

# ENGLISH

AT MINNESOTA

Vol. 5 No. 3

spring  
2004

University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts

play of language  
material history  
literature of the past  
genres  
literature of the past  
discipline  
transnational  
imagination  
multicultural  
new media and visual culture  
cross-historical  
pleasures of the text  
play of language  
the words to say it  
multidiscipline  
subterranean affinities

Thinking about giving? 5,417 English alumni x \$10 donation = \$54,170 for new scholarships Postage-paid Envelope Inside

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# Three Centuries of English at Minnesota

**S**PRING SEMESTER saw several important changes in our faculty roster. Starting this fall, **Siobhan S. Craig**, formerly a lecturer in both the Department of English and the Department of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, becomes an assistant professor in the Department of English. Dr. Craig studied at Smith College and the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, where she earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. Expert in modern film as well as literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she is completing a book titled *Rubble Trouble: History and Subjectivity and Desire in the Ruins of Fascism*.

Two colleagues, **Tom Augst** and **Lois Cucullu**, have recently been promoted to associate professor with tenure. Professor Augst’s book, *The Clerk’s Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in fall 2003. Professor Cucullu’s book, *Expert Modernists, Matricide and Modern Culture: Woolf, Forster, Joyce*, will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in September. Each will begin a sabbatical leave during the coming academic year to pursue archival research. **Donald Ross** will succeed Tom Augst as Director of Composition.

After serving the department for three years as Director of Graduate Studies, **Josephine Lee** has become director of the new CLA Program in Asian-American Studies. **Qadri Ismail** will succeed her as DGS. His book, *Abiding by Sri Lanka: On Peace, Place, and Postcoloniality*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press.

Elsewhere in CLA an appointment was recently made that benefits the Department of English: **Louis Mendoza** is now associate professor and chair of the Department of Chicano Studies. Professor Mendoza earned his Ph.D. in English from the University of Texas-Austin. He comes to Minnesota from the University of Texas–San Antonio, where he was an associate professor of English and associate dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. Professor Mendoza’s publications include *Historia: The Literary Making of Chicana and Chicano History* (2001); *Crossing into America: The New Literature of Immigration* (2003); and *The Jail Machine: Raúl Salinas and the Poetics of Pinto Transformation* (forthcoming). Professor Mendoza will cross-list some of his courses in both the Department of Chicano Studies and the Department of English.



Photo by Tom Foley

**Michael Hancher**  
Professor and Chair

Before the new millennium began there was some dispute about when that was: January 1, 2000, or January 1, 2001? Those favoring 2000 will find our web page “Ph.D. Recipients since 2000” a useful guide to what our doctoral program has achieved this millennium: 35

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**WE INTRODUCE STUDENTS** to literary traditions of the English-speaking world, and engage topics that range from medieval literature to world Englishes to creative writing. Our students learn the arts of interpretation, analysis, critical understanding, and communication that they will rely on throughout their personal and professional lives.

**ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA** shapes the artists and scholars of tomorrow. Our program in creative writing develops students’ skills in the writing of poetry, fiction, and nonfictional prose, and brings to campus some of the world’s most renowned writers. For more than a century, our graduate program in English has prepared scholars and teachers for successful careers in community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and research universities.

**ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA** makes a difference.

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE** | 207 Lind Hall | 207 Church Street SE | Minneapolis, MN 55455-0134 | Michael Hancher, department chair | Gordon Hirsch, associate chair | Josephine Lee, director of graduate studies | M J Fitzgerald, director of creative writing | Tom Augst, director of composition | Patricia Crain, director of undergraduate studies

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# Charles Baxter

## Gift of Babble

**“As the Edelstein-Keller Professor in Creative Writing, acclaimed writer Charles Baxter uses everything he’s learned during his 30 years of literary life”**



by Kate Tyler

**A**s a young and struggling writer, Charles Baxter spurned an opportunity to study under fiction luminaries John Barth and Donald Barthelme, who were then teaching in Baxter’s English Ph.D. program at the State University of New York at Buffalo. “I wanted to be a writer so much,” recalls the author of *Saul and Patsy*, *The Feast of Love*, and other critically lauded works. “I feared that any criticism could easily deflate the fragile balloon of my ego. To some extent, too, it was just prideful and stubborn on my part. I thought I would learn on my own. You can, but it takes longer.”

In the 30 years since then, Baxter has become one of the most acclaimed and widely anthologized authors in the country, with 15 published books to his credit, one of them (the 2001 novel *The Feast of Love*) a National Book Award finalist. Yet even with his books translated into ten languages, even as he is honored by,

among others, the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1987), and even as he savors reviews where the superlatives run from *ravishing* to *luminous*, he has forgotten none of the insecurity or toil of his apprentice years. After completing his Ph.D. and heading to Wayne State University to teach literature, he spent fully a decade reworking what he calls “bad, highly abstract” drafts of novels and suffering ink-curdling rejections (“Tell me why I hate your novel,” began one memorably cruel phone call from a literary agent) before landing a breakthrough story and then a book, in 1984. He was 37.

As the University’s Edelstein-Keller Professor in Creative Writing, Baxter uses everything he’s learned during his 30-year journey as a writer to make the joys come more quickly and the tribulations settle more gently for today’s aspiring novelists and poets. His arrival a year ago from the

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ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA



### Bio Tidbits

#### Home

A brick townhouse in the Lowry Hill neighborhood of Minneapolis.

#### Family

Spouse, Martha Baxter, a remedial educator; son, Daniel, 25, a civil engineer (“he builds concrete segmental cantilevered bridges in places that are ecologically fragile”); dog, Maggie, a 9-month-old Keeshond.

#### Non-literary passions

Hiking along the Superior Hiking Trail (Lake Superior’s North Shore); bicycling; plays at Theatre de la Jeune Lune.

#### Observation

“If a novel or short story continues to resonate, it usually speaks to the condition of the culture and usually something slightly invisible in the culture—something we’re not noticing enough.”

# Vital Bridge

## A unique project sends English majors out to improve community literacy

by Kate Tyler



Photo by Kate Tyler

Derek Johnson, Eric Daigre, and Andrea Echelberger

When University of Minnesota student Andrea Echelberger spots a small gaggle of women and children coming in the door of a St. Paul school, she's so delighted she literally sprints to greet them. "Hello! *Iska waran!* How are you?" she calls, as a half-dozen smiling faces turn her way, some framed by *hajib* (Somali headscarves), some by pint-sized baseball caps. Amid the ensuing hugs and excited babble all around ("How did you do on your test?" "You have new glasses!" "How's your little one doing?"), it would be easy to peg this scene as the exuberant reunion of a strikingly diverse family.


Echelberger's ties to the group in the doorway aren't, strictly speaking, familial. That they almost feel that way to her is one testament to the success of a program called Community Learning Internships (CLI)—one means by which the Department of English swings open its doors to bolster learning and literacy in the broader community.

For the past year, Echelberger, a senior English major from Fergus Falls, Minnesota, has spent at least six hours every week as a volunteer at the Jane Addams School for Democracy, an educational hub for

immigrants and refugees on St. Paul's West Side. Whether helping Latin American families prepare for citizenship tests, teaching English to Hmong elders, or developing a child-care cooperative with Somali women, Echelberger found her CLI participation to be illuminating and even life-changing.

"It's the best thing I ever did; it's been a totally transformative experience for me," says Echelberger, describing a vibrant multicultural community "in which everyone's a teacher and everyone's a learner," and relationships are so warm she might on any given night be invited to someone's home for *sambosa* (fried Somali dumplings) or other savory dishes from around the world. Just as important, she's discovered that the stocks in trade of an English major—skills in close reading, critical thinking, and effective communication, for starters—"are assets that can make a tangible difference in people's lives."

Eric Daigre, the English department's community liaison, hears student testimonials like Echelberger's almost every day, along with plaudits from the various schools, youth programs, and other nonprofit agencies in which the students volunteer. The rave reviews are all the



**“There was this amazing moment when I realized with absolute clarity that I couldn’t have been happier anywhere else in the whole world.”**

–Marianne Baum, a sophomore English major

A Native American group meets outside Franklin Learning Center

more thrilling, he says, because CLI represents a bold new approach in University-sponsored service-learning.

For one thing, Daigre notes, the program is based in a liberal arts department popularly associated with, say, Shakespeare criticism more than with roll-up-your-sleeves community work. Just as remarkable is that CLI asks as much of its participants in a single week as many comparable programs do in an entire semester.

Like Echelberger, all CLI students spend six to eight hours a week for an entire year working and learning “on the ground” in nonprofit community agencies, from Jane Addams School to the Franklin Learning Center. That far exceeds the one- or two-hour stints—often lasting just a semester or less—of most similar projects, Daigre notes.

CLI students start by “soaking up the culture of their [internship] site community,” says Daigre, who urges the students to consider “what people there care about, what they worry about, what skills are valued at the site that maybe aren’t in an academic setting.” On top of their 6–8 hours of community work, students spend yet another hour each week in the classroom, discussing their experiences with Daigre, working through questions and problems, and analyzing their experiences within the context of readings and debates about the role of education in a democracy and the responsibilities of a public university.

They also maintain regular journals in which they reflect on all they are learning, make field trips to one another’s sites, and, at year’s end, collaborate with their host agencies on major projects of lasting community benefit. Echelberger’s capstone project was planning the child-care cooperative. Among others, Justin Crum, who worked at West Side Youth Farm, developed race dialogues for community youth; Amaya

Fairbanks, at Plymouth Youth Center/Lyndale Alternative School, coordinated a public art project; Jonas Lader, at Kaleidoscope Kids Place, devised a project to boost parent involvement; and Marianne Baum, at Franklin Learning Center, completed an oral history project documenting a groundswell of community activism that spared the center from a fatal budget blow.

For all this work, students earn five academic credits (seven next year), but not a penny in salary. They also juggle their CLI commitments with the demands of full courseloads and the often weighty part-time jobs that help pay their tuition (Echelberger holds down a 35-hour-a-week job at a group home for vulnerable adults). Yet far from balking at their internship commitments, Daigre says, students are rejuvenated by them.

That’s certainly been true for Echelberger, who is continuing to volunteer at Jane Addams even since graduating in May. “I’ll go from an eight-hour workday at the group home to my internship at Jane Addams feeling so tired, so burned out, all I want to do is go home and go to bed,” she says. “Then four hours later, I’m having such a good time that I’m just bouncing off the walls. It happens every time; every hour I spend in my community work is just invigorating.”

Derek Johnson, facilitator at the Jane Addams School, says that level of engagement is “one of the biggest strengths of the English department’s internship program. It’s been great to have students like Andrea and Hannah [Casey, another CLI participant] involved for a long-term period of time. They develop a sense of ‘ownership’ in terms of our work, and really strong relationships with the people who come here. It’s not just someone coming in a couple of hours a week, doing a project for a class, and then they’re done.”

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# Text and Image

## Text and Image in Medieval England a conference in honor of Calvin B. Kendall

Scholars from around the United States and England gathered at Coffman Union of the University of Minnesota, Oct. 23-25, for a weekend of serious discussion and festivities. The organizers of the conference, Jill Keen, University of Minnesota, and Pat Eldred, College of St. Catherine, chose the topic to honor Kendall's work at the intersection of literary and art historical scholarship, shown in his book, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions*. An exhibit of photographs taken by Kendall and his wife, Eleanor, during their years of research highlighted the interaction between visual presentation of sculpture and carved verse inscriptions.

As the conference opened, Michael Hancher, chair of the English Department, recalled the history of Old English studies at the University of Minnesota, from the department's first chairman, George MacLean, through Friedrich Klaeber, editor of the definitive text of *Beowulf*, down to Calvin Kendall, editor of Bede's *Art of Poetry and Rhetoric* and author of *The Metrical Grammar of Beowulf*. The organizers of and participants in the conference look forward to the continuation of this strong tradition.

The speakers included many of Kendall's doctoral students, from Tom Hanks, who received his Ph.D. from Minnesota in 1976, to three students who are finishing their dissertations. In addition, a number of friends and colleagues also presented papers. Among many excellent papers, attendees heard about and saw examples of the illustrations on a 14th-century map of the world, the process of selecting illustrations for manuscript books, the connections between an Anglo-Saxon woman's will and the decorations in her church, and a project to digitize illustrations from medieval manuscripts of Arthurian legends.

A dinner on Friday evening at the Campus Club gave colleagues,



Professor Emeritus Calvin Kendall

**“The speakers included many of Kendall’s doctoral students, from Tom Hanks, who received his Ph.D. from Minnesota in 1976, to three students who are finishing their dissertations.”**

friends and students from a variety of disciplines a chance to thank Kendall for his scholarship, teaching, and service to the University of Minnesota, where he has taught for 36 years.

