

# ERUDITION

SAVE THE DATE:  
EVENTS SPRING 2007

**FEBRUARY 8, 2007**

Karl Kirchwey, Poet

6:00 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Reading,  
DeGolyer Library

**FEBRUARY 13, 2007**

Jewell Parker Rhodes,  
Fiction and Non-Fiction  
Author

6:00 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Reading,  
DeGolyer Library

**FEBRUARY 20, 2007**

Adria Bernardi,  
Novelist and Poet

6:00 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Reading,  
DeGolyer Library

**MARCH 30-31, 2007**

SMU Literary Festival

Honoring Marshall Terry

[http://www.smu.edu/  
english/Events/marsherry/  
index.htm](http://www.smu.edu/english/Events/marsherry/index.htm)

**APRIL 12, 2007**

Mary Jo Salter

6:00 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Reading,  
DeGolyer Library

**APRIL 13, 2007**

Recital of musical  
settings of  
Emily Dickinson's Poems,  
sung by soprano  
Virginia Dupuy

O'Donnell Hall, Meadows  
School of the Arts

SMU Department of English

2006 • issue 2

## A Background for Success

by Perry McKnight, Political Science/  
Public Policy major, SMU, Class of '07

Dallas Hall, with its massive green cupola casting shadows along the trees, is the heart of the SMU campus.

The first and most distinctive building constructed, it is home to the office of the Dean of Dedman College. A hub for faculty, staff and student affairs in the liberal arts and natural sciences, it is comprised of associate deans, assistants, record advisors, financial officers and lecture series coordinators, all under the direction of newly appointed interim dean, Dr. Caroline Brettell.

A Montréal native, Dr. Brettell is a long-standing SMU professor of anthropology, whose accolades are too numerous to list here. She received her B.A. in Latin American Studies from Yale University and her M.A and Ph.D from Brown University. Dean Brettell has been a faculty member at SMU since 1988, the diversity of her work is quite impressive. For example, in the 2001-2002 calendar year alone, she served as the president of the SMU Faculty Senate and was a member of the SMU Board of Trustees, along with being a member of the International Migration Program, and serving on the SNEM-3 Scientific Review Panel and in the National Institute of Health. This was all after she served as President of both the Social Science History Association (2001-2002) and the Society for the Anthropology of Europe (1996-1998).

Dean Brettell's published works are as distinguished as the many positions that she has held. Although her research interests are eclectic, her more recent books have been sharply focused on migration and



Caroline Brettell, Dean ad interim,  
Dedman College

immigration. One of her publications, *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity and Identity and Migration Theory: Talking Disciplines* (edited with James F. Hollifield), addresses issues within this field of study, and has become popular; many of her other books are currently being revamped for publication as new editions. She has also co-written books and numerous journal articles, and headed up impressive research projects,

in addition to writing her individual publications.

Outside of the office, Dean Brettell still finds time to pursue some other remarkable pastimes. A long-time writer on the subject of the Portugese diaspora, she travels to Portugal, along with many other places,

*... one article simply isn't enough to expound upon all of the academic and community services that Dean Brettell has provided for students, teachers, individuals outside of the classroom or anthropologists.*

to study migration and immigration practices and trends within the population. These journeys, combined with several years of research and study, have reinforced Dr. Brettell's sense that one lifetime is

*continued on page 4*

SMU

## Passing On

Our scope is inherently  
changing its form:  
where one history dies,  
another is born.

Still men will name and  
rename a savior,  
though legends dissolve  
as ink and paper.

The push to make and  
leave behind  
a thing that stands the test  
of time  
consumes my hand in  
penning verse.

But do I dare disturb  
the universe?

And what is standing  
anyway?

Won't all return to whence  
it came?

Do doubts extend to art  
and song  
in futile hope of passing on?

- by Keith Kobyłka  
SMU '07 English Major



# Of Commissars, Four Decades in the

There's a Cold War-era joke  
Q. What's the most difficult  
A. The past.

My own brush with the attitude underlying this joke came in the summer of 1959, when I found myself in the office of the dean of the law school at the University of Warsaw. Noticing a set of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* in his bookcase, I indulged a bad habit I have in the presence of other people's books and started browsing through the "B" volume to check out a story we'd heard before heading behind the Iron Curtain.

