

ACCUTE Newsletter March Edition 2010

ACCUTE

President : Heather Murray

Secretary Treasurer: Craig Patterson

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ACCUTE's Mandate: To promote the interests of those teaching and studying English language and literatures in Canadian colleges and universities by facilitating the dissemination and exchange of research and the exploration of professional issues, by organizing scholarly and professional meetings, by seeking to improve work conditions, by representing the interests of members before provincial and federal decision-making bodies, and by supporting the interests and aspirations of members entering the profession.

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Introducing this year's ACCUTE Plenary Speakers



Sappho Poets and Nights in Fairyland
Will Straw (McGill)

Retention Deficit Disorder: Things That Work for and Against Indigenous Scholars and Students in the Contemporary Academy
Warren Cariou (Manitoba), Tasha Hubbard (Cree/Calgary), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee Nation/U of T)



President's Column

Attending the general assembly of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences in Ottawa recently, I found myself shocked by the reminder that there were only two months to go until the start of Congress 2010. The planning has been underway for so long, that it takes some mental adjustment as the conference moves into its material manifestation. It may just look like thirteen pages of typescript up on the website, but the conference program represents the collective labour of hundreds of individuals: the organizers of member and joint sessions who submitted interesting CFPs as early as last summer, the submitters who sent in their best and freshest work, the vettors who outdid themselves this year with on-the-mark and detailed comments, the many people who agreed with alacrity to act as session chairs. And of course, there's Craig Patterson, Pam Coles, and Laurel Ryan in the ACCUTE office, who deal with the thousand details of room and av bookings, program formatting, and website updates. Special acknowledgement also must be made of Jason Camlot, John Miller, Nicola Nixon, and Kevin Pask of Concordia, who are handling local arrangements. In addition to

receiving funding from the Aid to Interdisciplinary Sessions program from the Federation, we have been the beneficiary of direct funding from Concordia University to support our roundtable on Aboriginal issues. And the Department of English is providing both moral and financial support.

Please take a look at the penultimate program, posted to the ACCUTE website. It is jam-packed this year, and we expect a record number of conference participants. It is difficult to choose which of the many highlights of the program to mention, but here are a few. Plenary speaker Will Straw will be known in person to many ACCUTE members and by reputation as Canada's outstanding cultural studies scholar. Will's plenary address comes from his work on scandal sheets and the "pulp" as sources for historical work on urban subcultures. Warren Cariou, Len Findlay (the session moderator), Tasha Hubbard, and Daniel Heath Justice undertook a long email "roundtable" of their own in designing this exciting plenary roundtable titled "Retention Deficit Disorder," in response to an invitation to think specifically about Aboriginal students and scholars in English departments. The Professional Concerns Committee has developed three linked

panels on the timely topic of “Professionalism,” and the focus of the ever-popular ESC panel this year is “Academic Fashion.” Add 72 other sessions, lots-and-lots of meetings, the ESC cash bar, the President’s Reception, and the ACCUTE wine and cheese + disco night.... and (as they say on the commercials) there’s more! Much more!

Much of the “more” is provided by the Congress’ own schedule of events. There are two plenary addresses of particular interest to ACCUTE members, at the same time as our own conference. Cultural historian (and book history pioneer) Robert Darnton will be speaking on “Technology and the Book” at lunchtime on Friday May 28, and author Lawrence Hill will be speaking about his research for *The Book of Negroes* at breakfast on Monday May 31. The other “more” is provided by Concordia University which is throwing all of its scholarly and cultural forces behind the Congress event, and has developed a rich array of programming, installations, and performances showcasing its departments and the resources of Montreal. Check out the details of the massive installation by Robert LePage, just for starters.

Make use of all three websites in learning

about the conference and making your plans to attend:

The ACCUTE website www.accute.ca has the penultimate version of the conference program.

The Congress website operated by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences www.congress2010.ca has all the information about the larger Congress within which the ACCUTE conference operates. Go here for registration information, to book accommodation, and to learn about the Congress events, open to all delegates. Note that if you joined ACCUTE after October 30 (when we provide our mailing list to the Federation) you will not receive registration information in the mail, and will need to rely on this website. Concordia is providing handy local knowledge for conference participants, and showcasing its programming, at www.concordia.ca/congress2010

As always, feel free to contact the ACCUTE office directly by telephone or email if we can answer any questions or help with the logistics of your visit to Concordia.

