

## What's new with you?

We'd like to hear from you! Please take a minute to let us know where you are living these days and what keeps you ticking. We're just now starting to collect alumni updates at the following e-mail address: [artsci.alumni@uc.edu](mailto:artsci.alumni@uc.edu) and online at [www.artsci.uc.edu/updates](http://www.artsci.uc.edu/updates). A recent photo of you would be most welcome, as well. If we receive a response from you, we'll post your update in the (forthcoming) alumni area of our website. Look for the alumni link at [www.artsci.uc.edu/english](http://www.artsci.uc.edu/english).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name at graduation (if different) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Degree(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Year(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_ UC alum? yes  no

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (home) \_\_\_\_\_

(work) \_\_\_\_\_

Your news (attach an additional page if needed)

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:  
McMicken College of  
Arts & Sciences  
Department of English  
University of Cincinnati  
PO Box 210069  
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0069

## YOUR MEMORIES SOUGHT

Did you know that Steven Spielberg's grandmother majored in English at UC during the First World War? We would like to preserve a sense of our department's long history by collecting your memories – of classmates, faculty members, literary events or other experiences connected with the Department of English.

Send your reminiscences to: [artsci.alumni@uc.edu](mailto:artsci.alumni@uc.edu), post them online at [www.artsci.uc.edu/updates](http://www.artsci.uc.edu/updates) or to the mailing address above, and we will post them in the forthcoming alumni area of our website.

## Save the Date!

# Alumni Weekend

May 14-17, 2009

Visit [www.alumni.uc.edu](http://www.alumni.uc.edu) or contact **Lindsey Theobald** at **513.556.0912** for more information

## 2009 Ropes Lecture Series:

### The Bible and Contemporary Culture

Organized each year around a unifying literary theme, the Ropes Lecture Series provides the UC community a sustained investigation of the series topic over a two-month period. Jay Twomey, associate professor of English, has put together this year's series on the subject of the Bible and contemporary culture. The roster of this year's lecturers is a mix of creative writers, Biblical scholars and literary critics:

**Jan. 13, 2009:** Poet Scott Cairns, 2006 Guggenheim fellow and author of six collections of poetry, one collection of translations of Christian mystics, and one spiritual memoir.

**Jan. 27, 2009:** Bible scholar Ken Stone, author of *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective* and *Sex, Honor and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*.

**Feb. 10, 2009:** Bible scholar Erin Runions, author of *How Hysterical: Identification and Resistance in the Bible and Film*.

**Feb. 24, 2009:** Literary scholar Martin Harries, author of *Forgetting Lot's Wife: On Destructive Spectatorship* and *Scare Quotes from Shakespeare: Marx, Keynes, and the Language of Reenchantment*.

**March 3, 2009:** Novelist David Maine, author of *Fallen, The Preservationist* and *The Book of Samson*.

**All lectures will take place at 8 p.m. in Room 427, Engineering Research Center.**

## The 2009 George Elliston Poetry Reading Series

**Scott Cairns**  
Jan. 14, 2009, 4:00 pm  
Elliston Poetry Room


**The Cincinnati Review 5th Anniversary Reading and Reception**  
Featuring former Elliston Poet and MacArthur Award winner **C.D. Wright**  
Jan. 23, 2009, 4:00 pm  
Stratford Heights Grill Room  
(parking in garage off Clifton Ave)

**Eric Pankey and Jennifer Atkinson**  
April 10, 2009, 4:00 pm  
Elliston Poetry Room

**Jeff Gundy and UC's own Liz Tilton**  
Winner of the 2008 Wick Chapbook Competition for *Salt*  
April 17, 2009, 4:00 pm  
Elliston Poetry Room

**Lynn Emanuel**  
2009 George Elliston Poet-in-Residence  
May 2009  
Date and Location TBD

**All readings are free and open to the public. Please check the Department website or call 513-556-5924 for the latest information on the series.**

UNIVERSITY OF  Cincinnati  
Department of English & Comparative Literature  
University of Cincinnati  
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Cincinnati, OH 45221-0069

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McMicken  
College of Arts & Sciences

January 2009

# Department of English Newsletter

## From the Head



Russel Durst

Happy New Year!