### Public Events

The fun was not restricted to scholars. Four public events punctuated the conference. On Thursday evening, Carol Marrin of Saint John's University, Collegeville, showed pages from the Saint John's Bible, the

first complete, hand-written Bible to be produced since the 17th century. As director of the project, Marrin regaled the audience with inside anecdotes about its challenges and joys, as well as technical details of the production.

On Friday evening, Derek Pearsall, professor emeritus of English at Harvard, now at York University, gave a slide lecture about the illustration of medieval manuscripts, with special attention to the miniatures of the pilgrims in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Saturday afternoon began with a somewhat alarming lecture by Fred C. Robinson, professor emeritus of English at Yale. Robinson pointed out ways in which modern editors ignore features such as section breaks in medieval manuscripts, and thereby change the way readers understand the "standard texts" of poems.

Images are not just static pictures; sound and physical action play a part. The conference ended with a Readers' Theater combining the serious Caedmon's Hymn, read by Helen Damico from the University of New Mexico, with the hilarious Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale performed by five of Kendall's students: Gloria Betcher, University of Iowa; Tom Hanks, Baylor University; Jill Keen, University of Minnesota; Karolyn Kinane, University of Minnesota; and Pat Price, Del Mar [CA] Library. The performances closed with a moving rendition of Chaucer's Retraction, read by Derek Pearsall.

A selection of pictures from the conference has been added to the conference web page:

[http://english.cla.umn.edu/text\\_image/index.htm](http://english.cla.umn.edu/text_image/index.htm)

— Jill Averil Keen and Patricia M. Eldred

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Text and Image in Medieval England" was sponsored by the Department of English and the center for Medieval Studies at the University of Minnesota, with additional support from the University of Minnesota McKnight Arts and Humanities Endowment, the College of Liberal Arts Scholarly Events Fund, the Department of French and Italian, the Department of History, the Center for Early Modern History, and Glasgow University Library, Special Collections.

## FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The conference has ended but the Text and Image project continues. In her welcoming speech, Susan Noakes, Director of the Center for Medieval Studies, announced the inauguration of an 18-month long lecture series on "Text and Image" in other regions of the medieval and early modern world. The Center also hopes to develop a digital image library for use in teaching.

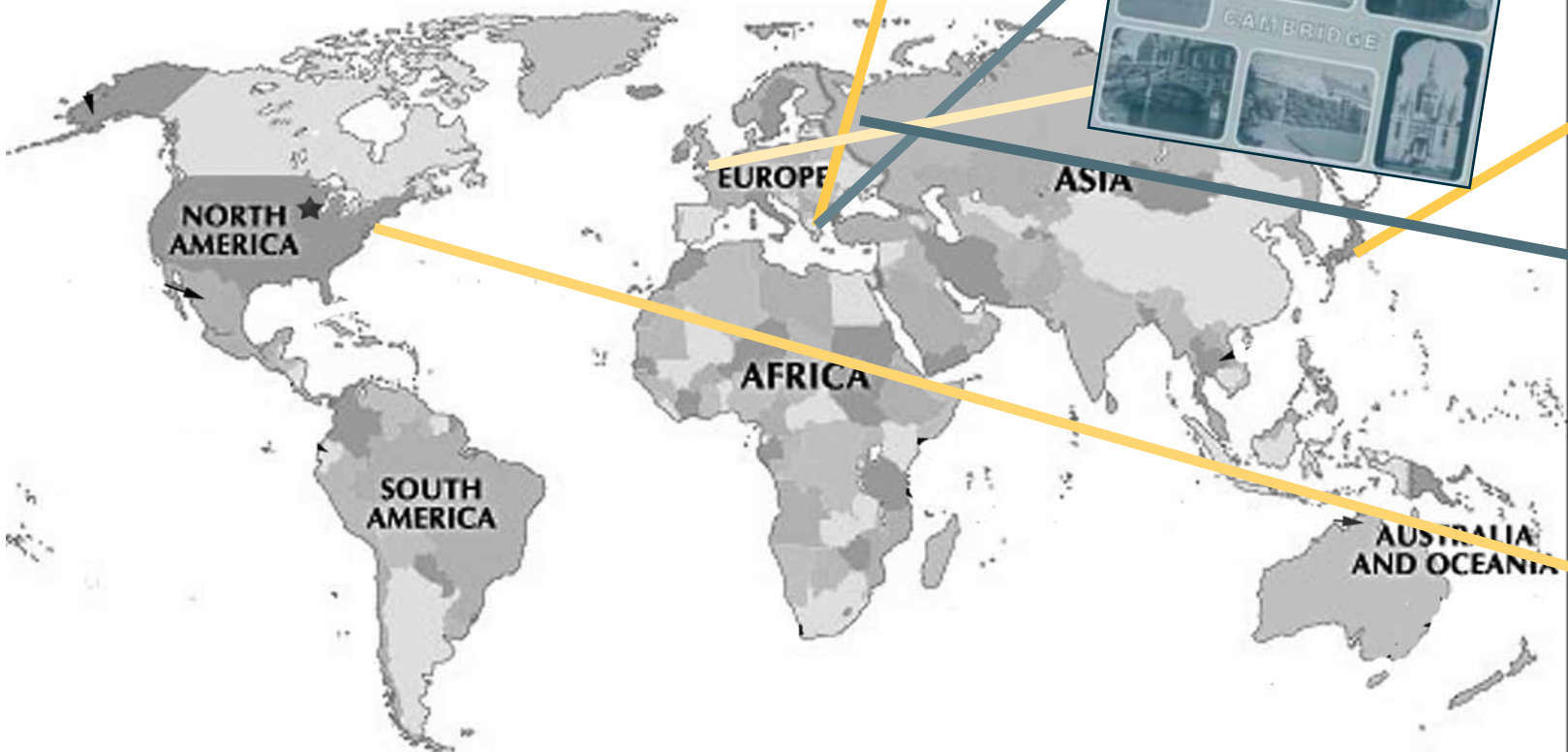
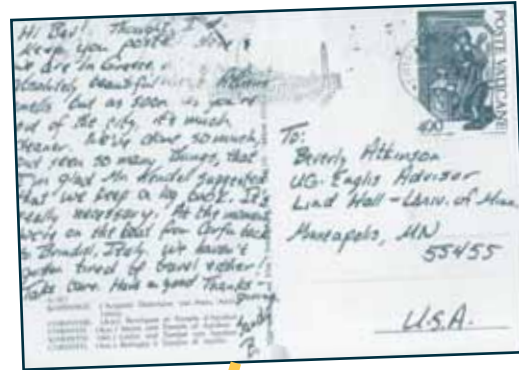
In addition, the organizers intend to pursue publication of conference proceedings, and a possible follow-up workshop, "Text and Image in the Classroom."



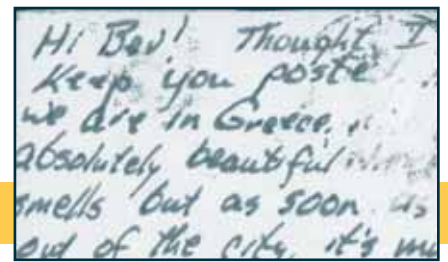
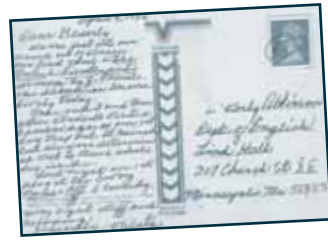
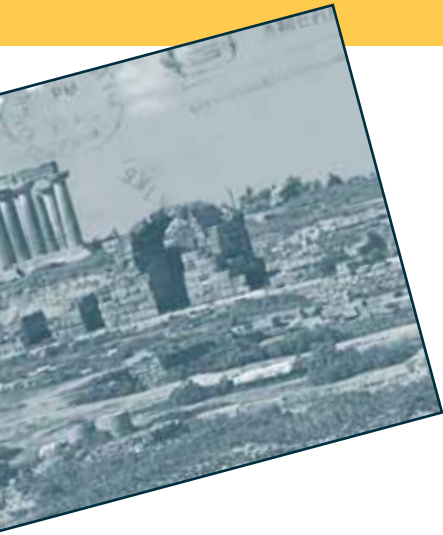
Gloria Betcher as the Wife of Bath, with Tom Hanks

# From All Ends of the Earth

From all the ends of the earth to hands of Beverly Atkinson, Associate to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, English majors have been penning postcards from their world travels. From that tall stack of cards we have reproduced a few here and spotlighted three recent experiences of students who have traveled abroad as part of their undergraduate education.



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## Gliding Over Germany

Rosalie Aronson  
English and German  
B.A. 2004

Last summer I traveled to Germany with the Student Project for Amity among Nations (SPAN) Program. SPAN sends students abroad to different countries every summer where they complete research on a topic of their choice and write a 50–100 page paper upon return to explain their findings.

The title of my research paper is, “The Portrayal of American Indians in German Literature: An Exploration of the Author

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## Lit and the Fringe

Brandon Lewis  
Senior English Major

During the summer of 2003, I had my first opportunity to travel abroad. For six weeks, I attended a summer school program at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. I quickly realized that the best part of the program was that students from all over the world were attending classes with me. They wanted to learn about life in the United States just as I hoped to learn about their home countries. My friends provided me with many anecdotes about their countries and this information led me to promise myself that I would see more of the world as soon as I could. During the

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## Lost in the Shadows

Aaron Perkins  
English and Spanish  
B.A. 2003

In Seville, Spain, there is ambiance and beauty implicit in most parts of the city. The air is infused with a permanent sweetness, which can be attributed to pollinating orange trees lining every avenue. During siesta a few of my good friends and I would meet near the Guadalquivir River, talking until our faces were sun-baked, and our stomachs called for more of that seafood paella, my Señora made so well. At night sometimes I found myself meandering through the narrow streets of la judería, the Jews quarters, just to get lost in the beautiful shadows. When I reflect on my year in Spain, the memories come back to me warm and indelible.

Not every memory I have of my time in Spain is so pleasantly dreamlike. When the war in Iraq broke out, Seville was host to numerous riots and manifestations. Classes were canceled while Spaniards and a few disgusted Americans alike lined the streets to protest the preemptive strike. One morning while walking to class, I saw an American flag with its stars removed and Nazi swastikas in their places. Spanish newspapers and television news was plastered with pictures of Iraqi civilians burnt and wounded from explosions

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# Looking Back

A Retrospective Look at the Department of English  
by **Ann Pflaum**, University of Minnesota Historian

## MARY ELLEN CHASE

University of Minnesota M.A. 1918, Ph.D. English,  
Assistant Professor 1922-1926

Smith College 1926-1930 associate professor; 1930-  
1955, professor

Author of more than fifty articles, biographies  
essays, novels, essays



Mary Ellen Chase, photo courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives

**“D.H. Lawrence has died...go to the library and read everything you can find...class dismissed.”**

(Mary Ellen Chase to a Smith College English class in 1930)

Mary Ellen Chase's publications spanned more than fifty years and included thirty-eight books (biography and autobiography, novels, books about writing, popular works on the Bible), more than twenty short stories, and close to fifty articles for magazines such as *Atlantic Commonwealth*, *Harpers*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Readers Digest*. She was born in Blue Hill Maine in 1887, the second of eight children. Always an avid reader and a great admirer of *Country of the Pointed Firs*, Chase was thrilled when her father took her to visit Maine's best known living writer, Sara Orne Jewett. Asked by the author what she wanted to be when she became an adult, Chase replied, "I want to write books as you do." As Chase recalled the conversation, Jewett then said, "I am sure you will. And good books too, all about Maine."<sup>1</sup> Beyond her writing, she is most recognized for her originality and impact as a teacher. Her college teaching began in

1917 at the University of Minnesota and continued for the eight years until she went to Smith College, where she taught for another twenty-nine years until her retirement in 1955.

