



This is Just to Say

The Canisius College English Department Newsletter

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This is Just to Say
By William Carlos Williams

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

"Revisiting the American Renaissance" at the PCEA Conference

—Alixandra Krzemien

On April 12th, Dr. Desiderio and four students from her American Renaissance course presented papers at the Pennsylvania College English Association Conference held at Pennsylvania State University in State College, Pennsylvania. The conference was the perfect venue to showcase the students' research papers since this year's conference theme was "Celebrating American Literature."

Giving a panel presentation entitled, "Revisiting the American Renaissance," the students sought to broaden conceptions

on canonical and non-canonical texts. Each paper was comparative, either discussing two texts or a text alongside an artifact from mid-nineteenth century culture.

Alixandra Krzemien, a senior, engaged in material culture as she compared the daguerreotype to Walt Whitman's poetry. She argues that both mediums attempt to define and celebrate the democratic body.

Lauren Jaroszewski, a sophomore, discussed two authors who traditionally were excluded from studies on the American Renaissance but who have been receiving attention in recent years, William Wells Brown and Lydia Maria Child. In her paper, Lauren compares Brown's and Child's representa-

tions of the controversial "tragic mulatto figure."

Mary McLeod, a junior, highlighted the similarities and differences between Ralph Waldo Emerson's and Frederick Douglass' literary nationalism.

Judith Wissing, a German foreign exchange student studying at Canisius, looked at the gendered differences in Harriet Jacobs' and Frederick Douglass' slave narratives.

In addition to giving their own papers, the students attended other panels. The following week, Lauren Jaroszewski and Alix Krzemien delivered their papers at the Ignation Scholarship Day.



2008 PCEA attendees. From left to right:

Mary McLeod, Dr. Jennifer Desiderio, Lauren Jaroszewski, Alixandra Krzemien and Judith Wissing



Dr. Cochrane Teaches Literature of Service Course

—Duyen Nguyen

Dr. Cochrane's course on The Literature of Service asks that students "explore the moral, cultural, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of service, its motives, hazards, and rewards" not only theoretically, through the study of literary texts, but firsthand, through community service.

In addition to reading

works which "depict the lives of the disadvantaged, the elderly, the homeless and those who serve them," the students enrolled in the class last Fall each engaged in a community service volunteer project, tutoring in the Canisius College Literacy Center and at St. John's Jesuit High School, assisting immigrants and refugees at the Catholic Refugee Assistance Program, and caring for the elderly at the Lutheran Church Home of Assisted Living.

Dr. Cochrane himself volunteered at the St. Augustine Scholars Program, a school on Buffalo's East Side dedicated to making "a profound difference in the lives of low-income middle school children exposed to 'street life' and the pressures of inner-city living." He taught creative writing to the St. Augustine Scholars and collected their work in a journal.

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Little Theatre Presents

William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*

—Colleen Kersten

On consecutive weekends, October 25th – 27th and November 1st – 3rd, the Marie Maday Theatre housed a rendition of William Shakespeare's comedy, *The Winter's Tale*. Directed by Eileen Dugan and co-produced by Little Theatre's Executive Board, the play was well received by audiences, which included faculty, students, and visitors.

Reformatted under the cultural ambiance of the mid-twentieth century, the production took on new meaning with the first half set in the homespun backdrop of Sicily in 1951, and the second half set in avant-garde Bohemia in 1967. The cast's modern take on one of Shakespeare's classics was compelling and relevant to viewers.

Theatergoers enjoyed the solemn and witty scenes of the production. English major Cara Cotter starred as Hermione, a performance that left the audience awestruck when her statue came to life after sixteen years in seclusion.



Dugan Named Artist in Residence

—Dr. Jennifer Desiderio

Eileen Dugan was named Artist in Residence for Theater in the English Department this year. She has taught theater classes in the English Department and has directed Little Theater for the past fourteen years. She was thrilled by her new title and hopes to continue to strengthen the theater program and the minor. Dugan believes that Canisius has an "incredible theater space" and she is committed to making Canisius "a desirable and competitive place to study theater."

Dugan regularly teaches Acting I and II and Introduction to Theater. She hopes to add "Voice and Speech" and "Directing" courses to the minor. This

semester, she is teaching "The Theater Experience," which she describes as a "hands-on theater course, offering students costume, design, and acting experience." Her course presents theater as a "collaborative act" and exposes students to the many elements that the spectator does not see when viewing a play.



