



Western Arts & Humanities

A monthly newsletter brought to you by the Department of English & Writing Studies

March 2016

JOHN LEONARD LATEST RECIPIENT OF DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY PROFESSORSHIP

John Leonard will be joining a select group of faculty members recognized for exceptional scholarly careers as he becomes the latest recipient of Distinguished University Professorship (DUP) award. The award acknowledges sustained excellence in scholarship over a substantial career at Western. The award includes a citation, the right to use the title, an opportunity for a public lecture and a \$10,000 prize to be used for scholarly activity at any time.

Leonard will present Public Talks- *Milton and the power of Poetry*- during a ceremony at 4:00pm on Monday, April 25, in The Great Hall, Somerville House. The full article can be found online at [Western News](#).

JOIN US FOR A PUBLIC READING FROM THE POET, MEMOIRIST & WESTERN ALUMNUS ROGER BELL

A two- time finalist in the CBC/ Tilden/ Saturday Night Competition, Roger is a storyteller who uses his poetry to write narratives about real life. His lyrical style is reminiscent of the Canadian Poet, Al Purdy. In 1997, he was the first winner of the Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Contest for his book *Luke and the Wolf*.

Roger is the author of *Larger Than Life*, *Candy Cigarettes*, *You Tell Me*, *The Pissing Women of LaFontaine*, *Henry's Creature: Poems and Stories on the Automobile*, and *When the Devil Calls*.

All are welcome to this free public event on Monday, April 4, 2016 from 12:30– 1:30pm in the Arts & Humanities Building (AHB) 2R07.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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- 2016-17 Student Writer– In–Residence: Victoria Wiebe
- Public lecture on gender variance in video games
- *Squalls of Glass* review

MARIE SMIBERT WRITING STUDIES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PRIZE 2015-16

Has one of your students written an **outstanding** essay or project in a Writing Studies course this year? If so, please encourage him or her—a student in any eligible Writing Studies course 2015-16 (May to April)—to submit an entry and compete for the Marie Smibert Writing Studies Student Achievement Prizes 2015-16.

There are four categories with a first place prize of \$300 and up to two Honourable Mention prizes of \$250 each, available in each category. Students may submit only one entry in a category, but can compete in more than one category. Complete information including a list of categories, eligible courses and the required entry form is available on the Writing Studies [website](#).

Categories include introductory essay writing, advanced essay writing, non-fiction manuscripts and technical and professional writing. A list of specific courses can be found [here](#).

The deadline for entries this year will be **Monday, April 18, 2016** at 4:00pm.

2016-17 GRAHAM & GALE WRIGHT DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

Jan Plug was named a 2016-17 Graham & Gale Wright Distinguished Scholar Fellowship for his prominent contributions as internationally-recognized researcher in his field. Professor Plug's research focuses on nineteenth and twentieth-century English and German literature, notably Romanticism and Modernism, and on theory from German Idealism to deconstruction. The fellowships are for a one-year period providing faculty members with one half-course teaching relief, allowing them to focus on research.

“GRATE, DUNDAS ST.” RECEIVES HONOURABLE MENTION

David Huebert's poem “Grate, Dundas St.” received an honourable mention in [Poetry London's](#) 2016 poetry contest—the theme “The Streets of London”. The winning poems will be displayed at branches of the London Public Library during Poetry Month, April 2016.

Face a Christmas of marquee light,
you stood on transplant streets, watched
grated steam rising eerie, rising slow.

Followed that shudder-still tornado and
dreamt a secret city in the depths: engines
boring and you diving weightless, diving low

through granite chasms, through wastelands
of steam. You saw stalagmites weeping,
saw black tears oozing wearily below.

A child among the drilling minions
raised a hand—one finger, one thumb,
three stumps churning the underglow.

The child became a man, holding out
that hand for change and you went slack,
dreamsick, heard yourself muttering no.

You walked away thumbing change—what
change could sack a secret city, turn fingers
into lizard tails, help coral labyrinths grow?

Like stitches melting into wounds you saw
the bridges and the dams dissolve, watched
concrete wilt, rode the rivers' rage and flow.

MEET THE NEW 2016-17 STUDENT WRITER– IN-RESIDENCE: VICTORIA WIEBE

Victoria Wiebe, a third– year psychology and creative writing student, has been chosen as the student writer-in-residence for the upcoming 2016-17 year. She was president of the Creative Writing Club last year, part of the editorial board for *Nom de Plume* and has a few published novels and poems.

Victoria wants to make the Western community more aware of the creative resources available and aims to organize workshops that are tailored to students from all faculties, fostering creative ideas and develop skills in student writing. She “feels it is important to showcase the creative work of Western students in order to appreciate the creativity that is constantly being nurtured on–campus” — [Western Gazette](#)

“BYE, BYE, BIRDO: HEROIC ANDROGyny AND VILLAINOUS GENDER VARIANCE IN VIDEO GAMES”

Meghan Adams gave a public lecture titled “Bye, Bye, Birdo: Heroic Androgyny and Villainous Gender Variance in Video Games” at the Institute for Research on Digital Learning at York University.