Chase attended Blue Hill Academy, which had a rigorous program in English, Latin, Greek, history, and chemistry. In 1904 she entered the University of Maine. Following her graduation as an English major in 1909, she went west to Chicago to seek a teaching position. (She had taken time off prior to her college graduation, teaching in a country school in a neighboring town.) She found her second teaching position at Hillside Home School in Spring Green Wisconsin, where she spent two years overseeing athletics, serving as house mother, and teaching English and history in the progressive private girls boarding school run by the aunts of Frank Lloyd

Wright. In February of 1914 she returned home to Blue Hill, because her father, Everett Chase, a lawyer and legislator, was dying.<sup>2</sup>

Following Everett Chase's death, the family faced a severe financial crisis because he had left virtually no assets other than parcels of land which he had received in payment for legal services. Another blow for Mary Ellen Chase was that a cough which she had been battling since the previous summer turned out to be tuberculosis. As a result, she moved to Bozeman, Montana, because its climate was thought to be salutary for her health. Her forced isolation allowed her plenty of time to read and write. Her biographer notes that paradoxically this "resulted not in a sense of deprivation, but in a sense of liberating freedom."<sup>3</sup> She read the works of English essay

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# Outstanding Teachers

## 2003-2004

Department of English Faculty Teaching Award Winners



The Horace T. Morse–Minnesota Alumni  
Award for Outstanding Contribution to  
Undergraduate Education

**John Watkins**

“I am happiest and most productive in an environment that fosters ranging interdisciplinary encounters and even occasional collisions.”



Award for Outstanding Contributions to  
Post-Baccalaureate Graduate and  
Professional Education

**Madelon Sprengnether**

“My aim...is to set the stage for my students to respond to one another’s work in a way that encourages them to see themselves as peers in the process of learning—as well as future leaders in their fields.”



The Arthur “Red” Motley Exemplary  
Teaching Award

**Thomas Augst**

“I’m interested in seeing how tangible literature can be. I think to great extent literary studies have lost touch with the world. I want to be a bridge.”



Ruth Christie Distinguished Teaching  
Award in English

**Joel Weinsheimer**

Professor Weinsheimer teaches undergraduate courses in textual interpretation, analysis, and investigation and introductory courses in poetry, fiction, and drama.

# Summer Reading

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**Marc Curtis Anderson (M.F.A. 1999)**

*Jesus Sound Explosion*

The University of Georgia Press (2003)

“An affectionate, sometimes hilarious portrait of growing up evangelical. Anderson depicts the allure of salvation on the one hand, and sex, drugs, and rock and roll on the other. A great read.”

—Julie Schumacher



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**Professor Ray Gonzalez**

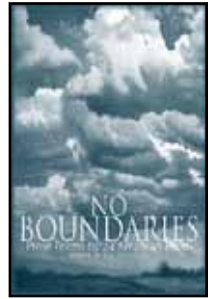
Editor, *No Boundaries: Prose Poems by 24*

*American Poets*

Tupelo Press (2003)

“*No Boundaries* features 24 writers whose prose poems have been, and continue to be, critical to the development of this, one of the most exciting, captivating and magical of poetic forms.”

—Tupelo Press



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**Charles Baxter, Edelstein-Keller Visiting**

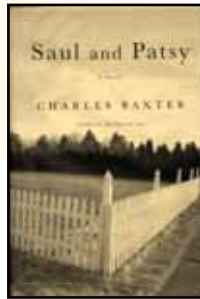
Professor in Creative Writing

*Saul and Patsy*

Pantheon Books (2003)

“Based on two of his previous stories--the novel greatly expounds the title characters' lives and further explores themes of irony and sentimentality ”

—Stephen M. Deusner



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**Judith Healey, English Advisory Board**

*The Canterbury Papers*

Harper Collins (2003)

“*The Canterbury Papers* is a strong historical fiction mystery that enables the audience to see an era filled with treachery that makes the Democrat and Republicans parties look like choirs.”

—Harriet Klausner, *The Best Reviews*



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**Professor Michael Dennis Browne**

*Give Her the River: A Father's Wish for His Daughter*

Atheneum Books (2004)

“For everyone who wants to instill in a child a love of nature and an appreciation of the intangibles of life, *Give Her the River* is a gem.”

—Dorie McCullough Lawson



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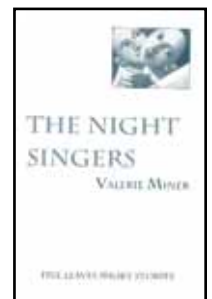
**Professor Valerie Miner**

*The Night Singers*

Five Leaves Publications (2004)

“Miner is a writer of reach, audacity, range, uniquely important to understanding our time... She gives us the beat of everyday urban life”

—Tillie Olsen



# New Books by English Department Alumni, Faculty, and Friends

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**Susanne Nevin (B.A. 1980, M.A. 1991), with**

Charlotte Haarmann

***Frauenlandschaften***

Drey-Verlag (2000)

*Frauenlandschaften* is a collection of fictionalized portraits of strong country women and their hard lives in post-war era Germany.

—Judy Woodward



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**Professor Julie Schumacher**

***Grass Angel***

Delacorte (2004)

“Honest, lyrical, and deeply felt, *Grass Angel* is the kind of book that you want to insist that others read. Really. You must read it. I insist.”

—Kate DiCamillo, author of the Newbery Honor Book *Because of Winn-Dixie*



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**Shannon Olson (M.F.A. 1998)**

***Children of God Go Bowling***

Viking (2004)

“[Olson] takes us on a whirlwind tour of the heartbreaking (yet often hilarious) process of recycling old college boyfriends, attending group therapy, and maintaining a desperate attachment to *feng shui* in an effort to clear out the spiritual clutter from her apartment and life.”

—*The Rake*



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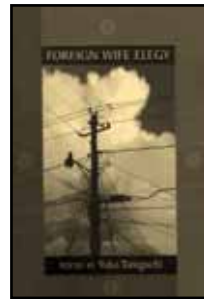
**Yuko Taniguchi (M.F.A. 2001)**

***Foreign Wife Elegy***

Coffee House Press (2004)

“Yuko Taniguchi, the Japanese-American daughter of a Hiroshima survivor, presents her debut compilation of poetry in *Foreign Wife Elegy*, a collection of brief yet moving verses about the crossroads and decisions of life itself.”

—*Midwest Book Review*



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**Michael O'Rourke, English Advisory Board**

***O'Banion's Gift***

St. Johns Publishing Company (2003)

“Riley McReynolds is back. The hero of Michael O'Rourke's debut novel, *The Ordeal of Riley McReynolds*, is now a partner specializing in white-collar criminal defense at Cosgrove & Levi, a large Minneapolis law firm.”

—The Hennepin Lawyer



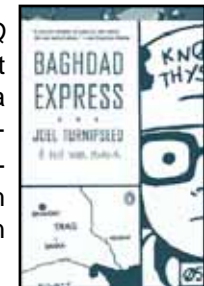
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**Joel Turnipseed**

***Baghdad Express: A Gulf War Memoir***

Penguin (2003)

“Turnipseed has expanded a 1997 *GQ* article on his experiences as a reluctant Marine during the first war with Iraq into a compelling memoir about the camaraderie, ‘soul rending boredom,’ and horror of life on the battlefield by a bookish soldier more comfortable hefting a pen than a gun.”—*Publishers Weekly*



# Faculty News

**John Mowitt** has been appointed to membership in the School of Social Sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, for the academic year 2004–05.

“Pilgrims’ Hymn,” by **Michael Dennis Browne** and composer Steven Paulus, was sung by the Armed Forces Chorus during the prelude at the state funeral for President Ronald Reagan, held in National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., on June 11, 2004. Browne and Paulus wrote the hymn as the finale to their one-act opera, *The Three Hermits* (1997). On May 30, 2004, the same piece was sung by the Dale Warland Singers as the last song at their very last performance, in Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis.

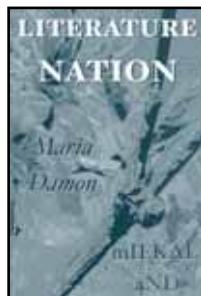
## New Books by English Department Alumni, Faculty, and Friends

**Professor Maria Damon, with Miekal And**  
*Literature Nation*

*Potes and Poets* (2003)

“It’s not nature, but many references to nature and its imagery abound in the work. It’s a kind of list. *Literature Nation* is a constant, but continually growing idea. It’s not a place or we simply haven’t arrived there yet. The society, without their knowing, changes with it. We try to control it by speaking to one another, teaching, writing books about it, making things.”

—Bob Marcacci, *Moria Poetry Journal*



## Special Thanks

Thanks to the generosity of Michael O’Rourke, the Department of English has been able to establish the O’Rourke Fellowship in Creative Writing. Beneficiaries of this endowment will be full-time graduate students in the Creative Writing program who are in good academic standing and show strong potential in their field; the fellowship may be applied to a variety of expenses related to graduate study. Michael O’Rourke’s gift builds on previous gifts by Steve Snyder and Jim and Teddy Gesell: together they establish an endowment that qualifies for matching funds from the 21st Century Graduate Fellowship Endowment Fund, a general University endowment fund that has been dedicated to graduate education.

## From the Editor

As the re-design of the newsletter progresses I would love to hear your reactions and your news. The Alumni, Faculty, Friends, and Student News sections will be returning to their full splendor in the coming issues. Additionally, we will be holding drawings for signed copies of books by the acclaimed authors and scholars that we host throughout the year. Details to follow in the next issue.—nk

# Alumni News

**Eugene Spott (B.A. 1956)** Though not an English major, Spott noticed the 1954 faculty photo from the Fall 2003 issue of *English at Minnesota* and remembered the English classes and professors from his time at the University. Specifically, he remembers Frank Buckley who would “briskly enter the room, quickly glance around to catch any late comers and begin his lecture. He was always absolutely prepared. His last sentence ended with the bell.”

**Alan Powers (Ph.D. 1976)** Professor of English at Bristol Community College, Fall River, Massachusetts, has published *Bird Talk: Conversations with Birds* (Berkeley, CA: Frog, Ltd., 2003), which relates bird song to music and poetry. He is also the author of several articles and book chapters on Shakespeare and Eric Gill.

**Usko S. Shivute (M.A. 1985)** completed diplomatic work in Washington D.C. in 2000 and returned home to Namibia. He retired in October 2002 and was then appointed Pro-Vice Chancellor at the International University of Management on April 1, 2003, where he is currently working.

A chapter by **Patricia Kelly Santelmann (Ph.D. 1987)**, “Written as Women Write: *Anne of Green Gables* within the Female Literary Tradition,” has been included in *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 140, published in 2003 by the Gale Group. The chapter first appeared in *Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L. M. Montgomery: Essays on Her Novels and Journals*, edited by Mary Henley Rubio (Canadian Children’s Press 1994).

**Dennis Zehren (B.A. 1998)** graduated from St. Paul Seminary, and on May 29, 2004, he was ordained into the priesthood.

**Gerri Brightwell (Ph.D. 2004)** has accepted a tenure-track assistant professorship in English at the University of Alaska–Fairbanks. Her Ph.D. dissertation was titled “Directing Class: The Servant in Victorian Crime Fiction.” Her advisors were **Gordon Hirsch** and **Donald Ross**.

## New Books by English Department Alumni, Faculty, and Friends

**Morton D. Elevitch (B.A. 1949)**

*Dog Tags Yapping: the World War II Letters of a Combat GI*

Southern Illinois UP (2003)

“This is war as it should be told—through the words of an individual who was there on the front-lines. M. D. Elevitch is an incredible artist and a real American hero, and his war letters reveal an extraordinary story with great passion and humor. *Dog Tags Yapping*, like the author himself, is simply sensational.”

—Andrew Carroll, editor of *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars*



# Creative Writing

## 2003-2004

### Reading Round-up: Edelstein-Keller Visiting Writer Series

**October 2003** Pulitzer Prize-winning poet **Charles Simic** opened the second **Minnesota Poetry Festival**. Other poets included **Jane Hirshfield**, **Angela Shannon**, **Anna George Meek**, **Greg Hewitt**, and **Juan Felipe Herrera**, who spear-headed a performance-poetry workshop at the Loft Literary Center that involved tiny notebooks, a boom box and.....Post-it Notes?.....The Edelstein-Keller Visiting Professor in Creative Writing, **Charles Baxter**, lectured on “Great Faces in Literature” to a packed house at McNamara Alumni Center.....**November** novelist **Lorrie Moore** brought her unique wit and pungent take on humanity to Coffman Union Theatre.....**February 2004** *New York Times* editorialist and essayist **Verlyn Klinkenborg** visited to discuss the environment, politics, haymaking, and the perfect sentence.....**March** novelist **Andrea Barrett** read at the Weisman Art Museum to a rapt crowd, discussing everything from nineteenth-century natural history and science to her new novel about a sanatorium.....**April** memoirist and former cattle-rancher **Judy Blunt** came to the Weisman to read from her award-winning memoir, *Breaking Clean*, her gritty account of high-tailing it off the ranch, leaving behind a confused husband and the only life she'd ever known.....**May** “Love, love, love. It’s all you need...” **Garrison Keillor** closed out the reading season with **The Green Light at the End of the Dock Festival of Romantic Writing** at Ted Mann Concert Hall. On a blustery, thundery Sunday of a Mother’s Day, he gathered seventeen finalists (students, faculty, and staff of the U) onstage to perform their original love poems and love songs. With celebrity judges **Michael Dennis Browne**, **Vern Sutton**, and **Jennine Crucet**, Keillor listened to a variety of love-styles, including an ode to the matchmaking powers of a Macintosh computer and a sonic all-female band complete with a pregnant librarian playing electric guitar. More than \$3,000 in prize money was awarded. **Upcoming: Fall 2004 September 21:** Poet and nonfiction writer **Gerald Stern**...**October 21:** Poet and Renaissance Scholar **Linda Gregerson**.....**November 4:** Novelist **Lan Samantha Chang**...**December 2-3, First Books**, featuring five newly published authors from around the country...Spring 2005 **February 23:** Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist **Edward P. Jones**...**March 3:** Poet **Linda Hogan**.....**April 12:** Fiction writer **David Bradley**.....for updates, info, and additions see

<http://english.cla.umn.edu/creativewriting/program.html>

# Love Test

GARRISON KEILLOR HOSTS ROMANTIC WRITING FESTIVAL

By Cass Erickson from UMNnews

[www.umn.edu/umnnews](http://www.umn.edu/umnnews)

“Not a summer’s day but a thunderstorm,  
Nature’s wrath that gives life ...”

