



Department of English
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Chair's 2 Cents

Driving to choir practice last night I heard on the car radio about a soon to be released movie, "Snakes on the Plane." The NPR announcers were having some fun with it, and though I don't think I'd care to see five hundred snakes slithering among the passengers on a packed flight, the title made me laugh out loud. Its sheer silliness of linking snakes and an airplane struck my funnybone. Later it made me think about expressions that make it into our American lexicon, in the vein of "stuff happens" or, pardon the pun, "a can of worms." At the next family reunion, when Uncle Harry has one too many and breaks an unspoken taboo against discussing certain topics at the dinner table, will your eyes meet your cousin's over the dinner rolls, both of you mouthing "snakes on the plane," as the decibel level rises around you? When your little sister announces she's marrying the "mature" boyfriend who at the last family gathering pulled out his guitar and serenaded everyone with his entire repertoire of '60s folk songs, will you comfort your parents with "snakes on the plane," folks? Go figure.

Dr. Cookson

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THIS IS JUST TO SAY

The English Department Newsletter

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Alumni Bring Poet John Ashbery to Campus

On Thursday, October 20, 2005, Poet John Ashbery visited Canisius College and read to a large crowd of students and faculty. His reading was made possible by a generous gift from Canisius English Alumni John Kolaga ('82) and Judy Kubiniec ('83), in the names of their children, Christian and Alison Kolaga.

Kubiniec and Kolaga met each other at a Canisius College poetry reading over twenty years ago. Kolaga fondly remembers poetry readings, with such poets as Roland Flint and Alan Dugan, from his undergraduate days. He valued these experiences because he was

able "to meet real writers and to rub shoulders with them." He added that it was always "exciting" to see published poets "as mere mortals."

To celebrate their twentieth wedding anniversary, Kolaga and Kubiniec sponsored Ashbery's visit. They both enjoyed the event and believed it was a "great success." Kolaga stated, "I thought there were some real good questions and Ashbery gave some encouraging words to students."

Kubiniec and Kolaga are active readers. Kolaga said, "Literature is important to both of us." While they both read fiction, Kolaga believes that



poetry can be a much more "rewarding experience."

The English Department looks forward to another poetry reading sponsored by these two very special alumni next year. Thank you, Judy and John!

From left to right: Alumni Judy Kubiniec ('83) and John Kolaga ('82), Dr. Sandra Cookson, and Poet John Ashbery

English Council Launched

In Fall 2005, the English Council was formed to reinvigorate participation by English majors in departmental activities. Comprising faculty and students, the indefatigable Council has both organized its own events and spread the word about already-scheduled activities.

The month of February, for example, saw the screening of *Howard's End* in the My Favorite Film Series; Brock Clarke's reading as part of Professor Mick Cochrane's Contemporary Writers Series; the lively

"Career Connections in English" panel presentation on job opportunities for English graduates; the open-mike readings of the new "Poetry Café"; and the Sigma Tau Delta (English Honors Society) induction ceremony.

March events included the Northern Irish poet Paul Muldoon's visit as part of the Contemporary Writers Series; the Sigma Tau Delta panel discussion of *Frankenstein*; the second My Favorite Film installment; the long-awaited English Spring

Banquet at Chef's Restaurant; and the Little Theatre's production of *The Bachelor Party*.

Activities planned for April comprise Sandra Benitez's appearance as the last of this year's Contemporary Writers Series guests; the Kavinoky Theatre's performance of *The Cocktail Hour*; and the unveiling of *The Quadrangle*, the Canisius College literary magazine. Congratulations to the Council on a most auspicious beginning!



Student Krystal Champagne ('06)

Student Offered Job at Kavinoky Theater

In order to complete her Theater Minor, student Krystal Champagne ('06) needed to find an internship. Champagne found not only an internship, but a job at the Kavinoky Theater on the D'Youville Campus.

After serving as the production assistant for *Man of La Mancha* and *Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell*, Champagne was approached by the theater general manager who offered her a job as the production assistant. Champagne enthusiastically accepted

the position and particularly looks forward to running the sound for shows. She has been the sound designer for various Little Theater productions, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *I Love You, You are Perfect*, *Now Change*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Godspell*. Regarding the job offer, Champagne stated, "I am so excited. This is the most amazing experience."

Champagne's interest in the theater is fairly new. Looking for something to fill her time,

Champagne checked out the Little Theater. "I quickly became hooked—the people and the atmosphere drew me to the theater." She is now the publicity director for the executive board for the Little Theater.

After graduation this Spring, Champagne will begin her job at Kavinoky. She has not ruled out graduate school and is considering a MFA in production management. Stop in and see her at the Kavinoky!



**Dr. Lopez
Dr. Desiderio**



Two New Professors Join Department

Prof. Jennifer Desiderio (Ph.D., Ohio State University) comes to us from Florida International University. A native of Rochester, Professor Desiderio is thrilled to return to Western New York and feels doubly comfortable at Canisius because of its small classes and her prior undergraduate years among the Jesuits of Marquette. Specializing in early American literature, Professor Desiderio is currently teaching an Ameri-

can captivity narratives course, which she enjoys immensely. In the Fall, she will be teaching a course on "Love and Marriage" in American Literature.