See you in May!

– Heather Murray

In Memoriam

D. Lorne Macdonald

1955-2010

ACCUTE members will have been saddened to learn of the untimely death of Lorne Macdonald last December. Lorne was a "backbone" member of ACCUTE, ever since he gave his first paper at our annual conference in 1987. (He was then a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at UBC; the title was "Polidori and the Byronic Vampire.") At the time of his death, he was the ACCUTE campus representative for Calgary, and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of English Studies in Canada. This is a great loss to our association's community, and to the field of Romanticism studies. Anne McWhir, chair of English at Calgary, has kindly provided this memorial notice for the Newsletter:

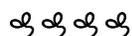
Lorne Macdonald, a long-time member of ACCUTE and of the Editorial Advisory Board of *English Studies in Canada*, died in Calgary on 14 January 2010 following a brief illness. Educated at the University of London and the University of Toronto, Lorne was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia

before joining the Department of English at the University of Calgary in 1991. A devoted teacher, a principled colleague, a meticulous scholar, and a valued friend, he will be missed by friends, colleagues, and students at the University of Calgary and at other universities in Canada and abroad.

Lorne was a voracious reader and a fine writer and scholar. Students remember him for his encyclopedic knowledge and his kindness—as well as for his ability to call the roll by memory at the first class of each term! A respected scholar of British literature of the Romantic period, he was internationally recognized as a biographer and as a textual editor. At the time of his death he was working on an ambitious monograph entitled "Geneva in 1816: A Group Biography," a study of Lord Byron, Claire Clairmont, Matthew Gregory Lewis, John William Polidori, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Shelley) and Percy Bysshe Shelley. He published biographies of Polidori (*Poor Polidori: A Critical Biography of the Author of "The Vampyre,"* 1991) and of Matthew Gregory Lewis (*Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography*, 2000). His highly successful edition of *Frankenstein* (with Kathleen Scherf) provided Broadview Press with the template for the en-

tire Broadview Editions series; editions of Wollstonecraft's *Vindications*, Lewis's *The Monk*, and Polidori's "The Vampyre" and "Ernestus Berchtold" (the latter based on an earlier UTP edition) followed. A fine edition of Charlotte Smith's monumental last novel, *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* appeared from Pickering and Chatto in 2007. For many years Lorne had also been working with Anne McWhir on *The Broadview Anthology of Literature of the Revolutionary Period*, which appeared in March 2010.

- Anne McWhir



Call for Executive Nominations

The ACCUTE executive invites members to suggest candidates for two upcoming executive positions: one member-at-large, and the sessional representative. Please send suggestions directly to Heather Murray by April 15, 2010, and give a brief rationale for your recommendation.

Report on the Sessional Situation

In an effort to determine the impact on sessional hiring of the recent economic downturn, ACCUTE has sent a short questionnaire to English departments on the CACE (Canadian Association of Chairs of English) listserv, asking about cuts/increases to sessional hiring for the 2009-10 academic year, and requesting projections for 2010-2011. So far, forty-three departments have provided information, and more responses are expected. The report will be distributed to ACCUTE members when completed.

In the meantime, ACCUTE members who have any other information, opinions, or personal experiences they would like to contribute to this report, are asked to kindly send these to Heather Murray as soon as possible.

Federation President's Report on Budget 2010

Of course, we all hoped for many millions more than the recent federal budget bestowed upon SSHRC and the other Councils,

but when you consider how bad it could have been, we did all right. Overall, the Councils received an increase of \$32 million a year, a good surge of support. The Federation lobbied all year directly with MPs, including Minister Flaherty, for two key items: more funding to support what we have described as the new generation of scholars and untargeted support for research. In effect, we got what we wished for. SSHRC has been promised \$3 million dollars, none of it targeted to any theme or government-dictated priority.

This is a great relief, especially following last year's much narrower restriction to consider research only relating to business, management, or financial matters. Government is also investing \$45 million towards the creation of new postdoc positions, which will go a long way to filling a conspicuous gap in our research culture.