As Jenny Blaine read these words from her poem, “Thor, God of Love,” a peal of thunder interrupted, rumbling through Ted Mann Concert Hall as if to say, “I approve.”

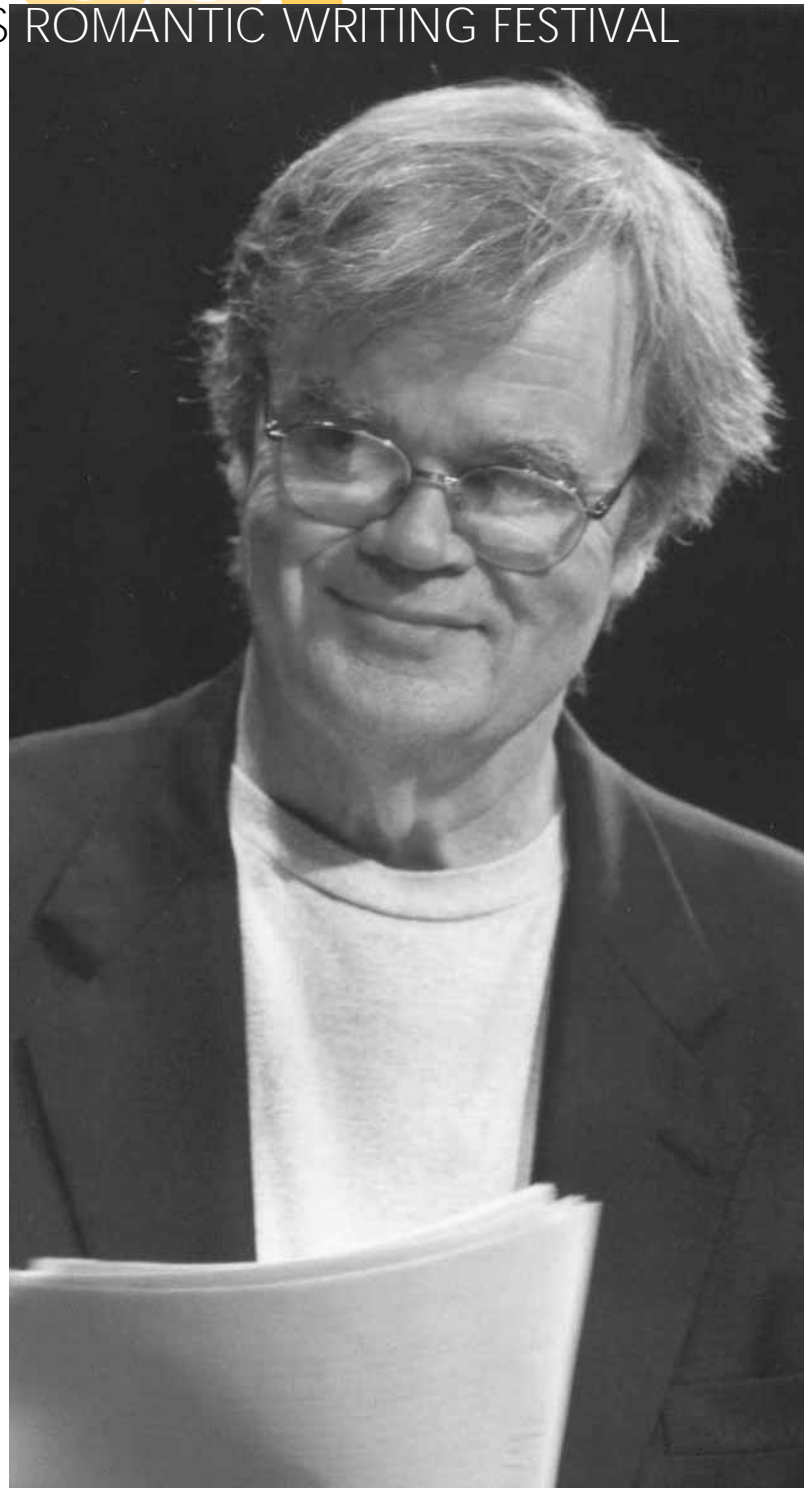
As well he might. On May 9, Blaine won one of the top two awards in *The Green Light at the End of the Dock: Festival of Romantic Writing*, a contest hosted by Garrison Keillor (with a nod to Jay Gatsby’s fascination with the green light on the end of Daisy’s dock and all the longing it implied).

The ubiquitous alum (class of ‘66), Keillor seems to enjoy his association with the English department and can’t get enough of stirring up talent at his beloved alma mater. He’s a man who likes variety and never lacks for creative solutions. So, since he couldn’t squeeze in teaching a class at the U this year, he enlisted the Creative Writing Program’s help in organizing the festival and got additional support from the Edelstein-Keller Endowment for Visiting Writers.

He solicited romantic songs (lyrics only) and poems (sonnets encouraged but not necessary) from U students, staff, and alumni. “We received many poems about the breakup of romance. . . we aren’t interested in those. . . we remember those too clearly. . . what we need is the beauty of how it felt at the beginning,” Keillor says.

Despite the violent storm that whipped through the Twin Cities on Mother’s Day, a chummy entourage from the English department and poetry devotees nearly packed the house as blue-jean-clad Keillor took the stage. In the singular cadence of his “Prairie Home Companion” radio show, he opened with a clever monologue about the passion of mothers followed by his recitation of an e.e. cummings poem, “Since Feeling is First.” Clearly a poetry aficionado, Keillor, who has edited a well received and popular book of poetry titled *Good Poems*, was in the company of kindred spirits as he was surrounded by 15 poet-finalists—some of whom were strikingly dressed in bright scarves, gowns, and

continued on page 30



Garrison Keillor hosted the first *The Green Light at the End of the Dock: Festival of Romantic Writing* on May 9 to discover the best romantic songs and poems from U students, staff, and alumni.

# Gift of Babble

Tyler, “Gift of Babble,” *continued from page 3*

University of Michigan was a testament to the vitality of Minnesota’s M.F.A. program in creative writing, whose distinguished faculty includes poets Michael Dennis Browne and Ray Gonzalez, novelists and essayists Julie Schumacher and Valerie Miner, and memoirist (and MacArthur “genius grant” recipient) Patricia Hampl.

Baxter’s coming to the Twin Cities was also a personal homecoming: he grew up here, in a family fractured and reshaped by the early death of his father, and graduated (*summa cum laude*) from St. Paul’s Macalester College, where he edited the literary magazine. It was in the Twin Cities, living on an estate near Lake Minnetonka (called by his stepfather—improbably—“World’s End”) that Baxter began creating worlds through storytelling.

“I had a strange gift, a gift of babble,” says Baxter, who recalls turning that gift into tales about an imaginary family that he would spin for his brothers on car trips. Noting that his babbling eventually morphed into a lifelong habit of day-dreaming his way into written works, he suspects that the buds of many a writer are formed by a preternatural fascination with words.

“What makes anyone a writer is as mysterious as what makes anyone into a musician or a painter,” says Baxter. “Musicians probably hear music in their heads. A painter just has to draw. I think writers often hear the sound of words in their heads—there’s a hyperacuity there. And I think writers also are attracted to stories in intimate ways—they want to tell stories, read stories, listen to stories.”

## Path to a Literary Life

When Baxter began putting words on paper, his stories came out as poems. As a graduate student at SUNY, he focused on Elizabethan poetry and published two volumes of poems with Minnesota’s New Rivers Press (both now listed on his Web site as “Oddities, Early Works”). Then he switched his specialty to modern fiction, and turned his pen to prose; his dissertation roughed out the fictive territory he would eventually explore in his first novel, the 1987 work *First Light*. Of his shift from poetry to prose, Baxter says simply, “In a sense I both lost my way as a poet and I found poetry at its best in narrative form.”

Initially, though, the prose form proved perilously capacious. “I was very taken with the sound of my own prose, which I think is a problem for many young writers,” Baxter says. “You keep going until you’ve skipped past the point you want to reach. You find it’s such a joy to do what you’re doing, you just do it too much.”

Baxter says his long apprentice period ended only when, teetering on the brink of giving up fiction entirely to write criticism, “I finally boiled

down all my failed novels into a single short story.” The result was “Harmony of the Mind,” snapped up by the *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Baxter recalls that the journal’s editor called him up to “say, in so many words, ‘Who *are* you?’”

Describing the story as “about a music student who is not as good as he hopes to be,” Baxter says “Harmony of the Mind” drew directly from his own experiences as a floundering writer. (At one point a teacher denounces her student by asking, “Why does your piano playing make me sick?”) It also set Baxter firmly on the path to a literary life. The story became part of a 1984 story collection (under the same title) that won the Associated Writing Program Award for Short Fiction (judged—ironically enough—by the same Donald Barthelme Baxter had nervously avoided at SUNY). Its publication was followed a year later by a second collection and two years after that, by a debut novel.

Baxter is keenly aware that his own history—the idea that one good story can change your life—is cheering to his students. Beyond that, though, he prefers “encouraging my students to find their own voices, in their own ways” to dispensing salubrious bromides or prescriptive “how-to’s.”

“I think there’s a great danger in being too specific about what young writers should be doing,” he says. Still, university writing programs, he maintains, “serve the same kind of function as a music school or studio art department. They help a writer pay close attention, and offer an environment in which craft and technical matters can be illuminated and explored. They can help a writer learn a lot about the essentials of characterization, voice, scene creation, and plot—as well as close reading, the attention to detail that will make them good editors of their own work.”

What even great writing programs like Minnesota’s can’t provide, Baxter says, is “the inspiration or subject matter or vision” on which good writing turns; a childhood fascination with words is only the flame, not the fire. For Baxter, the issue of what animates a writer is highly individual and infinitely complex. In his own case, he says his indelible need to write stories and novels “about the ordinary lives I spend a lot of my time observing” might be explained by “a metaphor I once I heard that I liked: ‘I wasn’t invited to the party.’ I write about it instead.”

## Themes and Variations

The basic thematic stuff of a writer’s work is, in Baxter’s view, likely to become visible only as poems and stories are written. “I’ve always liked the answer William de Kooning gave when he was asked about the themes of one of his paintings. He said, ‘I’m not an ornithologist; I’m a bird.’ As a writer, I don’t start with themes. I start with dramatic images and characters and then find where the story goes.”

# om page 3

Baxter does see “things that turn up repeatedly” in his work, from early story collections such as 1985’s *Through the Safety Net* (in which Saul and Patsy first make an appearance), to the new novel *Saul and Patsy* (which finds the couple grappling with contemporary community life in Baxter’s oft-used fictional town of Five Oaks, Michigan). “There’s often a sudden shock that disrupts the flow of things—something that removes the sense of security and stability that people have,” Baxter observes.

“Besides that, I think you can find in all my works characters who are reasonably well-intentioned who find themselves on the wrong side of the moral map.” This would include the protagonist of *Shadow Play*, an assistant city manager in Five Oaks who finds he has made a devil’s deal in luring a chemical plant to his economically depressed town. It would

Letting his mind wander as he falls asleep, does the dishes, or “is just in the company of other people, listening to things,” Baxter lets his mind spin narratives unhampered by “American myths about productivity.” At some point, he says, “I feel that I’m ready to sit down and write—then I just try to get it all onto the page before it’s gone.”