Prof. Robert Lopez (Ph.D., University at Buffalo) has returned to his native Buffalo after receiving his B.A. from Yale and teaching at Rutgers University-Camden. An Americanist, Professor Lopez has additional postgraduate training

in Classics, writes on early American writers' use of ancient Greek and Latin authors, and is currently teaching Introduction to English Studies and The Bible as Literature. He is excited to work at a small Catholic school and views improving reading skills as not only a cultural but also a political mission for American democracy.



Alumnus Marcy Kearns ('95)

Alumni Profile: Marcy Kearns

Marcy Kearns ('95) juggles a career in the theatre with an insatiable case of wanderlust. Fortunately, the industry is suited to travelers. She studied and performed in Vienna, Austria, on a Fulbright Fellowship in dramatic literature from 1995-1997; pursued her MFA in Acting at the University of South Carolina from 2000-2003; took a production to the Sibiu International Festival in Transylvania in 2002; and fol-

lowed up her MFA with a nine-month tour based out of Boston, which hit every state east of the Mississippi.

Since fall 2004, she has been acting and teaching theatre along the Milwaukee-Chicago corridor as well as serving as Education Administrator for Milwaukee Shakespeare. Next up? Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*. Kearns will be playing the char-

acter of Hamm, a role traditionally played by a male actor.

One of her fondest memories is when classmate Dan Shea and she, who made unofficial careers of acting out "The Yellow Wallpaper" in various Old Main classrooms, were called upon to act it out at a department dinner. Quite a funny start to an impressive career!

Alumni Footnotes

Dan Falkner, '05, is in his first year of pursuing an MFA degree in fiction writing at Bowling Green State University. He also serves as an assistant editor to the literary magazine, *Mid-American Review*. **Pat McNally**, '05, works as a Staff Assistant in the Washington office of Representative Brian Higgins. **Melissa M. Piotrowicz**, '04, is in her second year of the Juris Doctor Program at the University at Buffalo Law School. Her expected date of graduation is May 19, 2007. She is interested

in pursuing a career in the litigation field. She is a member of UB Law's chapter of Phi Alpha Delta and the school's association for College Republicans. She participated in Wechsler Moot Court and has served on the Student Bar Association's Social Committee. Recently, she was awarded the 2005 Jacob Weissfeld Scholarship for students exemplifying skills as a trial lawyer. This past summer, she worked as the law clerk for the Erie County Attorney's Office. **John Oddo**, '03, is a

Graduate Assistant at Kent State University. He is taking courses in Shakespeare and Literary Criticism and preparing to teach College Writing next semester. He also works at the University's Institute of Bibliography and Editing, assisting two professors in their editorial work on Joseph Conrad. In the future, he hopes to conduct a study on humor in literature, especially black humor. **Dana Rappa**, '03, is currently in her last year of law school at University at Buffalo. She works part-time at a

downtown law firm, Gibson, McAskill & Crosby. She is involved in the Phi Alpha Delta law fraternity and participates in the Affordable Housing Clinic, which provides legal services to not-for-profit organizations in Western New York. She serves as the Submissions Editor of the Buffalo Women's Law Journal and is a member of the Buffalo Moot Court Board. She has an offer to work for Harris Beach in Pittsford, NY, after graduation. **Shevaun Donelli**, '02, recently completed her MA in

English from the University at Buffalo. Her thesis was entitled "Tomcat in Love and the Digression of Ill-Repute," a discussion of the fiction of Tim O'Brien and its relationship to Deleuzian rhizomes. Donelli will be teaching as an adjunct professor at Daemen College in the Spring. **Janet McNally**, '02, earned an MFA in creative writing (fiction) from the University of Notre Dame in August 2005. She is currently teaching English 9 and 10 at Canisius High School and working on short stories

and a novel. She has had work published recently in *The Iron Horse Literary Review*, where she was the fiction winner and overall runner-up of the Discovered Voices Award. **Michael Spillman**, '02, teaches 11th and 12th grade English at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute. Last year, **Brian Kania**, '96, also a teacher at St. Joseph's Collegiate, and Michael led and taught a class called "London Seminar," predominantly influenced (and assisted by) Professors Ken Sroka and Mel Schroeder. Michael remembers

his class trip to London in 2001 with Professors Sroka and Schroeder as one of his most valuable experiences at Canisius. During his summer vacations, Michael is pursuing an MA in English at the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College. **Kayte Decker**, '01, has written three books on study skills for a Club Z! Tutoring, a nation-wide tutoring company based in Tampa. The books cover everything from organization to reading comprehension to note-taking, writing, and test anxiety. She

tutors SAT prep and studies classic portrait painting in Manchester with Paul Ingbretson. In her free time, she rock climbs and has traveled to cliffs in Spain, Mexico, and British Columbia. **Shannon (Rohring) Shepherd**, '01, teaches 7th grade ELA at Sweet Home Middle School. She is also a member of the Western New York Writing Project and recently returned from a summer honeymoon to Northern Europe. Her husband, Steve, is also a teacher. They were married January 1, 2005. On