I hope you enjoy this second annual newsletter. We're in the midst of another exciting year in the

Department of English and Comparative Literature, and we'd like to fill you in on what's been happening. First, I want to thank all of the people who wrote back to me, whether by e-mail or snail mail, in response to last year's newsletter — we have a very large, interesting, and varied group of grads and friends of the Department. The newsletter went out to over 3,000 people; I encourage even more of you to contact me this year with comments, questions and reminiscences.

Our faculty continue to produce high quality scholarship and creative work at an impressive rate. During the past academic year, we published twelve books on a wide variety of topics. These publications range from literary criticism, such as Lee Person's *Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne*; to autobiography and memoir, including Jim Wilson's *Weather Reports from the Autism Front: A Father's Memoir of His Autistic Son*; to college textbook, with Kathy Rentz's *Business Communication: Making Connections in the Digital World*; to fiction, in Jim Braziel's novel *Birmingham, 35 Miles*.

We also won numerous awards for our scholarship, teaching, and creative activity, including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for fiction writer Brock Clarke, the Emily Dickinson Poetry Prize for poet Joanie Mackowski, the Witter/Bynner Translation Fellowship for poet Don Bogen, and Society for Professional Journalists prizes to Jon Hughes for photography and Jenny Wohlfarth for feature writing. Kathy Rentz won the Association for Business Communication Prize for Outstanding Teacher and also shared with several co-authors the award for Best Article of the Year.

Graduate students are getting in on the act as well. Creative writing doctoral students Erica Dawson and Caki Wilkinson, both graduates of Johns Hopkins University, had poems accepted for the volume *Best American Poetry of 2008*. In addition, *Contemporary Poetry Review* named Erica's collection, *Big-Eyed Afraid*, the best debut book of 2007 and will feature an interview with her in an upcoming issue. Caki was one of five young poets from around the country to win the 2008 Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship, sponsored by the Poetry Foundation.

Faculty also organized several successful conferences on campus. Edgar Slotkin coordinated the North American Celtic Society's annual meeting and Julia Carlson organized an international meeting on Romantic literature and the visual arts. Scholars from around the world came to Cincinnati to take part in these meetings with our own faculty, students and colleagues from area institutions.

Our new, improved English major is up and running in its first year of operation. Moving away from our previous "one

size fits all" approach, we now have a required core curriculum plus a choice of one of three tracks: literary and cultural studies, creative writing, and rhetoric and professional writing. Entering students value the greater flexibility and the opportunity for more in-depth study in their chosen specialties. Incoming majors are picking the track that best suits them and a number of advanced students are choosing to opt out of the old major and into the new. The number of students in English is already on the rise with the creation of the new tracks.

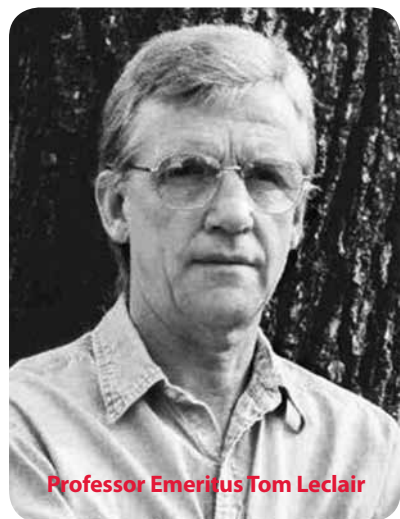
We continue to bring to campus some of the most distinguished scholars and writers in the English speaking world, including former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, fiction writer Jane Smiley, National Book Award winner Denis Johnson and science writer (and native Cincinnati) David Quammen, to name just a few.

We hope you have fond memories of your time in the English Department and an interest in finding out more about what we're up to these days. If you're in the area, you might want to check out the transformed campus, come to a departmental reading or lecture, or just stop by to say hello. Please drop me a note at [russel.durst@uc.edu](mailto:russel.durst@uc.edu) or give me a call at 513-556-3915 if you would like to get in touch for any reason.

Russel K. Durst  
Professor and Department Head

UNIVERSITY OF  Cincinnati

## A Note From Professor Emeritus Tom Leclair



Professor Emeritus Tom Leclair

True to my history, in my last year at UC I'm not at UC but enjoying my pre-retirement academic leave in Brooklyn, where writers go to die. I've been doing some freelance writing for the local newspaper, and I've taken up painting. This may seem an odd choice for a color-blind person, but I'm working mostly in white. My main works so far are "The Kitchen," "The Entry" and a massive project

called "Living/Dining." I'm playing table tennis (ping pong to you) five afternoons a week at the NY Table Tennis Foundation in Chinatown (check out their website if you want to meet your former professor some day).