These gains are significant and will help our community directly. It is comforting to consider that there are other elements in the education commitment of the budget that will benefit our community. Consider the \$15 million directed to the College and Innovation Program, the details of which we still need to

parse. We are hopeful we will recognize opportunities for our researchers here, as well. Another \$1 billion will be devoted to infrastructure, deferred maintenance, repair and construction to help our crumbling campus plants.

It certainly could have been worse. And the rumour mills and the message managers are starting to terrorize us into expecting the 2011 budget to be much worse, even dire. We will need to resist surrendering to that message. At least for now, we can let out a little air.

- Noreen Golfman

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Graduate Student Caucus Report

The Graduate Student Caucus (GSC) of ACCUTE represents the varied needs of graduate students in English departments across Canada. The president of the GSC sits on the ACCUTE executive in part to lobby for the best interests of graduate students within ACCUTE, and in part to pass on information from the ACCUTE executive to the GSC executive and the general graduate student membership.

This year's GSC meeting will be on Friday May 28, at lunchtime. All graduate students are welcome and encouraged to attend. This meeting is the best forum for graduate students to have a voice within ACCUTE. Perhaps the primary task of the GSC within ACCUTE is facilitating the survey of graduate student life in a Canadian university English department.

After taking a year to re-evaluate the most effective means of delivering the survey, the GSC survey is back out this year and will hopefully be ready in time for this year's conference. This survey is sent out to the GSC English departmental representatives and then the data from the questionnaire is compiled by the GSC executive with the VP Information Services taking the lead on its implementation.

This year's survey will be slightly more interactive, and has been sent out to every department the GSC has a representative for. However, in the process of moving from the conceptualization to implementation, it became clear that the list of departmental representatives we are using is out of date, and that there is no clear method for fixing this problem. In part, this is because some schools, like

UBC, elect their representative every year, and other schools simply do not. It's my recommendation that a better method of implementing the survey should be arrived at because this survey provides such a clear encapsulation of graduate student life in Canada. Perhaps we should also be working with the chairs of English departments to facilitate this survey. Moreover, the compilation of the survey represents a good deal of work; it would be nice if this survey were prominently displayed on the ACCUTE website so that it would be easy to find.

The GSC has kept its web 2.0 façade over the past year with the maintenance of the Facebook group—although we still do not have a Twitter account and the Facebook group only has 26 members. Improving communication between the GSC and the departmental representatives would allow the task of representing the varied needs of English Graduate Students to go more smoothly and would lead to even more student input. At this time, it is still unclear how this kind of improved communication might happen.

Last year's professional concerns panel on graduate student supervision was clearly help-

ful for graduate students. One of the things that the GSC will discuss at this year's meeting will be what kinds of professional concerns panels students want to see at next year's ACCUTE and what, if anything, can be done to make ACCUTE more graduate student friendly.

— Jamie Paris

FROM THE ACCUTE ARCHIVES:

A History of the Christianity and Literature Study Group

By Deane E. D. Downey

Professor Emeritus (English), Trinity Western University

The idea of establishing a special study group to foster dialogue on the interface between Christianity and Literature was first raised during an informal exchange among several similar-minded ACUTE members during the Congress of Learned Societies at the University of Manitoba in May, 1986. Deane Downey (Trinity Western University) offered to compile a list of Canadian academics that might be interested in such a group.

The starting point in developing such a list was to identify the Canadian members of the Con-

ference on Christianity and Literature, an adjunct society of the U.S.-based Modern Language Association. Downey had recently met Diane Edwards, a member of the University of Victoria's English department who was on the CCL international executive. Edwards was warmly supportive of the idea of founding a group of Canadian academics interested in the relation between literature and Christianity and provided that list in short order.

An organizational luncheon meeting was planned for the May 1987 meetings of ACUTE at McMaster University. With the strong support and involvement of McMaster English department chair Laurel Braswell-Means, as well as the cooperation of Redeemer College's English department chair Hugh Cook, that meeting took place on May 26th. Seventeen people attended, representing twelve Canadian post-secondary institutions. An additional sixteen had sent their regrets but joined the attendees in strongly supporting the establishment of such an entity. As an adjunct to ACUTE (supported by everyone as an important dependent connection), those in attendance agreed to call it the Christianity and Literature Study Group.