One of Dugan's favorite courses to teach is "Acting Shakespeare" because it gives her the opportunity to "share her passion" for the bard. She especially enjoys teaching students to appreciate Shakespeare's language and to read his plays as scripts.

Dugan is particularly fond of her stu-

dents at Canisius. She proudly states, "My graduates work. They work locally in Shakespeare in the Park and the Kavinoky, or they leave for Chicago and New York. I give them a strong work ethic and they use it." She believes that the internship required by minors prepares students for a profession in theater.

When she is not in a classroom, Dugan is on the stage. This year alone, she has acted in a range of plays, including *Othello* in Shakespeare in the Park, *On Golden Pond* with O'Connell and Company, *Kindertransport* with The Jewish Repertory Theatre, *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Studio Arena, and *Glorious* at Kavinoky. She is currently rehearsing for *Facing East* with Buffalo United Artists.

Dr. Joan Jacobs Brumberg's Presentation on Anorexia Nervosa

—Colleen Kersten

On Thursday, September 27, 2007, Dr. Jane Fisher, Professor of English and Director of the Women's Studies Program, and Dr. Kay Dierefield, Professor in the Honors Program, welcomed author and historian Dr. Joan Jacobs Brumberg to Canisius College's Montante Cultural Cen-

ter. Well attended, her lecture on "Fasting Girls: Then and Now" drew an audience of approximately 150 students and faculty—both females and males.

Brumberg, Director of the Women's Studies Department at Cornell University, presented in PowerPoint format an account of the development of anorexia nervosa from its beginning stages during the Victorian era to its now prevalent role in modern-day America.

A leading expert in the field of adolescent disorders, the speaker was knowledgeable about the determinants and dynamics of this disease, stemming from biological, social, and psychological factors.

Focusing on the historical implications of anorexia within class and cultural boundaries, Brumberg displayed how the disease has shifted from somatic symptoms in the 19th century to social pressures in the 21st century. The changing roles

of women in the household and workplace and the pressures from the media have resulted in a new perception of "female perfection."

In her lecture, Brumberg predicted that more sufferers are to come if society does not take precautions against the disorder. As a mother and a grandmother, she stressed that it is "what your body can do, not what it looks like, that is important."

Student Teaching— the Future of Eng- lish Education

—Colleen Hawkes

A few years ago, I never would have pictured myself teaching in an urban classroom. Now as a senior, I aspire to teach in a challenging school. We are constantly reminded of the low literacy rates in Buffalo and other city schools, but instead of regarding these rates as a deterrent, I see an opportunity to share my skills, and more importantly, my passion for reading and writing.

The study of English transcends reading and writing; it is translatable to life skills, and it forms a firm foundation for other disciplines. I value English because it opens doors for continuous growth. Reading metaphorically gives students the tools to “read” into their life situations, empathize with other “characters,” and resolve conflicts.

Writing skills are equally valuable. Last semester, my cooperating teacher asked me to prepare a unit on writing, since most of her students struggled with this skill. I knew that I needed to select a topic that uniquely appealed to

the students and allowed them choices. My teacher thought it would be difficult, but I decided to teach personal narratives, which made all the difference. Students usually loathe minimum sentence requirements for writing assignments, but this was not the case. As it turned out, the class was so engaged in writing about their experiences that they were reluctant to put their pencils down when it was time for their break.

My English concentration has equipped me with the knowledge of mechanics, style, and other formal aspects of writing, but I hope my personal love for the subject has a lasting impact on my students. Just as I did in my personal narrative unit, I know that I need to make writing fun and engaging. I believe that an avid reader and writer is a lifelong learner—the kind of person needed in our society.

Colleen's teaching placements were at Buffalo Public School 56 Frederick Law Olmsted in a 6th grade class, and at Thomas Edison Elementary (Kenmore-Tonawanda) in a grade 2 class.

Service Project, continued from page 1.