## Literature and Culture

The process of writing fiction is no less idiosyncratic than imagination, no less infinitely varied than style, Baxter emphasizes. Yet in a 1997 volume of essays on fiction called *Burning Down the House!*, Baxter drew on his many years of experience as a writer, reader, and teacher to

**“I think you can find in all my works characters who are reasonably well-intentioned who find themselves on the wrong side of the moral map.”**

also include the character at the center of *Believers*, the 1997 novella about the well-intentioned American priest who accompanies a couple to Nazi Germany in 1938, then, as Baxter explains, “realizes the situation he’s in, for which he’s partly responsible, and tries to morally extricate himself, which means he has to give up being a priest.”

Baxter is particularly proud of *Believers*, which was drawn from real-life stories of people known to his family. “They’re all your children, of course,” he says of his many works of fiction. “But I do think *Believers* is one of the best things I’ve written, although it by no means got the attention *The Feast of Love* did. I just felt this work had the complexity and depth of emotion I always hope to get into fiction; I felt I had gotten it. It’s darker than my other novels. There’s usually a lot of humor in my work, especially in *The Feast of Love* [in some ways a modern riff on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*], and almost always in *Saul and Patsy*—but it’s just not there in *Believers*.”

*Believers* found its way onto the page the same way all of Baxter’s works do: through daydreams that unfold in narrative form, in many ways hearkening directly back to the “strange gift of babbling” that shaped his imaginary-family tales in boyhood. He finishes every one of his works thinking that he’s entirely tapped out. “Then I just wait until I feel it again—until I have something I have to get on the page. Someone tells you a story. Or you imagine an interesting incongruity. I daydream my way through these things—what if that happened, and then that happened. Where is it taking place. Who are they?”

advance some general ideas about “storytelling in the broadest sense,” ideas he says were meant to have “what Gertrude Stein called the excitement of unsubstantiated generalities.” He allows that his provocations have succeeded in “making a bit of a splash” in literary circles.

In “Against Epiphanies,” Baxter reflects upon the “insight ending” that shows up in work by a striking number of contemporary fiction writers, particularly in the United States. “There are dozens and dozens of ways of ending a story,” he observes. “The insight ending has always been around; James Joyce is famous for it. But Americans seem addicted to it; I look at my students’ work or each year’s *Best American Short Stories* and frequently see endings along the lines of, ‘Suddenly she realized. . . .’ I think that this connects to the marketing of insight in this country—think of self-help books, talk shows. This is a pragmatic culture. How you profit from a story—that’s what people look for. We don’t want to look far for meaning.”

Baxter describes himself as “an observer, not a cultural critic,” but in “Mistakes Were Made,” he probes the connection between an American fiction he sees as rife with passive characters, and a cultural and political landscape in which “people in positions of responsibility decline to take responsibility.” In his creative writing classes, students often “create characters who have no agency,” he says. “Things happen to them. There’s nothing they desire or fear; they put nothing out; they

continued on page 20

# Gift of Babble

## continued

Tyler, “Gift of Babble,” *continued from page 19*

are nothing but passive recipients of fate. I looked around and saw that this was also true in the life of the culture.

“Harry Truman said ‘the buck stops here,’ but that’s not often the case anymore in public life. What I see as prevalent are ‘dysfunctional narratives’ where people are not answerable for their experiences; fate is responsible.”

Taken together, Baxter says, the epiphany-embracing, responsibility-shy characters who surface in fiction and in real life “are manifestations of a kind of neediness you see in our culture, for meanings on the one hand and for innocence on the other. You can see this in the morning newspaper or the TV news, the way stories are being told about what’s going on in the world.”

Baxter’s leeringness of “being too specific” with his students doesn’t preclude his prodding them to write “more functional narratives than they might otherwise be inclined to write.” Most young writers, he observes, “are writers because they read a lot. They’re bookish people. I think it’s useful to remind them that good fiction is built on action—not on conflict avoidance, but on conflict. I ask my students to think about villains, antagonists, and where their ideas might come from. The trick is to get your characters into motion somehow so they’re not always passive recipients of fate, and also to have them grapple with life in ways that aren’t necessarily neat.”

### Teacher and Writer

Juggling the engaged life of a teacher with the solitary rhythms of the writer is challenging, says Baxter. Much of his most productive writing takes place during summer sojourns at his cabin on Lake Superior’s North Shore, just north of Two Harbors. During teaching months, the Mac laptop on which he customarily writes (always in the morning, facing toward the sun) usually stays off his desk, supplanted by heaps of student manuscripts and proofs of books from former students (to which he unfailingly contributes generous cover blurbs).

He’s ventured out a few times to promote *Saul and Patsy*, including trips this past spring to Houston and back to Michigan. He’s also managed to coedit and contribute an essay to a forthcoming book of “memories and appreciations” on William Maxwell, whom he knew quite well. And he’s squeezed in readings of works by contemporary writers he admires, such as Edward P. Jones (*The Known World*) and Jennifer Egan (*Look at Me*)—as well as a rereading of Thomas Hardy’s classic *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (“I’m curious about the way he uses physiognomy—face as a clue to character”).

As he lets his mind roam toward new narratives of his own, he knows only that his future work—whether a novel or the short stories he prefers (“I like the concentration, the efficiency of the story form”) won’t involve Saul or Patsy. Nor will he return to Five Oaks, Michigan, the fictional setting for those and other characters. “I’m done with Five Oaks—I really think I’ve exhausted the uses I could put to it,” says Baxter, whose

“What makes one a writer is as mysterious as what makes one into a musician or a painter . . . I think writers often hear the sound of words in their heads—there’s a hyperacuity there. And I think writers also are attracted to stories in intimate ways—they want to tell stories, read stories, listen to stories.”

own move to Minneapolis last year was prompted in part by his “wanting a bigger city” after 30 years in Ann Arbor.

Baxter told a New York Times interviewer, only half in jest, that he might write next about a psychopath, an idea prompted by his sense that “Saul’s sociopathic brother Howie, in *Saul and Patsy*, might be an American for the 21st-century, just as I think Saul was a characteristically 20th-century American. Saul assimilates, finds a way of living in a particular place. Howie is a shape shifter, kind of a confidence man. Everywhere is his territory; he’s peripatetic, kind of a trickster. We’ve always had people like this, but I feel I see more of them now.”

It’s only a notion, he adds—one of many ongoing ruminations about life, literature, and culture. In a senior seminar this past spring, he asked his students to consider “why we’re suddenly getting so many books and movies about amnesia. Tim O’Brien’s *Lake of the Woods*, the new Jim Carrey movie, the film *Memento*—students had many titles of their own.”

Baxter, who edited a 1999 anthology on the subject of memory for Graywolf Press, says he and his students speculated that amnesia “might be a strategic survival skill—a response to the data smog that surrounds us.

“That sort of discussion is one of the joys of being a writer at a university,” he adds. “You can ask questions you don’t know the answers to. That’s bound to provoke your students in interesting ways and nourish your own work as well.”

—Kate Tyler is a freelance writer based in Minneapolis

## Published Works by Charles Baxter

*Saul and Patsy* (novel, 2003)  
*The Feast of Love* (novel, 2000)  
*Believers* (novella and stories, 1997)  
*Burning Down the House!* (essays, 1997)  
*Shadow Play* (novel, 1983)  
*A Relative Stranger* (stories, 1990)  
*Imaginary Paintings* (poems, 1989)  
*First Light* (novel, 1987)  
*Through the Safety Net* (stories, 1985)  
*Harmony of the World* (stories, 1984)  
*The South Dakota Guidebook* (poems, 1984)  
*Chameleon* (poems, 1984)

### Edited collections:

*Best New American Voices 2001* (fiction, 2001)  
*Bringing the Devil to His Knees* (essays, 2001)  
*The Business of Memory* (essays, 1999)

# study abroad

**Perkins, “Lost in the Shadows,”** *continued from page 9*  
and misguided mortar shells.

Despite the anti-American sentiment, Seville at times, seemed like a teeming US Colony. I believe my American compatriots could have tried a little harder to assimilate themselves into Spanish culture. It is definitely not advisable to go everywhere in large groups of Americans! Frequently, this was the case. The program I went with was Cultural Experiences Abroad (Gowithcea.com). CEA is an outside program not associated with the University of Minnesota. Their best attributes are the costs of their programs and a customer service oriented approach toward study abroad. When it came to tackling the whole study-abroad monster, CEA was great. One of the most disagreeable aspects of this program, however, was the size of the group of students studying in Seville. In addition to the 90 students in my program during the spring semester, there were around 2,000 Americans studying in Seville. Often times on the pre-planned excursions, I began to feel less like a scholar and more like a tourist.

I dealt with these grievances in a couple of ways. First of all, I stopped going on the group excursions and instead busied myself with my demanding courses. A few of the highlights of my academic experience at the Universidad de Sevilla, were studying International Relations, Politics of the European Union, Contemporary Spanish Cinema and Literature of the Spanish Golden Age. In between classes, people always seemed to gravitate down towards the café. To sip a café con leche in the excitement of this bustling cafetería was an experience all its own.

In addition to taking advantage of the resources of my demanding classes and interesting professors, I sought after and obtained an internship where I could use my Spanish language skills in a real world setting. On my first Saturday volunteering for Juventud Idente, an extracurricular program for inner-city youth at Jose Obrero Public School, I took the bus to a part of the city that I had never been. The buildings were not kept up very well, there were no orange trees and the air smelled stale. I walked through large rusted iron gates and a few students eyed me as I came in. My accent made them giggle. I could understand them and they me: a great first step! The younger children were telling me I was tall; the older teens tried out jokes. Some of the students wore shoes with holes. Others had stains on their clothes, sullen demeanors and silent passivity.

Each Saturday we separated into groups to teach role-playing, discuss books they were assigned and complete writing exercises. I was leading a team of students who were 12-17 years old. Something incredible happened those Saturdays. Ana and Rafael were children of gypsies and they would come into my class with glazed eyes and sad faraway looks. Four hours later, they would be expressive and even exuberant. On Saturday afternoons my students felt free to express themselves.

When I remember my year studying in Spain and traveling throughout Europe, my dearest memories are not of large cathedrals, London at Christmastime, gorgeous Italian sunsets, the sound of a rising Mediterranean tide, New Years in Paris, nor the frothy taste of Guinness at an pub in Achilles Sound, Ireland. The warm indelible scenes that replay most frequently in my mind, feature the friends I made, the conversations and laughs we exchanged and the times we danced into the morning. My experience working as a teacher in Seville allowed me to understand that the positive influence that you have over others is not easily measured. It is hidden in the sparkle of the eyes when they see you, the surprise when you ask them a question (in imperfect Spanish), and they answer, curious to know you care.

**Aronson, “Gliding Over Germany,”** *continued from page 9*

Karl May and His Influential Work, *Winnetou*.” Karl May was a German author who wrote about American Indians and American settlers at the end of the nineteenth century.

I also chose to travel to Germany because I have familial connections to the country. Both my grandmother and my mother were born in Germany, and we have several relatives who still live there in a small town thirty minutes outside of Munich, called Erding. I was able to stay with my relatives, so it enabled me to get to know them much better.

Once in Germany, I conducted several interviews of professors at the Ludwig Maximilians Universität München (LMU), professionals, students, and other citizens. Professor Michael Korhammer, who was very helpful, invited me to go gliding with his family near the base of the Alps. I agreed and one hot Saturday we drove to a town near Bayrischzell to a small airfield, which was comprised of two fields separated by a road. The landing site was just a field with a big machine shed next to it for the gliders. They use a winch to pull the planes into the air and then release them.

There was a bike in the big shed next to the airfield, so after watching a few planes take off and land, I took the bike and went for a ride on the paths around the base of the Alps. I biked partway up the mountain, but I did not get very far before it got too steep; so I stashed the bike and hiked the mountain by foot. It was really fun, liberating experience, even though the temperature neared 100 degrees F. At one point, I felt rather dizzy, but luckily, I found a small stream where I drank and splashed some water on my face. Hiking alone in the Alps was one of the most thrilling experiences I have ever had.