A tentative suggestion was made to have CLSG deemed a Canadian affiliate of CCL. That proposal garnered a less than enthusiastic response. Rather, it was agreed to hold two or three sessions in conjunction with the 1988 ACUTE meetings at the University of Windsor. From the beginning, a commitment was made to the principle of scheduling the CLSG meetings so as not to conflict with the ACUTE program. It was also agreed to establish a voluntary annual membership fee of \$5 (raised to \$10 the following year for regular full-time academics but kept at \$5 for graduate students/retirees/underemployed)—to cover mailing costs and other incidental expenses. (These were the days before the wonderful advent of email communication, which development several years later eliminated the need for membership fees!)

A steering committee was established at this organizational luncheon meeting: Deane Downey (TWU) as chair, Cory Davies (Huron College) as secretary, and both Diane Edwards (U. Vic.) and Douglas Loney (Redeemer College) as members at large. It was agreed to issue a general call for papers for presentation at the 1988 University of Windsor “Learneds” in such fields of inquiry as the Bible and Litera-

ture, literary works by self-acknowledged Christian authors, and the influence of the Bible on secular writers and their work. A suggestion was also made that an informal evening be organized involving a panel discussion of one or two appropriate articles, circulated in advance.

It turned out that two CLSG sessions took place at the Windsor meetings, one involving the reading of two papers and the other a business meeting. Paper presenters were Jim Doelman (McMaster), “The Word in the Fiction of Rudy Wiebe” and Victor Yelverton Haines (Dawson College), “Exemplification as the Basis for All Allegory and Applied Typology in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.” At the business meeting, those present were pleased to learn that the membership of the group had grown to 40 people.

From its inception, CLSG founders were encouraged in their endeavours by a number of people of influence in positions of academic leadership: the afore-mentioned Laurel Braswell-Means, chair of English at McMaster; David Williams, chair of English at McGill; Douglas Wurtele, editor for a number of years of ACUTE/ACCUTE’s *English Studies in Canada*,

and Mary Elizabeth Smith, chair of the Division of Humanities and Languages at UNB (St. John campus). Each one made their support explicit by reading at least one paper at one of the CSLG sessions during the organization's formative years. During that time, the group also enjoyed the ready cooperation of ACUTE president Thomas Cleary (U.Vic.) in the publication of CLSG's call for papers and announcement of meeting times in the parent organization's Newsletter.

CLSG undertook a number of rather ambitious projects during its early years, due in part to the fact that many of its supporters were unable to attend the annual Learned Societies meetings. An additional logistical challenge was that a number of non-ACUTE members were interested in the group—e.g., from the Society of Biblical Literature and from the Canadian Philosophical Association. The meetings of these organizations did not necessarily coincide with those of ACUTE. One CLSG project was to prepare an annotated bibliography (limited to ten items per person) of recent publications by members. The first of these bibliographies, 13 pages in length, appeared in April, 1989; twenty-four CLSG members were represented. Volume 2 appeared in July, 1990,

18 pages, involving items from 30 members. Unfortunately, continuation of this worthy annual project did not continue, primarily because of compiler Downey's distraction with a textbook editing project.

As the years passed, interest in CLSG's activities continued to flourish. The group's programs became more and more ambitious (albeit still never conflicting with announced ACUTE activities). At Laval University in May, 1989, Carleton's Douglas Wurtele's invited discussion paper, "Augustinian Theological Aspects of Spenser's Book of Holiness," was complemented by a round-table discussion two days later on the topic "Christian Responses to Deconstruction." Participants were invited to read seven pre-announced articles in preparation for that discussion.