I live across the street from the Brooklyn Museum, and have so far been true to my semi-retirement vow to never enter another museum, gallery or church.

The Central Brooklyn library is a long block away, and it has a good fiction collection but not (yet) my last and final novel, *Passing Through*. If you're in this 'hood, please ask the library to order it. Come to think of it, ask your own neighborhood library to order it. *Passing Through* is an academic comedy about Queen City College. If you read closely, you may find yourself in it.

Former students will be pleased to know that it's not just your papers I dropped the hatchet on. Google me and the "New York Times Book Review" for my last three reviews. This is a belated admission: I can be wrong. One of the novels I panned just won the National Book Award. But I'm not changing any grades.

I went to Columbia for a seminar talk. I can't say that it made me miss the classroom, but it could happen. I do miss hearing what students are choosing to read on their own, so drop me a line at [leclaire@uc.edu](mailto:leclaire@uc.edu) if you happen to read a book more than 500 pages long. In exchange, I can tell you what not to read.

## No Longer Lost in Translation

Have you heard the joke about what happens when people from the humanities and sciences get together? That you need a translator to be present?

Well, times are changing, thanks in part to a partnership between the Journalism and Professional Writing programs and the Environmental Health department. As part of a federally funded grant, Elissa Sonnenberg and Lisa Meloncon from the English Department have teamed up with Assistant Professor of Environmental Health Erin Haynes, of the Academic Health Center, to implement and evaluate a multifaceted Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) program. Their goal is to bridge the gap between research scientists and a community affected by environmental exposure.

Presently, Haynes is conducting a large scale study on the effects of environmental exposure to manganese. Manganese (Mn) is an essential element, yet is neurotoxic in large doses. Despite the fact that infants and young children may be at greater risk for Mn neurotoxicity than adults, very few studies have evaluated the effect of chronic Mn exposure on child development. Marietta, Ohio, a rural Appalachian community, has been home to the only Mn refinery in the U.S. and Canada for over 50 years. In response, the community formed Neighbors for Clean Air (NCA).

The University of Cincinnati (UC) has been asked by NCA to assist them in understanding their exposure, and any related health effects, through a federally funded project: the Marietta Community Actively Researching Exposure Study (CARES).

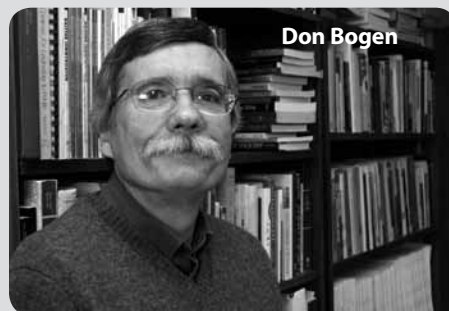
The Marietta-Parkersburg Metropolitan Area is in dire need of environmental health education related to industrial air emissions. As a complement to the scientific CARES study, the CARES Communication project is working to educate local journalists and community members by providing accessible and reliable information about the scientific process and its results. In addition, a website will provide a clearinghouse of information about manganese as a way to help community members "translate" the science into practical information.



Lisa Meloncon

## Faculty Spotlight: Don Bogen

Professor of English and Comparative Literature Don Bogen was awarded a Witter Bynner Poetry Translator Residency from the Santa Fe Art Institute in New Mexico. Prior to the 2008 fall quarter, he spent a productive month engaged in full-time translation work at the institute, which is home to the only poetry translation residency in North America that offers a stipend, travel and free residency for one month.



Don Bogen

For several years, Don has been translating into English the poetry of Julio Martinez Mesanza, one of the leading poets in Spain today. During a 2003 Fulbright Senior Lectureship, he discovered Mesanza in anthologies of contemporary Spanish poetry and began translating the work. Having translated about 30 of Mesanza's poems and publishing several in *Literary Imagination*, *Pleiades* and *Poetry International*, he decided to expand the project, developing a volume of translations of Mesanza's poetry that deals with the European history from classical times to the present: *Europa: Selected Poems of Julio Martinez Mesanza*.

