately;
it's glare deceives the newcomer.

The winter sun artfully speaks tongue in cheek;
it's doublespeak tempts chilled bodies.

The winter sun dissembles repeatedly like *Dangerian politricians;
it promises what it lacks.

Warts and all, the winter sun is poetry;
manifold messages in manifesting light!

*The phrase, “Dangerian politricians,” is no French to the conscious Nigerian minds. What do you call a polity which incessantly dangerously flirts with dangers? What name befits its politicians who have more tricks than treats for the masses? Dangerous politricians!

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