By the 1992 meetings at UPEI, the CLSG program had grown to include one pre-arranged panel discussion (on "The Implications of a Christian Worldview on Pedagogy") and seven read papers (presented at three sessions). At the 1999 meetings at Sherbrooke/Bishop's Universities, 15 papers were read during five sessions, with a sixth meeting devoted to a special session on Bruce Cockburn presented

by two invited speakers, Brian Walsh (Wycliffe) and Richard Middleton (Colgate Rochester). Papers touched upon a rich diversity of topics, from Sarah Emsley (Dalhousie), "What is Dinah's Duty? Religion and Sympathy in Adam Bede" to Jens Zimmerman (TWU), "Trusting the Word: Communicative Ethics, Language, and Literature" and Margo Swiss (York), "Taming Sorrow: Grief Work in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*."

At its most recent meetings at Carleton University's Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in May, 2009, no fewer than seven sessions involved the reading of 22 papers. Once again, the range of topics was impressive: from Krista Lysack (Western Ontario), "Christina Rossetti's Devotional Reading" to Canada Research Chair Di Brandt (Brandon), "So this is the world & here I am in it," Gordon Johnston (Trent), "Reading Margaret Avison's Poetry," Emily Hill (McMaster), "Can Prime Evil Be Forgiven?: The Possibility/Impossibility of Forgiveness in Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *A Human Being Died That Night*," and Anthony Raspa (Laval), "Love and Beauty in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*."

Much to the surprise (but also delight) of most

of the CLSG initiators, the Christianity and Literature Study Group continues to thrive. ACCUTE now graciously publishes the annual CLSG program in the same organ as its own program. The CLSG email list now exceeds 200 names. Attendance at the various CLSG multiple-paper sessions often exceeds attendance at many ACCUTE sessions; for example, average attendance at each session in the past two years has been between 18 and 24.

Without question a large portion of the credit for the continuing vitality of CLSG over most of its 22-year history can be attributed to the enthusiastic leadership of Trinity Western University's Barbara Pell, who departed from this life 9 March 2009. Barbara was in attendance at the founding luncheon meeting at McMaster in May, 1987. At the May, 1988 meeting at the University of Windsor she agreed to take the Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting and also to serve as Downey's assistant. At the 1989 Laval University meeting she was chosen to serve as Secretary and also Meetings Coordinator. At the 1990 CLSG business meeting Barbara was appointed as Chair of the Steering Committee, with Irwin Streight (Queen's) as Meeting Arrangements Coordinator and Downey as Newsletter Editor.

At both the 1991 and 1992 meetings Pell and Downey were designated as CLSG co-chairs, but the Minutes of the UPEI meeting make clear who had the significantly heavier set of responsibilities: “Barbara will look after arrangements for next year’s meetings at Carleton, including calling for and arranging for the vetting of papers, making room reservations, corresponding with speakers, setting up the program, chairing the sessions, etc.; Deane will look after the membership list, finances, mailings to members, newsletter, annotated bibliographies.” At the same meeting the attendees were informed that between 80 and 90 names were on the CLSG membership list (although only 32 of those had paid-up fees!). Just a couple of years later, the fee levy was dropped because of the advent of email communication. It followed that an annual business meeting also was deemed unnecessary. Barbara continued her dedicated leadership of CLSG until health challenges obliged her to hand over her duties to others. The husband-wife team of David Kent (Centennial College) and Margo Swiss (York U.) supervised the 2006 meetings at York in Barbara’s absence (owing to illness) and then were asked by Barbara to take over the CLSG leadership. Barbara’s involvement with the group, however,

did not end at that point; she astonished everyone present by delivering her last CLSG paper (on Brian Moore) as well as hosting a poetry reading at the UBC meetings in May, 2008, in spite of the fact that she undergone brain cancer surgery just a few weeks before. Her example clearly is inspiring Kent and Swiss to carry on the fine tradition she established, for in many ways the 2009 Carleton meetings were the best ever. (We are sure the thought occurred to many: “Barbara would have loved this!”)

We honour our esteemed colleague Barbara Pell’s memory and continue to be inspired by her outstanding example of enthusiastic commitment both to the advancement of literary studies in general as well as to serious (and not always academy-endorsed) reflection on the interface between serious literature and the Christian faith. Barbara will be remembered at the Concordia Congress with a special session on Canadian literature in her honour, the papers for which will then form the basis of a special issue of David Bentley’s journal, *Canadian Poetry*, dedicated to her memory.

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