The opportunity to focus exclusively on this translation work enhanced Don's ability to bring out what he calls the "poem-to-poem unity" of Mesanza's voice. When not translating, Don enjoys high-altitude running (7,000 feet above sea level) and exchanging ideas with the other visual artists, writers and performance artists in residence at the institute. Along with translation, he continues to publish his own poetry; his new book, *An Algebra*, is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press.

## Remembering Professor Bill Boyce

By: Billie Dziech

In spite of all the time that has passed, I sometimes imagine I might catch a glimpse of him walking toward me on the second floor of McMicken Hall. And on days when my students' faces say, "I get it!" I like to believe Bill Boyce is somewhere smiling.

Cincinnati Post columnist Si Cornell dubbed him "Mr. Chips." Undoubtedly, Cornell recognized in him what those of us who admired and loved him also saw. Like James Hilton's protagonist Arthur Chipping, a man who disdained the barriers that separate people, Bill Boyce never bought into hierarchies or the perceived snobbery of the academic profession.

His eclectic academic interests included 17th century literature, John Milton, the poetry of T.S. Eliot and creative writing. But his special love was teaching first year students.

Boyce's students were his unique legacy. More than we can now count went on to become educators themselves. He took special pride in the fact that so many became faculty members at UC, including more than half of the Law School faculty at one point.

Described by former students as a "true Renaissance man" and a "guy who had read every book in the English language," he also argued that "ain't" is essential to the English language because "you do not misunderstand it." On the other hand, he is said to have remarked to a student who asked why he should study Shakespeare's sonnets, "I told him it is good for him, just once



Prof. Bill Boyce (left) with a student in 1964

in his life, to have the feel of beautiful English in his mouth."

Occasionally he went too far over the edge for doubting college students. Like the day we were discussing Keats in my Romantic Literature class. One hand resting on the top of our text and the other holding an ever-present cigarette, he glanced at the young faces around the table, paused dramatically, and said, "The grave of Keats is the only one over which I have ever wept." A hush filled the room as he gazed mournfully down at his book. No one said a word, of course, probably because once you heard Bill Boyce talk about Wordsworth and Keats, you almost agreed you too were capable of shedding tears over a long-dead English poet.

The two things he seemed to me to love best were literature and students. Together they explain why, 10 years before he died in 1978, he won UC's A.B. "Dolly" Cohen Award for Excellence in Teaching and why after his death, the English Department established a teaching award in his name. He taught at UC from 1931 - 1972.

## Students Earn High Honors

Many graduate students in the Creative Writing Program have earned recognition for their work, including Jamie Poissant and Caki Wilkinson.

Jamie Poissant had a short story published in *Best New American Voices*. "Venn Diagram" is about a couple that loses a child. While the wife turns to faith to cope with the loss, the husband turns to mathematics. Jamie is particularly interested in stories about family relationships. "I am interested in how people hurt each other without meaning to," he says, "and how they atone for the pain that they cause others."

Caki Wilkinson was awarded the Lilly Fellowship, one of the largest awards offered to aspiring poets in the United States. Over 860 poets submitted poems for this award. Among Caki's submissions were two shorter poems, "Bower Bird" and "Mnemosyne," and a selection from a longer poem "The School by the Zoo." Caki says she's been trying to work against "pretty stiff constraints;" "The School by the Zoo" is composed of 17 sections of 16 lines. It can be frustrating, but sometimes interesting things arise from the tension."



Caki Wilkinson (left) and Jamie Poissant (right)

## Community 101

Motivating students to reevaluate their place in their communities is a challenge Field Service faculty member Bev Brannan meets through her service learning composition sequence for Honors Program students. Bev structures the

course so that students "examine what being part of a world community means." Often, freshman year is the first time students attend classes with people of different races and religions. Bev wants her students to see that "what's the norm for one person is not the norm for another person."

Bev assigns writing projects that "make [students] look at their own community with some ethical or moral border in mind." Other assignments include exercises such as having students do without electronics in order to recognize that a community can consist of shared experiences as well as social connections.

As the climax of the course, students build a house for Habitat for Humanity. This project teaches them practical skills while expanding their concept of community.

Overall, Bev is pleased with the class and what the students experience. "I've done [this class] five times," she says. "It seems to work very well. The students have learned much more about community, and the word has much more meaning to them than it did before they took the class."



Bev Brannan