The gaming industry is rife with characters that mix gender signifiers: what differentiates them primarily is whether this mix is portrayed as heroic androgyny or villainous gender confusion. More specifically, androgynous characters exhibit relatively few secondary sex characteristics (such as facial hair or widened hips), while gender variant characters exhibit a mix of secondary sex characteristics and social signifiers of gender (clothing, cosmetics, et cetera). The talk explored the contrast between the tradition of androgynous player– characters and vain non-player characters with an excess of non– normative gender signifiers in order to critique how mainstream games police gender variance.

“REALITY ITSELF IS NOT A CONTENT”

On March 17, **Andrew Wenaus** presented a paper titled “Reality Itself is Not a Content” at the Thirty– Seventh International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, Florida.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

David Huebert. “A Tiger in the ‘Rooster Coop’: Techno-capitalism, Narrative Ambiguity, and Ghandian Traditionalism in *The White Tiger*”. *South Asian Review*. 36.2.

David Huebert. “[Silicone Giddy](#)”. *The Puritan*. 32.

Kathryn Mockler. “[You Should Write My Life Story](#)”. Vol. 1 *Brooklyn, Sunday Stories*.



ORIGINAL STUDENT PLAY *SQUALLS OF GLASS* A HIT AT THE MCMANUS STUDIO THEATRE, RAISES OVER \$300 FOR MENTAL HEALTH

On February 26, a group of seven undergraduates, including six English majors and one Music major, successfully produced a new, original one-act play, entitled *Squalls of Glass*, at the McManus Studio Theatre at the Grand Theatre in downtown London. Written by one of the students, Meg Cormack (third year English Honors Language and Literature, SASAH), the play was a powerful psychological drama that touches on mental health issues. Heightened by a haunting original musical score, the performances were deeply felt and affecting. Audience members were at the edge of their seats for the duration and gave very positive feedback afterwards, including several standing ovations. The show was very well attended and raised over \$300 for the Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex. Presented by the Theatre Studies Program, it was made possible through the generous support of the Department of English and Writing Studies, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and the Hume Cronyn Funds for dramatic performances.

According to the students, the play was about a theatre company that “struggles to finish a musical while juggling their traumatized relationships. Their lives have been knocked askew, and their burdens begin to blur the faint divide between the real world and the psychological.” It featured Matthew Butler (English IIII), who also served as the play’s director, as Kip, Jasmina Hothi (English III) as Larsen, Jacek Orzylowski (English, Psychology III) as Aaron, Jesyka Traynor (English IIII), who was also the play’s editor, as Elsie, and Meg Cormack, the playwright herself, as Dean. Matthew Rodnick (Music IIII) provided the production design and original incidental music, and Jess Symington (English III) directed the elegant marketing and promotions campaign.

Squalls of Glass began as one of these students’ class projects for the department’s Fall 2015 English 3666F course, entitled American Drama from the Playwright’s Perspective, taught by George Ramos, who served as the show’s producer and faculty advisor. Students were divided into groups or “companies” that wrote and performed original imitations of plays by major American dramatists included in the syllabus. Essentially, each company emulated key aspects of the dramaturgical style and technique of its assigned syllabus plays in order to explore topics of special concern to the company members. As a result, the students became able understand how form helps the playwright explore theme. An imitation of Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, which was one of plays assigned to Meg’s company, *Squalls of Glass* emulates the psychosocial games, meta-theatricality, and dramatic tension of Albee’s drama in an ambitious, sophisticated, inventive, and moving way. After its first in-class presentation, the play underwent further script, performance, and production development and expansion. Meg and her colleagues are currently in the process of expanding *Squalls of Glass* into a full-length play.



Top Left to Right: Matthew Rodnick, Jacek Orzylowski, Matthew Butler; Bottom, Left to Right: Jasmina Hothi, Meg Cormack, George Ramos, Jessica Symington, Jesyka Traynor.

—[Western Gazette](#)

IRDL SPEAKER SERIES



BYE, BYE, BIRDO

HEROIC ANDROGYNY AND VILLAINOUS GENDER VARIANCE IN VIDEO GAMES

THURSDAY
MARCH 31ST, 2016
305 YORK LANES
1:30PM - 3:30PM

Please RSVP
irdl@yorku.ca

This talk will explore the contrast between the tradition of androgynous player-characters and vain non-player characters with an excess of non-normative gender signifiers in order to critique how mainstream games police gender variance.

PRESENTED BY MEGHAN BLYTHE ADAMS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IRDL:



Meghan Blythe Adams is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English and Writing Studies at the University of Western Ontario. Their work in Game Studies focuses on difficulty, submission and death, in addition to genderqueer identity and representation in media.

Their work has appeared in *First Person Scholar* and *Loading...: Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*.

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