Since September 2004, the St. Augustine Scholars Program, an all-boys school, along with its all-girls counterpart, the St. Monica Scholars Program, has been providing underprivileged “middle school students from diverse backgrounds” with access to quality education. The two programs follow the Nativity/San Miguel Model, which opened its first school in 1971 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

The students in the course on The Literature of Service recorded their volunteer sessions in journals. At the end of the semester, they reflected on their work in essays “full of insight born of study both in the library and in the world.” For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact Sr. Pat Brady, Director of Service Learning.

New English Courses

—Duyen Nguyen

In the past two academic years, the Department has introduced a number of new courses, including Dr. Mark Hodin's Cold War Literature, Dr. Mel Schroeder's Comedy and Humor, Dr. Robert Lopez's Latino Literature, Dr. Jane Fisher's English Honors Seminar on Virginia Woolf and Her Readers, and Dr. Jennifer Desiderio's two courses on Sentimental Literature and the American Renaissance. Students have responded favorably to the broadening range.

Elizabeth Padgett, a senior English and Spanish dual major, who “would enjoy seeing more courses on multicultural literature,” found Dr. Lopez's course “to be a valuable interdisciplinary class...[that] allowed me to expand my knowledge of the cultures surrounding the Spanish language.”

Senior Adam Walters, a Spanish and International Relations dual major and one of several non-English majors that Latino Literature attracted, “thought it tremendous that the English Department chose to offer a course that was relevant to society today”—one that “addresses the expansive Latino minority in the United States.” The “hodgepodge of students” who enrolled in the course, said Dr. Lopez, reflects the “extremely diverse meanings” inherent in the “hemispheric labels” of Latino and Latin American. He considers the course to be one of his best experiences at Canisius College.

Dr. Desiderio feels similarly about her two courses, Sentimental Literature and the American Renaissance. “It was an incredible class with interesting texts,” such as Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok*, “and smart and compelling students,” she says of Sentimental Literature, a course she designed in response to the increasing scholarly attention that sentimen-

tal literature, once rejected as “melodramatic slop,” has garnered in recent years. Her course on the American Renaissance last Fall “closely examined a time of rapid growth and literary accomplishment in antebellum America”—a time that witnessed such pioneers in American Literature as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Edgar Allan Poe. Sophomore Lauren Jaroszewski, who admits that she “was never very fond of American writers,” realized after taking American Renaissance that she “did enjoy the writing style and content of American writers...[the course] allows American students to see the development of American literary ideas.”

Of the new courses in British literature, Dr. Fisher's English Honors Seminar focuses on, arguably, one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century—one who, according to senior Kevin Thomas, “instills so much fear in students.” But despite “the negative things about Virginia Woolf” that he had heard prior to taking the seminar, Kevin finds Woolf's writing to be “unique and challenging.” Dr. Fisher, he says, “is knowledgeable and passionate about” the writer on whom she wrote her dissertation, and “has a talent for getting students to embrace” Woolf as much as she herself has. “Almost twenty years later,” Dr. Fisher says, “I still remain drawn to Woolf's letters, diaries, novels, and essays because of her intelligence, complexity, and brutal honesty as a writer”—aspects of Woolf that the students in Dr. Fisher's seminar now have the opportunity to discover for themselves.

Professor Gansworth Presents his Newest Works

—Lauren Jaroszewski

On Friday, February 29th, 2008, there was a feeling of perseverance in the air. True, the Buffalo weather was just being persistent, with its harsh blowing winds and side-ways falling snow, but that did not stop locals and even those from out of town from attending Professor Eric Gansworth's art opening and poetry reading.

Later, the theme of perseverance became more apparent as Prof. Gansworth read poem

after poem of hardships he, his friends, and his family, and, by extension, the country have experienced. The poetry and paintings presented to the audience reflected Prof. Gansworth's background on a reservation. For example, his poetry showed the discomforts of a life that lacked the basics, such as indoor plumbing.

Prof. Gansworth's readings were from his newly published collection of poems, *A Half-Life of Cardio-Pulmonary Function*, as well as his other book, *Sovereign Bones*.

Below: Eric Gansworth's paintings, on display at



On Sept. 28th, at Grupp Fireside Lounge, Brock Clarke read selections from his latest novel, *An Arsonist's Guide to Writers' Homes in New England*



Poet Jim Daniels visited Canisius on February 7th, speaking to students in an informal afternoon session and reading to a full house in Grupp that evening.