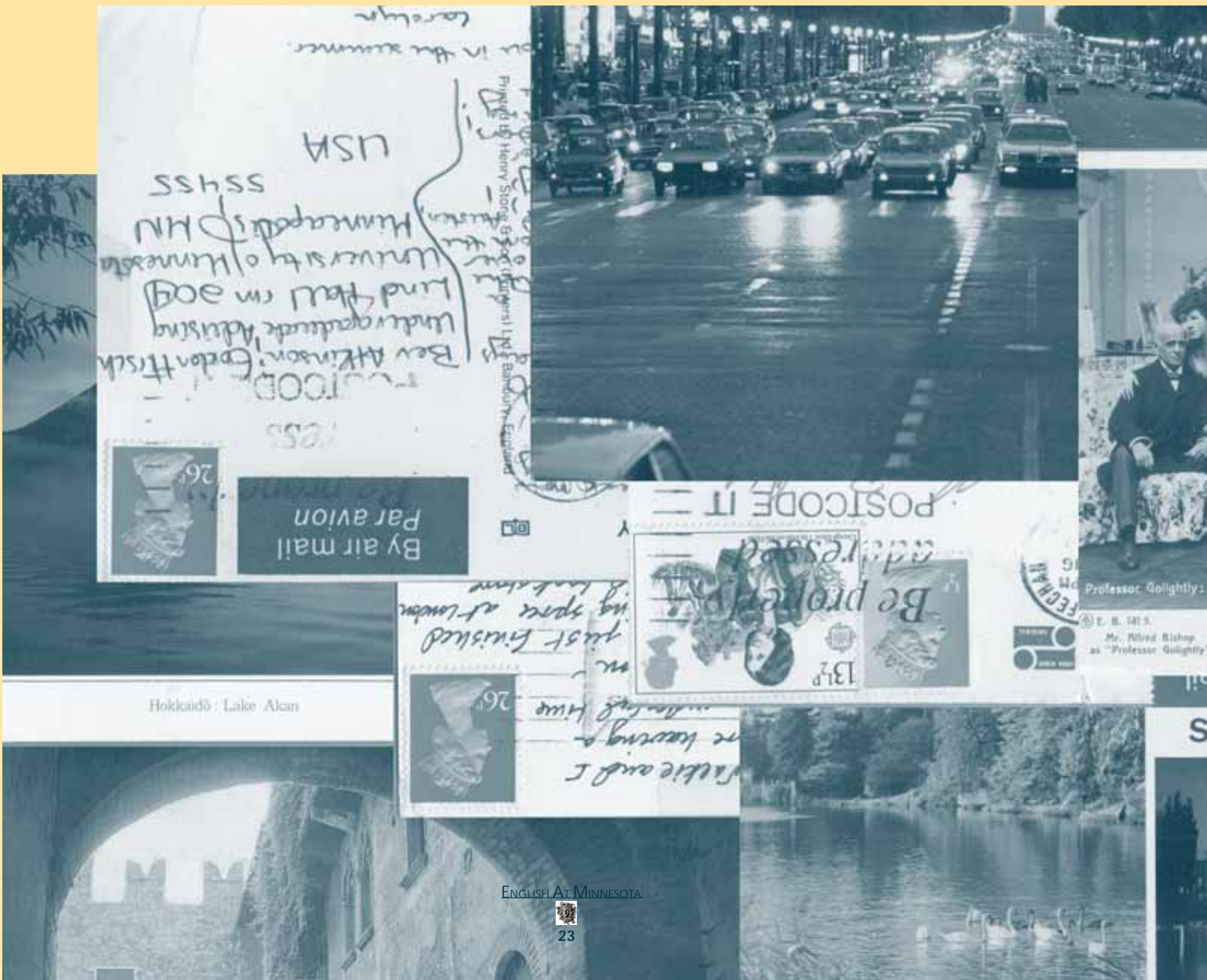
The hiking ended up being only second-best, though, because when I returned to the airfield, Michael Korhammer said, “Come on, Rosalie,

# stories from page 9

let's go!" referring to the glider. I had no time to think it over before I was strapped into the glider. It was better that way, I think. Given a chance to consider, I might have said no. Before I knew it, the winch was pulling us up into the air and we were gliding on the thermals. We went in circles to get higher within the thermals, just like the birds. Then, when I started to feel a little airsick from all the circling, we went straight for a short time. The scenery was beautiful and I could see up into the Alps, as well as down into the surrounding villages. We were in the air for 52 minutes. We went 2.5 km above sea level. The valley where we started out was 800 m above sea level. The landing was completely smooth and the whole experience was wonderful, but I must say that I was relieved to be back on the ground. It is an odd psychological experience to fly in a plane without an engine. It was an experience that I will never forget and it was surely the highlight of my trip to Germany.

Lewis, "Lit and the Fringe," *continued from page 9*

summer, Edinburgh has a festival season in which performers of all types converge on the city. When the Fringe Festival is in full swing, High Street is absolutely flooded with people and you do not have to walk more than a few feet to find a street performer to watch. In addition to all that was available in Edinburgh, I also had traveled to the Scottish highlands, including a weekend on the Isle of Skye. While I cherish the social and cultural aspect of my study abroad program the most, that is not at the expense of my classes. We had the chance to hear from a new scholar every day. Our teaching assistants made class discussions informative and enjoyable. I developed new interests in British literature while I also found new aspects to texts I had engaged in previous classes. Certainly, my time in Edinburgh has been one of the best times of my life.



[http://english.cla.umn.edu/literacy\\_lab/index.htm](http://english.cla.umn.edu/literacy_lab/index.htm)

**“The founding philosophy . . . is that literary studies should not be separate from the intellectual and cultural life of the community .”**

—Pat Crain, English faculty member  
and codirector of the Literacy Lab

Tyler, “Vital Bridge,” *continued from page 5*

### A new model

A meaningful University-community partnership was precisely what Daigre and faculty member Tom Augst had in mind when they brainstormed the idea for CLI two years ago. Completing his English Ph.D. at the time, Daigre collaborated with Augst on a national study of university-based community engagement programs related to literacy.

Most striking among their findings was that community agencies were ambivalent about the value of short-term student-learning experiences. “They told us, ‘University students are great, but they’re usually not here much, so they don’t really get to know us very well,’” recalls Daigre, a longtime community volunteer in his own right (in 2000, he was honored by the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center for his extensive service there). “They also said, ‘And just when students are really starting to get into it, the semester ends.’ So organizations were investing in the training of labor that’s very part-time and that soon goes away.”

That assessment galvanized Daigre and Augst, who were determined to find, in Daigre’s words, “a more stable, long-term, and meaningful way of connecting the classroom and the community.” With seed money from the Bush Foundation, grants from state higher-education agencies such as Minnesota Campus Compact, and funds from the department, the pair founded CLI, the first major outreach initiative of the English department’s Literacy Lab.

Like the Jane Addams School, on which it is partially modeled, the Literacy Lab isn’t a formal physical place, but a way of bringing people together around common goals, explains faculty member Pat Crain, a scholar of the history of literacy (and the department’s director of undergraduate studies) who codirects the lab with Augst.

“It’s way of promoting literacy research in the department, and for promoting ways of thinking more broadly about university literary stud-

ies in general,” Crain says. “The founding philosophy of the Literacy Lab is that literary studies should not be separate from the intellectual and cultural life of the community. Both literature and basic literacy—and the stories of great authors alongside the stories of ordinary people—ought to be our business. That’s the rationale for making civic engagement integral to our literary studies curriculum.”

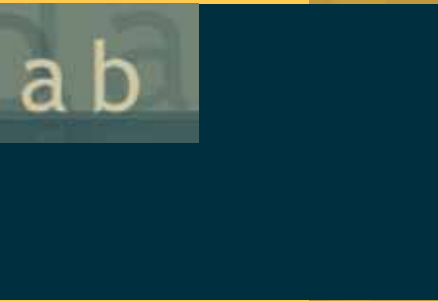
For Daigre, the Literacy Lab and CLI are about nothing less than “reconciling all the different philosophies of education for our students.” This includes the liberal arts model, emphasizing broad learning through reading and discussion; the vocational model, focused on learning skills for careers and professional advancement; and the civic model, expounded most famously by John Dewey, emphasizing the role of education in preparing citizens to lead rich lives in a democracy

Lofty though it may be, this viewpoint strikes a chord with the students who participated in CLI. They credit the initiative with helping them bridge the book smarts prized in English classrooms with the street smarts needed to launch careers and establish toeholds as community citizens.

“If you’re an English major and you don’t want to teach, you need to figure out how your degree is going to translate into a career,” says Echelberger. “Working at Jane Addams gave me a whole different way of looking at my English background. I realized that I had valuable skills from my literary studies that I was using every single day.”

And, says Echelberger, she was adding a host of new strengths to her portfolio, whether an understanding of organizational management issues or a new appreciation for “what it means to be part of a culturally diverse and democratic community.” For her, that meant not only the world she became part of at Jane Addams, but the “incredible tight-knit community that developed among all of us doing internships. I’ve never experienced anything quite like it.”

Lessons in civic responsibility were among the benefits Hannah Casey



prizes most from her own internship at Jane Addams. Speaking at a CLI end-of-year celebration in Lind Hall, Casey told the story of Inez, an immigrant from Ecuador who worked two jobs to support her four children and came evenings to Jane Addams to study for her U.S. citizenship test.

Watching Inez speak out at meetings about pay disparities between women and men, write letters protesting cutbacks in social service funding, and call the governor with impassioned pleas to settle the Twin Cities bus strike (“despite the fact that no one in the governor’s office spoke Spanish and Inez spoke little English”), Casey was jolted by the realization that Inez “had something that I, for all my education, did not have: active citizenship. I only learned what it means to be an engaged citizen from Inez and the other immigrants I worked with at Jane Addams.”

## Two-way street

CLI is after just two years “a proven thing,” as Kathleen Butts sees it. Butts, the coordinator at Plymouth Youth Center/Lyndale Alternative School, says that the English department’s significant service-learning initiative offers cash-strapped schools and social service agencies “the equivalent of a part-time staff person for a whole year, which is incredibly helpful and valuable.” Working with Amaya Fairbanks this past year, Butts found the senior English major “brought tremendous energy, fresh ideas, and perspectives to our school. Her background in English was useful in so many ways, as was her artistic skill. It’s been a revelation for us to work with English; usually our interns have come from disciplines such as social work, because lots of service-learning interns come from disciplines like social work.”

For Daigre, “street cred” in the community is one key to a thriving future for CLI; another is the positive buzz about the program among students in the department. The buzz has been positive enough to push

early enrollment in next fall’s CLI class to 18 students, triple the six who wrapped up in May.

Enrollments could climb even higher as past CLI participants continue to talk up their experiences to friends. Marianne Baum, a sophomore English major, is positively rhapsodic about her internship at the Franklin Learning Center in central Minneapolis. Recalling one lively classroom discussion with new arrivals from all over the world—Mexico and Ethiopia, Somalia and Laos—she says, “We had the whole roomful of people participating, everyone contributing, all of us laughing—people of all different ages and backgrounds, and everyone completely connecting. There was this amazing moment when I realized with absolute clarity that I couldn’t have been happier anywhere else in the whole world.”

—Kate Tyler is a freelance writer based in Minneapolis



# Looking Back

Pflaum, "Looking Back," *continued from page 10*

ists De Quincy, Lamb, and Hazlitt as well as novels such as *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, and *The Way of All Flesh*. When she had recovered, Chase took a position in teaching in a public school in Bozeman, teaching grammar and reading to classes of 50 to 60 students.<sup>4</sup>

Needing a supplementary source of income with which she could provide some financial help to her family, led Chase to turn out stories which she could sell. Among her early efforts were two novels for children set in the west—*The Girl From Big Horn Country* (1916) and *Virginia of Elk Creek Valley* (1916)—a number of stories for children designed for Protestant Sunday school audiences, and short stories set in Maine—a scene to which she would return in a number of her future novels.<sup>5</sup> Initial profits were modest: the proceeds from her two western novels were \$150, with the publisher, not the author, retaining copyright, royalties, and subsidiary rights. This was a start, however, and over time her essays, short stories and novels became popular and profitable.<sup>6</sup>

Seeking opportunities beyond writing and K–12 teaching, at the age of thirty Chase decided to apply to a graduate program in English. Although recovered from her bout with tuberculosis, she understood the importance of sticking to climates that would be healthy:

To her surprise and pleasure, she was accepted at the University of

Thomas' seminar "Writing," and Joseph Warren Beach's course on the nineteenth-century novel. Her Ph.D. dissertation *Thomas Hardy: From Serial to Novel* was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 1927.<sup>8</sup>

Helping out her family, Chase brought her mother and the three youngest children to live in Minneapolis. (Her youngest brother, Newton, was twenty-five years younger than she.) To support them, in addition to her day-time teaching in freshmen English, she took on evening classes, teaching at the College of St. Catherine as well as giving lectures and commencement speeches in the region. Beyond these efforts, she continued to sell short stories. She was clearly aware that her heavy teaching load and writing for popular audiences set her apart from her colleagues.<sup>9</sup> On the back of a 1925 application for a sabbatical leave to be spent in either England or France, she attached an explanatory note, "I feel it only right... to say frankly that I do not wish the year for what is commonly called scholarly research....Instead I wish to devote the time to writing."<sup>10</sup> She cited in defense of her request, the favorable decision by Ellery Sedgwick of the *Atlantic Monthly* to publish "Upland Pastures." Her application was approved.<sup>11</sup>