Saturdays, you will find Shannon at her downtown home updating her blog, or walking her dog, Zenobia. Her latest endeavor is a blog for students. **Erica C. Sammarco**, '00, after graduation, attended the University of Rochester, where she obtained an MA in English. Her thesis focused on several 1930s autobiographies and the role of the romance tradition. After grad school, she returned to Buffalo and worked for a local grant writing firm, Lucy Curley and Co., where she prepared a variety

Did you know that Buffalo Mayor Brown's chief legal adviser is a Canisius English Department graduate? Congratulations Alisa Lukasiewicz ('92)!



Erica Sammarco ('00) comes back home to Canisius College.



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This Is Just To Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

In the poem, "This Is Just To Say" by William Carlos Williams, the speaker tells us that he just ate some "delicious," "sweet" and "cold" plums. We would like to know much more than that from you.

Please contact us with your achievements, news, and stories. We are eager to hear from you!

Contact Drs. Desiderio or Grossi.
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Faculty Footnotes

Prof. Mick Cochrane's short story "Long Distance Operator" was published in the Fall 2005 issue of *The Cincinnati Review*. **Prof. Jack D'Amico's** essay, "Byron and the Italian 'Liberty Boys,'" on the poet's involvement with the revolutionary *carbonari* of Romagna in northern Italy, was published early this year in *Italian Quarterly*. Another essay, "Aquatic Byron," is under review at *The Byron Journal* and will form part of a projected monograph on literature and swimming. **Prof. Jennifer Desiderio** presented "Twice-Told Tales: The Truths and Half-Truths of the Early American Author," at Temple University, and "Monitoring the New American Subject" at the *Colloquium on the Americas: Women in the Construction of American Nations* at Mercyhurst College. **Prof. Eric Gansworth** has published a short story, "Billy the Chicken," in *Shenandoah*; a personal essay, "American Heritage," in the anthology *Eating Fire, Tasting Blood: Breaking the Great Silence of the American Indian Holocaust* (The Nation Books); and an entry on American Indian Literature in New York State in *The Encyclopedia of New York State* (Syracuse UP, 2005). **Prof. Joseph Grossi's** article, "'Wher ioye is ay lastying': John Lydgate's *Contemptus Mundi* in British Library Manuscript Harley 2255," appeared in *Leeds Studies in English* (Univ. of Leeds, U.K.), vol. 36 (2005). In addition, Prof. Grossi will present papers in May at the University of Cincinnati Romance Languages Conference and the International Medieval Conference. **Prof. Robert Lopez** presented a paper on Phillis Wheatley and Horatian tradition at the Classical Association of the Atlantic States in Delaware; and a paper, "Tradition, Race and Power" at the National Association of African American Studies in Baton Rouge. **Prof. Joseph Lovering** has written a biography of the late local novelist and poet Charles Brady, who was a longtime member of the Canisius College English Department. **Prof. Frank Riga** shepherded four Sigma Tau Delta students to the Society's 2005 conference in Kansas City. Jeff Bagley, Charlie Hartney, Pat McNally and Eric Soehnlein each wrote a paper on Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and then combined them into a single essay, "Theme and Variations: Paradigms of Identity in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*," which was accepted by the *Sigma Tau Delta Journal* for publication in the 2006 issue. We wish Prof. Riga well as he enjoys his retirement!

More Alumni Footnotes

of grant applications, mostly state and federal, for municipalities, school districts, and other non-profits. Following her time at Lucy Curley and Co., she went to work for URS Corporation, an international engineering firm, as a proposal manager within their marketing department. While at URS, she saw the job vacancy for the Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at Canisius. She applied and began working in the position in July 2004. Her office is responsible for working with faculty, deans and administrators to develop funding proposals to foundations and corporations in support of Canisius College's institutional and capital campaign priorities. **David C. Greenman**, '97, is the Director of Annual Giving at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute in Tonawanda, NY. **Brian Kantz**, '95, left his job as publications director at Medaille

College to become a full-time stay-at-home dad and freelance writer and graphic designer. In addition to providing publications expertise to local nonprofits, Kantz has written for *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Buffalo Spree*, and the Akron (OH) *Beacon Journal*. His monthly column on being a stay-at-home dad, called "The Newbie Dad," runs in *The Western New York Family Magazine*. **Alberto Roldan**, '89, lives in Sacramento, CA, where he works as a Deputy District Attorney for the Sacramento D.A.'s Office. He is also a part-time law professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law.

Upcoming Events

- March 28: English Department Banquet
- April 4: Annual Honors Program Banquet
- April 6: Contemporary Writers Series: Sandra Benitez Visits Campus
- April 27: Quadrangle Unveiling
- April 28: Spring Honors Convocation
- May 12-14: Honors Scholarly Travel to NYC
- May 19: Baccalaureate Mass
- May 20: Commencement