Irish playwright, poet, and novelist Sebastian Barry read at the Montante Cultural Center on March 6, 2008. This was the 5th annual Hassett Reading.



Poet Heid Erdrich will read at Canisius on April 10, 2008 at 6pm in the Montante Cultural Center.

“What Are You Reading?”

Student Carolyn Rudinsky and Dr. Mel Schroeder share their insights in their interviews with Lauren Jaroszewski.

Lauren: *What is the most recent book you have read outside of class, and what is it about?*

Rudinsky: I recently read *Rose* by Martin Cruz Smith, who is a wonderful mystery/suspense writer. *Rose* is about an Englishman who desperately desires to return to Africa where his daughter lives, but who first has to investigate the disappearance of a parish priest in England. The setting is a grimy town dominated by its hellish coal mine and the miners there who are even worse, except an enigmatic one named Rose, with whom the main char-

acter becomes obsessed. As always with Martin Cruz, the twisting of the plot is an exciting roller coaster ride of the unexpected.

Lauren: *What is the most recent book you have read outside of class, and what is it about?*

Schroeder: From the books I have recently been reading outside of class, I will list three. I am presently within all three, and closest to completing the Gropman book.

1. *Musicophilia* by Oliver Sacks, which offers many ideas about music, including how it can contribute to and cure mental problems and conditions.

2. *Conversations with Woody Allen* – Eric Lax, ed. Conversations and interviews with Allen covering, it seems, all the years

and movies of his long career as a writer, director, and actor in film. 3. *How Doctors Think* by Jerome Groopman. A fascinating and sometimes disturbing study of how doctors diagnose and misdiagnose, and the many and complex reasons why they are not always as right as we would wish them to be.

I have also read three books – a play and two novels – by Sebastian Barry, who read here as a part of Mick Cochrane's very fine program for bringing current authors to our campus.

Well there you have it, folks; now nobody on campus has any excuse in saying there are no good books out there. Happy hunting for your next inspiring read!

Students Study Abroad

—Keyla Zintek

Katie Zawadzki ('09) and I recently returned from semesters overseas. Katie spent last semester studying in London, England, where she reveled in the architecture and historical landmarks of the city and read Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. When asked about her courses, Zawadzki stated, "Dickens uses the real city of London. He makes the reader able to travel through the city, figuratively and literally. The story is much more meaningful when you're able to place yourself within the novel." During her free time, Zawadzki traveled throughout

England, following the trail of Jack the Ripper and visiting historic Bath and Windsor. During school breaks, she spent time in Italy and France, meeting a diverse crowd of people and networking her way through Europe.

I was fortunate enough to spend last semester studying in Galway, Ireland. The European education system surprised me, as it lacks an attendance policy and grades for midterms and final exams. I was left with more free time than anticipated, so I toured much of Ireland, Northern Ireland, London, and Poland. I enjoyed looking at Dublin through the eyes of James Joyce and viewing the landscape of North-West Ireland as the

inspiration for William Butler Yeats' poetry.

Whether your intention is to sit at The Red Lion Pub in London and have a pint with members of Parliament, or to find inspiration among the depths of history, it can be accomplished studying abroad. Learn a new language, befriend those from cultures you know nothing about and exist in ways you never thought possible. As Henry David Thoreau stated, "How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live!"

Below: pictures from adventures abroad



Dr. D'Amico's Travels to Pompeii

—Dr. Sandra Cookson

Since Dr. Jack D'Amico is both an avid swimmer and a Renaissance scholar, it is not surprising that Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* holds a certain fascination for him. The legend of Leander's nightly swim across the Hellespont, the treacherous strait between Sestos and Abydos, to visit his lover Hero, goes back to antiquity. As D'Amico explains, the iconography of the story is Leander swimming, Hero leaning out from the other shore, holding up a lamp to guide his way.

When D'Amico began to search out visual representations of the work, he came

across photographs of the faded but still beautiful frescoes in a villa among the ruins of Pompeii, depicting the legend, of, as D'Amico's book title reflects: *Hero and*



Leander: a Tale of Erotic Love and Heroic Swimming. The photographs led him to make a pilgrimage to the actual frescoes, which he visited in preparation for his book on swimming in gen-

eral, and literary swimming in particular.