Her sabbatical never took place. Instead, she accepted an offer from

President William Allen Nielson for the fall of 1926 to become an asso-

**My choice of a graduate school had been in large measure forced on me by my doctor. He refused to consider Chicago with its dirt and smoke; he advised strongly against the fogs and sea-level of New England....The state of Minnesota was in high favor with him and fortunately for me its university was second to none.<sup>7</sup>**

Minnesota for the fall of 1917 and given \$250 towards tuition. She received her master's degree in 1918 and her Ph.D. in 1922. Chase remained at Minnesota until 1926. She recalled positively courses in Shakespeare and Elizabethan drama under Elmer Stoll, history of drama with Oscar Firkins, *Beowulf* with Frederick Klaeber, Joseph

ciate professor of English at Smith College. In addition to the promotion from assistant professor, an increase in salary from \$2,800 to \$3,000, and her desire to be closer to her native Maine, another factor in her decision was her belief that Minnesota would not promote

# om page 10

women.<sup>12</sup> Two other members of the English faculty at Minnesota, Marjorie Hope Nicolson and Margaret Eliot Macgregor, likewise accepted offers to join the Smith faculty.<sup>13</sup> Chase's Minnesota colleagues expressed their regret at her decision to leave. Cecil Moore, chair of the department, wrote, "We have lost one of our most gifted and stimulating teachers." Martin Ruud, another colleague, wrote, "She is undoubtedly one of the best, if not the best instructor in her line of work we have ever had. She... has her own way of inspiring her students, of carrying them along with her in her enthusiasm and making them appreciate all that is beautiful in literature."<sup>14</sup>

Chase was promoted to full professor at Smith in 1930 and, subsequently, served as chair of the department.<sup>15</sup> Chase, Marjorie Hope Nicolson, and Frances Del Plaine, who had been colleagues in the English department at Minnesota when Joseph Thomas was chair, wrote a series of books designed for college English classes. Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *The Art of Description*, published in 1925, acknowledged both the influence of Joseph Thomas, the creator of Minnesota's freshman English course, as well as Mary Ellen Chase, who had taught in the program for eight years. Nicolson wrote, "Miss Chase's enthusiasm in making her ideas and suggestions for teaching the property of all who know her, has caused me both consciously and unconsciously, to adopt many of her methods as my own."<sup>16</sup> Chase herself wrote *Constructive Theme Writing* in 1929 and two years later, she and Frances Del Plaine produced *The Art of Narration*.<sup>17</sup>

Consistent with her earlier practice while at Minnesota, at Smith, Chase continued to write for popular audiences and had negotiated two days a week for this purpose.<sup>18</sup> In 1941 her novel *Windswept* sold more than 125,000 copies and freed her from constant financial pressure.<sup>19</sup> In addition to fiction, she published two autobiographical works, *The Goodly Heritage* (1932), about her family and growing up in Maine; and *The Goodly Fellowship* (1939), which carried the story forward and included her teaching at Minnesota and her first years at Smith. In the 1940s, she wrote several books treating the Bible as literature.<sup>20</sup>

Two of Chase's best known protégées were Anne Morrow Lindbergh (class of 1928), whom she mentored early in her Smith career; and Sylvia Plath (class of 1955), who was a student of hers, during her last year on the faculty. Chase kept in touch by letter and in person with these as well as with a number of other former students. She praised Lindbergh's *Listen the Wind*. "It has all the characteristics of the best in fiction, of life made more real than life ever is."<sup>21</sup> She wrote one of the letters of recommendation that helped Plath get her Fulbright fellowship to study at Cambridge (1955–57), and also supported her as a candidate to become

an instructor at Smith, following her two years in England. Chase was disappointed when her most talented students married—a sentiment which she did little to hide, believing strongly that it was impossible to both marry and write seriously.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of her extensive publications, Chase's most important legacy at Minnesota and at Smith is her teaching. Within four years of her arrival at Smith enrollments in her classes expanded five-fold.<sup>23</sup> Never still, she paced as she recited passages from Austen, Hardy, Dickens, and the Bible. One of her Smith students observed, "She was a good teacher, because she was a good actress."<sup>24</sup> Another student recalled being fascinated when Chase told one of her classes that she was so fond of Dickens' novels that she had put off reading one of them, saving it for her death-bed. Adding to the riveting effect of this proclamation was her refusal to reveal which novel she had selected.<sup>25</sup> Her flair for the dramatic can also be seen in her 1930 decision to cancel class because of the death of D.H. Lawrence:

"D.H. Lawrence has died!" announced Mary Ellen Chase to the students of her eight o'clock Smith College class on a nippy March morning in 1930. She entered the room a little late, her short legs taking long strides that assured her dignity with every step. She took her usual stance, hands upside down on her hips....No one knew what to expect....Go to the library and read everything he has written that you can find—including *Lady Chatterly's Lover*. Class dismissed.<sup>26</sup>

Looking back on being a student and a reader of her books, one of Chase's Smith students in the 1940s observed, "Miss Chase knew everything about writing a great novel, but, ironically, did not write one herself."<sup>27</sup> Another surmised that her reputation would rest less on her fiction than on her nonfiction works.<sup>28</sup> Chase did not appear unduly threatened by this discrepancy. Daniel Aaron, who had joined the Smith English department in 1939, recalled that whenever Chase had a piece coming out in a publication like the *Readers Digest*, she would warn him, "Don't you dare read it."<sup>29</sup>

Following her retirement in 1955, Chase continued to publish and give periodic lectures into the 1960s. In 1968, two houses at Smith were named in honor of Chase and her long-time companion, classicist Eleanor Duckett. Mary Ellen Chase died in 1973.

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# Looking Back

# continued

*continued from page 27*

<sup>1</sup>Elienne Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind: The Life of Mary Ellen Chase* (Santa Barbara: Fithian Press, 1995), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 42-61. Frank Lloyd Wright had designed one of the school's buildings.

<sup>3</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 64.

<sup>4</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 62-71.

<sup>5</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 65-68; and Evelyn Hyman Chase, *Feminist Convert: A Portrait of Mary Ellen Chase* (Santa Barbara: John Daniel, 1988), 82-84.

<sup>6</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 78-123.

<sup>7</sup>Mary Ellen Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 197.

<sup>8</sup>Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* 206-14; the quote is from 214.

<sup>9</sup>Squire recounted that at the time she received her Ph.D. degree Chase's advisor Joseph Warren Beach "had told her confidentially that her mind had baffled him for four years; it was not brilliant, it was not profound, nor even discriminating. This withering remark caught Chase off guard on that triumphant occasion, but she was inclined to agree there was some truth in it" (77).

<sup>10</sup>The application is dated October 23, 1925, and can be found in the University of Minnesota Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Ellen Chase, *Application for Sabbatical Leave* October 23, 1925.

<sup>12</sup>Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* 285. "Generous as the University of Minnesota had been toward me, I was forced to acknowledge that a full or even an associate professorship in English would probably be denied to me on account of my sex. The women's colleges, I knew, raised no such barriers to reach the top of one's profession." After Chase left, in 1945-46, Elizabeth Jackson was the first woman promoted to associate professor and then to full professor in 1960-61-the year she retired. Jackson had been hired as an instructor in 1916. (University budget book; English department listings).

<sup>13</sup>Macgregor, who had received her master's degree at Minnesota, took a leave from Smith from 1930 to 1932 to complete a Ph.D. at the University of London. She died in October 1932, three months after her return to the United States. Marjorie Hope Nicolson remained on the English faculty at Smith, serving as Dean of the Faculty from 1929 to 1941, when she accepted a position as chair of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, ending her career there in 1962. She took an additional year at Claremont Graduate School and as a visiting scholar at Princeton's National Institute for Advanced Study. A scholar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, she was a recog-

nized expert on Milton and Pope and wrote of the impact of science on poetry of the era.

<sup>14</sup>Quotes are from Evelyn Hyman Chase, *Feminist Convert* 84-85. The University budget book shows a combined English and Rhetoric department for the first time in 1921-22. Chase's appointment was first listed as "scholar" in English (1917-18) she was listed as "assistant" in rhetoric from 1918-19 through 1920-21. In 1921-22, both English and rhetoric were listed together. In terms of rank, Chase went from "scholar," her first year (1917-18) assistant (1918-20), instructor (1920-21 through 1921-22); from 1922-23 through 1925-26 she was assistant professor, the highest rank she achieved at Minnesota.

<sup>15</sup>In letters to Mathilde Elliott in the University of Minnesota Archives (Richard Elliott papers Box 954). Chase could be quite witty about the trials of departmental administration. Of a request from Smith's president Herbert Davis to assist him with the summer session, she wrote, "which means I run it while he considers Swift and Stella in a pleasant nook" (July 14, 1943).

<sup>16</sup>Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Art of Description* (New York: Crofts, 1925), p. vii.

<sup>17</sup>Mary Ellen Chase, *Constructive Theme Writing for College Freshmen* (New York: Holt, 1929); Mary Ellen Chase and Frances K. Del Plaine *The Art of Narration* (New York: Crofts, 1926).

<sup>18</sup>Daniel Aaron, "Northampton," *American Scholar* (Spring 2001); 75. The selection is from Aaron's memoir, *Circlings: A Personal History of the United States* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 2002).

<sup>19</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*; 120. Chase was to publish eleven novels, five studies of the Bible, thirteen short stories, several biographies and a large number of magazine articles. Squire lists her works on pp. 205-208.

<sup>20</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*; *The Bible and the Common Reader* was published by Macmillan in 1944 and reissued in 1952. *Readings From the Bible* was published by Macmillan in 1952. Norton published *Psalms for the Common Reader* in 1962 and *The Prophets for the Common Reader* in 1963. Her newspaper and periodical articles covered a wide range of topics. For example: "What Do You Expect of a College for your Daughter," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1936; "When you Go to England" *Harpers* August 1941. She adapted one of her articles for two publications: "Time to Oneself," *Yale Review* (September 1940) and "You Become Some-one Alone," in *Reader's Digest* (October 1940).

<sup>21</sup>Squire, *A Lantern in the Wind*: 164. Chase also supported Betty Goldstein (Friedan)- writing a letter of recommendation for her to her good friend Richard M. Elliott to urge him to accept her in Minnesota's

graduate program in psychology.

<sup>22</sup>Evelyn Hyman Chase, *Feminist Convert*: 13-15, 154-55. Helen Reynolds Anderson (class of 1944) recalled sensing her opposition to marriage by talented students when she and another student (Ann Cunningham) returned for a visit to the campus for their fifth year reunion. Personal communication to Ann Pflaum, February 17, 2003.

<sup>23</sup>Evelyn Hyman Chase, *Feminist Convert*:10.

<sup>24</sup>Evelyn Hyman Chase, *Feminist Convert*: 22.

<sup>25</sup>Perrin Brown Lilly (Class of 1945) personal communication to Ann Pflaum, February 17, 2004.

<sup>26</sup>Evelyn Hyman Chase in *Feminist Convert: A Portrait of Mary Ellen Chase* (Santa Barbara, John Daniel Company, 1988), p. 22 and p. 9 also recounts that both Lindbergh and Plath were aware of their mentor's disapproval when they married.

<sup>27</sup>Perrin Brown Lilly (Class of 1945), personal communication to Ann Pflaum, February 17, 2004.

<sup>28</sup>Helen Reynolds Anderson (Class of 1945), personal communication to Ann Pflaum, February 17, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Aaron, Victor S. Thomas Professor Emeritus of English and American Literature, Harvard University, described knowing Chase in "Northampton," *American Scholar* (Spring 2001), 75.

**No college graduate today** who unwisely enters any graduate school immediately after the bachelor's degree can possibly enjoy and profit by advanced study as I did in my five years at the University of Minnesota. My study was the fulfillment of years of desire. I had a perspective upon it gained alike from seven years of teaching and from one of illness. Even my very academic unfitness for it made it all the more entrancing when it came at last. My teachers seemed to me, and, indeed were, the best that I could have found, and I studied under their direction in a glow of excite-

ment. I worked in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama under Elmer Edgar Stoll, known throughout this country and elsewhere as one of the most original and basic of Shakespearean scholars. Mr. Stoll was (and still is) a charming man as well. As his assistant, I read papers for him my first year and because of that came into pleasant association with him. His teaching was sound and thorough; none could have been more so; but it was also shot through and through with personal excitement and fervor. Surely he came to his task "as to a sport". He could make the question of delay in Hamlet far more fascinating than a detective story, the women in the comedies far more charming than women elsewhere. . . .

—Mary Ellen Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 205, 207-09.

# ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA

When people ask me,  
“What can you do with  
an English Major?”  
I tell them, “Anything I  
want to do.”


—Amy Lyga  
B.A. English 2000

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Piyali Nath Dalal,  
B.A. English 2001

Ad to appear in the Minnesota Daily student orientation issue.

shimmering shawls—as well as three judges and “Prairie Home Companion” pianist Rick Dworsky on stage.

After reviewing some 300 poems submitted by 87 contestants, Keillor selected 17 finalists. Each of the 15 finalists in attendance read their work, often followed by a piano flourish reminiscent of Keillor’s show. Songs and poems ran the gamut from a bowl of cereal compared to the beloved, to an erotic poem about long distance love and the burying of a lover’s shirt in bed like a bone, to a song about mangoes (see below) favored by a judge from Miami, to a parody of the tune “Matchmaker” about finding love online. There were also tender love songs accompanied by piano, guitar, and a three-piece girl band.

The difficult task of selecting the winners followed, and the tone grew more serious. Along with Keillor, the judges—Vern Sutton, professor emeritus of the School of Music; poet and English professor Michael Dennis Browne; and Jennine Crucet, an MFA student in the Creative Writing Program—discussed their favorites and why. After much public deliberation, they awarded two \$750 first prizes to Jenny Blaine and May Mahala (see poems below); two \$500 second prizes to Margit Berman and Brian Hayden; and five \$200 third prizes to Brian Johnson, Jen Johnson, Melissa Kalpin Prescott, Kelly Jean Settholm, and Joshua Verges.

Keillor ended the feel-good evening by asking everyone to sing “You Are My Sunshine” as a recessional for the poets as they left the stage and headed out into the post-storm night air.

### Love Boat

Adrift? Our ship, a most beleaguered bark,  
Once cut from port to port before the wave.  
Ambitions drove a cold confusing arc,  
We look and sigh and say, “What’s left to save?”  
“All hands on deck!” we cry, and selfless  
Rush to work the pumps. An albatross could fly  
Or herring gull take wing, all weight and thoughtless  
Pinion safe upon the hands of sky.  
But we (such silly things), we try to form  
Our destinies on formless fantasies  
And call it love. When what we want is warm,  
As elemental as the evening breeze.  
So long as hand with hand and leg with leg entwine  
Our ship will safely sail though we be blind.

—Jenny Blaine

### Room 208

His lips  
juicy mango  
opened luscious

He had that  
casual grace,  
slipping his arm  
round her waist  
She seemed to  
fall into him.

Lying beside him  
fallen  
she stared up at  
pinhole stars

Laughing his  
mystic name  
then  
no yes no

she walked home  
checked the baby  
sat up alone

Secretly  
thinking  
his hands  
her waist  
his head  
soft thistle.

—May Mahala

a green light at the end of the dock

# In Memoriam

## Earl Miner



**Earl Roy Miner, M.A. 1951, Ph.D. 1955, passed away on April 17, 2004** at Meadow Lakes in Hightstown, NJ after a long illness. Earl was Townsend Martin, Class of 1917, Professor of English and Comparative Literature until his retirement from Princeton University in 2000.

Miner's Ph.D. thesis, "The Japanese Influence on English and American Literature, 1850-1950," which was published by Princeton University Press in 1958 as *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature*, launched a career dedicated to early modern literature, classical Japanese literature, and comparative literature. The many books that Professor Miner wrote or edited include, among others: *Dryden's Poetry* (Indiana University Press, 1967); *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley* (Princeton University Press, 1969); *John Dryden's Poems, 1685-1692* (University of California Press, 1969; co-edited with Vinton A. Dearing); *The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton* (Princeton University Press, 1971); *The Restoration Mode from Milton to Dryden* (Princeton University Press, 1974); *Japanese Linked Poetry* (Princeton University Press, 1979); and *Comparative Poetics* (Princeton University Press, 1990). His most recent book will be published soon by Associated University Presses: *Paradise Lost, 1668-1968: Three Centuries of Commentary* (co-edited with Milliam Moeck and Steven E. Jablonski).

Professor Miner was President of the Milton Society of America, the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies and the International Comparative Literature Association. He was honored with Princeton's Behrman Award for distinguished achievement in the humanities in 1993. In 1994 he received the Order of the Rising Sun from the government of Japan in recognition of his "special commitment" to Japanese literature.

According to Professor Sandra Berman, chair of the Department of Comparative Literature at Princeton, Professor Miner was known as a dedicated and loyal teacher who considered his students an extended family. Thomas Hare, a professor of comparative literature who specializes in early and medieval Japanese literature, said that a seminar on Japanese poetry he took with Miner as a Princeton senior in 1974 "set the course for my own career in many ways."

## Ruth Drake



**Ruth Drake, age 94, died on May 4, 2004.** Born in St. Paul on Jan. 25, 1910, she graduated from St. Paul Central High School in 1927 and from the University of Minnesota in 1931. In 1997 the College of Liberal Arts recognized her as a "CLA Alumna of Notable Achievement." Her generous support of the University of Minnesota included two substantial donations to the Department of English: a major gift to the Pillsbury Hall Renovation Fund; and also an endowment to establish the Ruth Drake Dissertation Fellowship, which focuses fellowship support where it is especially effective, at the culminating, dissertation stage of doctoral education. So far, her gift has made possible these recent and current dissertation projects:

- 2000. J. Penelope Kelsey. "Native American Autoethnography: Tribal Knowledge in New Genres." (Dr. Kelsey is currently Assistant Professor of Language and Literature at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Her dissertation will be published as a book.)
- 2003. Marie Sulit. "Hunger for Home in the Diaspora: The Filipina-American Writing Imagining Community."
- 2004. Adam Barrows. "Standard Time, Modernism, and Empire." (In progress.)
- 2004. Jennifer Young. "Poetry as Craft and Craft as Poetry in Anglo-Saxon England." (In progress.)

Ruth Drake's generosity will continue to benefit students in the Department of English for years to come.



## GHOSTS & DOCUMENTS

On Writing Historical Novels

April 17, 2004  
Ted Mann Concert Hall

## *A. S. Byatt*

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This April's Freier lecture featured A. S. Byatt. Already a formidable literary figure in England, A. S. Byatt achieved bestseller status in the United States with her Booker Prize-winning novel *Possession: A Romance*. The novel was made into a film in 2002, starring Gweneith Paltrow. Her novella *Morpho Eugenia*, which examines the similarities between anthills and 19th century manor households, was made into the film "Angels and Insects."

Playing to an audience of over 500 people, Byatt discussed the challenges, difficulties, and rewards of writing historical novels. Byatt also visited an undergraduate creative writing class where she talked about the many possible paths for finding literary success.



## WRITING BLACK LIVES

Biography & African American Culture

October 9, 2003  
Weisman Art Museum

Competing against a rescheduled University of Minnesota homecoming game, Arnold Rampersad still drew a full house at the Weisman Art Museum for his fall lecture. Rampersad, an acclaimed biographer and the Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University, brings to the complex art of biography such meticulous scholarship, political intelligence, and elegant writing that his books have become required reading on his subjects.

W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Arthur Ashe, and Jackie Robinson are the disparate but distinguished subjects of his four major works. Rampersad interweaved their stories in his lecture about the multiple roles a biographer assumes when constructing an honest version of another person's life.



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## *Arnold Rampersad*



# English at Minnesota

## Affiliated Publications

LUNA, a journal of poetry and translation

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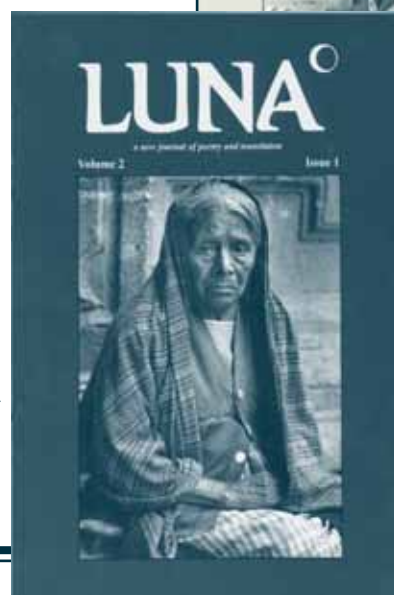
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LUNA #7 will be an all-prose-poetry issue and will feature the work of Robert Bly, Cesar Vallejo, Toni Mirosevich, George Kalamaras, Morton Marcus, Denise Duhamel, Virgil Suarez, Peter Johnson, Amy S. F. Lutz, Gary Young, Brian Clements, and others.



**Dislocate**, the newly reinvigorated literary journal published by the University of Minnesota's Creative Writing Program, is now accepting submissions in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for its Fall 2004 online issue. *Dislocate* publishes the work of both established and emerging writers, and we are especially interested in unique voices and a wide range of styles. Deadline for submissions to the Fall 2004 online issue is **August 31, 2004**.

### Submission Guidelines:

All submissions will be blind. Attach submissions as Word documents to your email and send to [submissions@dislocate.org](mailto:submissions@dislocate.org). Attach also a separate document with your contact information (including name, address, phone, email, and title(s) of work(s) submitted). Please include this contact information in the text of your email, as well. The subject line of the email should specify both submission and genre (for example: "Submission Poetry").

Poetry: 3— 5 poems of no more than 10 pages total in length

Fiction and Nonfiction: up to 5000 words

Simultaneous submissions are permitted provided we are notified immediately in the event of publication elsewhere. No previous publications are eligible. Submissions which do not meet with our guidelines will not be considered.

Dislocate  
c/o EDITORS  
207 Church Street  
207 Lind Hall  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

**DISLOCATE**.org

a new media journal of the arts

# Calendar

## 2004-2005

Besides the writers who are brought to campus in the endowed series listed below, the department hosts many other scholars and writers throughout the year. Please visit the English department home page for the venue and time of events and for changes and additions to the calendar.

<http://english.cla.umn.edu/>

### Edelstein-Keller Visiting Writer Series

2004

September 21 Gerald Stern  
October 21 Linda Gregerson  
November 4 Lan Samantha Chang  
December 2–3 First Books

2005

February 23 Edward P. Jones  
March 2 Linda Hogan  
April 12 David Bradley

### Esther Freier Endowed Lecture Series in Literature

2004

November 7 Rita Dove: “The Poet at the Dance”

2005

April 15 Anna Deavere Smith

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Department of English Language & Literature

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# ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA

## FROM THE CHAIR

Hancher, *continued from page 2*

dissertations so far, and still counting (see <http://english.cla.umn.edu/graduateprogram/alumni/2000s.html>). That begins to approach the number produced during the doctoral program's first half-century-plus: 48 dissertations from 1897 to 1949. A list of those dissertations, recently recovered from library records, is now posted at <http://english.cla.umn.edu/graduateprogram/alumni/1897-1949.html>. The complete set of pages at our site now reports all of our dissertations from 1897 to 2004—bridging three centuries! The Department of English at Minnesota was one the few departments that began to offer doctoral education late in the nineteenth century; others include Harvard, Yale, Chicago, and Michigan.

Something of the history of the profession can be gauged by reading the titles of our disserta-

tions. Unfortunately not all the dissertations themselves survive. For example, **Violet DeLille Jayne's** dissertation, "The Technique of George Eliot's Novels" (1903), has disappeared. Just a trace remains in the synopsis, published in *PMLA* in 1901, of "The Technique of *Adam Bede*," a paper that she read in Chicago that year. *Adam Bede* appeared in 1859: not exactly contemporary fiction in Jayne's day, but not ancient either. **Charles Abbemeyer's** dissertation, presented in 1900, reached further back: "Old English Poetical Motives Derived from the Doctrine of Sin." The department's first dissertation concerned not literature, modern nor ancient, but linguistics: **E. Porter Chittenden**, "The Labial Series in English Sounds" (1897).

In 1901 *PMLA* reported that the same Violet D. Jayne, already a professor at the University of Illinois, was nominated vice-president of the Central Division of the Modern Language Association. (Her advisor at

Minnesota, **Charles F. McClumpha**, was a member of the nominations committee.) Two years later, having completed her dissertation on Eliot, Jayne became the first woman to earn a Ph.D. from our department. The second was **Marie Caroline Lyle**, who wrote "The Original Identity of the York and Townley Cycles" (1917). The third was **Mary Ellen Chase**, author of "A Comparative Study of Several Versions of Thomas Hardy's Novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*" (1922). For a thoughtful account of Chase's career, at Minnesota and elsewhere, see the article by University Historian **Ann Pflaum**, beginning on p. 10.

ENGLISH  
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