The book also considers another famous swimmer and lover, Lord Byron, who completed the swim, and wrote about it in his letters and in a poem entitled "Written After Swimming from Sestos to Abydos." D'Amico was tempted to follow further in the daring strokes of his heroic adventurers, and attempt the feat himself, as a participant in an annual swim of these waters held to celebrate a Turkish national day. But on further research, he thought better of it, and attended the festivities as a spectator.

A Day in the Life of an English Major

—Colleen Kersten

7 a.m. Wake up. Sing yourself. Alive and well.

8 – 9 a.m. Bare essentials.

10 – 11:15 a.m. Become a child again. A child of Dublin's North Richmond Street. Pining over your first love, lost to maturity.

11:30 – 12:45 p.m. Rebel at fifteen. Surrender, not. Amidst adversity. Amidst Night's setting sun. Amidst Nazi Germany.

1 – 2:15 p.m. Return to the pomegranate trees. Aged twenty years. To an old friend and dead kite runner's son. Not to save a life, but two.

2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Tutor the humanities. Without a dictionary.

5:30 p.m. Eat dinner. Communicate.

6:30 – 9:30 p.m. Explore. Homework time. Reading and writing time. Language and arts time. "Your and You're" time. "There, Their, and They're" time.

10 – 12 a.m. Be. Freedom to be. Indulge in Me.

1 a.m. Go to bed. Comforted. Knowing that you lived, not only "a day in the life," but a day in the *lives*. Go to bed, knowing tomorrow is a brand new day.

Go to bed. Not to sleep.



Whatever your news may be, we hope you'll share it with us! Please contact us with your achievements, news, and stories so they may be included in the 2009 issue.

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Faculty News

Dr. Robert Butler delivered a paper entitled "Seeking Salvation in a Naturalistic Universe: Richard Wright's Uses of his Religious Background in *Black Boy/American Hunger*" at The Wright Centennial Conference in Mississippi on February 21-24. Butler also chaired a panel on Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* at the conference.

Dr. Jennifer Desiderio's article "The Periodical as Monitorial and Interactive Space in Judith Sargent Murray's 'The Gleaner'" has been published in *American Periodicals: a Journal of History and Criticism*.

In March, **Professor Eric Gansworth** read and led a mentoring workshop at "Returning the Gift," the Native American Writers Conference, at Michigan State University, and gave the keynote address at the Native American Literature Symposium, in Mystic, Minnesota.

Dr. Kenneth Sroka recently published "Reviving Spirit: 'Illth' and Health in Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit*" in *Literature and Belief* (XXVI), no. 2, published by Brigham Young University.

Dr. Amy Wolf attended an interdisciplinary conference, "Literature and Liberty in Voltaire and Samuel Johnson" in Cleveland, Ohio, from April 3-6.

Alumni News

Jason Begy ('05) will begin graduate studies in the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT next Fall. He will finish his graduate work at Northeastern University this March in Technical Communications.

Carly Czech ('07) is currently working in Boston, MA for Pearson Education Inc., the world's largest textbook company. She works as an editorial assistant for the Social Work/Family Therapy booklist in the Arts and Sciences higher education division.

Johanna Dominguez ('06) has completed the first semester of an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at Sarah Lawrence College, where she studied with poet Marie Howe.

Andrew Molitor ('07) is living in Billings, Montana, working with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. He is a reading clinician at St. Charles School in the Crow Reservation, where he works with first-graders on their reading and writing. Next year, he plans to attend law school in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Katie Schlientz ('04) is currently working for the American Kennel Club's three national magazines as a graphic designer. She is also training for a triathlon and maintains a food blog: katieeatsalot.squarespace.com.

Shaun Smith ('07) is working for Masterpiece Advertising Design in Atlantic City; he is an account executive as well as an in-house copywriter. He has been writing poetry and is working on a novel.

Joan Stoltman ('05) is finishing her M.S. in Art History at Pratt Institute. Her thesis on Contemporary Artists' Books is forthcoming (May 2008), and her first article, a review of the symposium "Metaphor Taking Shape: Poetry, Art, and the Book," will be in the next issue of *Umbrella*, a journal of poetry and prose. She still dreams of poetry vending machines in every school.

Lauren Woomer ('07) has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in Philosophy at Michigan State University.