It seems that  
after the fall from  
power

of Lavrentii Beria, Stalin's much hated secret police chief, owners of the encyclopedia were instructed to cut out the lengthy article praising Beria and replace it with a government-sanctioned, expanded version of the article on Lake Baikal. I soon discovered that in the dean's copy of the encyclopedia Lake Baikal was still confined to its original banks, as it were, and the career of the "unperson" Beria was still celebrated in flights of Stalinist rhetoric. "Where's the new article on Lake Baikal?" I asked. The dean smiled and shrugged. "It must have been lost in the mail." In one corner of the "Soviet Bloc," it seemed, the past had not mutated into a new form at the bidding of the present. In the course of the summer we were to see many other examples of the silent resistance to tyranny put up by those who would not allow their memories to be violated by rewritings of the past they had lived through.

At this stage in my life I must seem like something of a Cold War-era joke myself: my high school years were bracketed by the Suez crisis and Castro's seizure of power in Cuba, and geopolitics was the center of conversation in high school civics classes and on the terraces of suburban Hartford where my relatives nursed their cocktails and

praised De Gaulle for preventing France from "going Communist."

A decade further on, and I had somehow morphed into a left-leaning graduate student in English, my imagination quickened by the more fevered dreams of nineteenth-century American cranks, populists, and reformers: apocalypse, catastrophe, utopia. Their writings resonated strongly at a time when college campuses around the world were hosting committees for the reform or abolition of everything that was square, bourgeois, repressive, or devoted to the culture of death that had entrenched itself in the evening news. And so my dissertation (*Knowledge and Anxiety in Five American Utopias of the Nineteenth Century*) was, suitably disguised, a tract for the times, whose nominal heroes were the visionaries who had dreamed of a new humanity a century before my own time but whose actual heroes were those in my generation who had embraced a culture of dissent.

Forty years  
down the road (and most of those years have been spent in this department), I've been confirmed in my belief that the future, when it comes, is a disappointment, as immortality was for Dr. Greitzer in I. B. Singer's wonderful parable "The Reencounter." Imagining the Boston of 2000 from the perspective of 1887, Edward Bellamy foresaw a clean, classless city in whose buildings parlor-sized elevators offered passengers such amenities as live chamber music concerts. What came instead was Muzak. It sometimes seems that the more dire predictions have the best chance of coming true: on the threshold of the new millenium the disenfranchisement of the American working class has not yet reached the

continued on page 3

# Ghosts, and Professors: English Department at SMU

that runs like this:  
thing to predict under socialism?

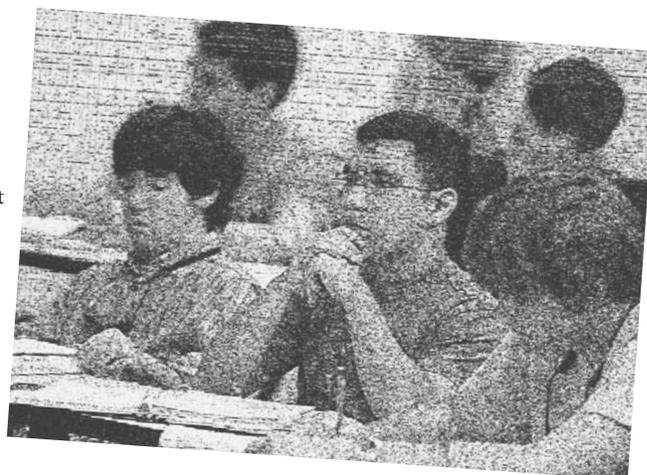
depths prophesied in Ignatius Donnelly's *Caesar's Column*, but the prevailing winds of social policy seem to be blowing in that direction.

Through the years I've been here, though, the past has been as much a site of contest as the future.

History continues to be rewritten, canons redefined, voices presumed lost or merely silenced given leave to speak again. Classicists trope their work of resuscitating the past as an offering of "blood for the ghosts." As in Book XI of the *Odyssey*, where the spirits of the dead must drink blood before they can speak to the living, the literary scholar must offer her life-blood, that is, the spirit and imagination within her, so that the dead can once again be heard. The more prosaic term for this, as I remind my students, is research, and there comes a moment in their—"training"—when they get it, when the task becomes a vocation, and the vital connection between past and present, other and self, is restored. A ghost told Odysseus how to find his way home, and it may be that the next ghost we revive will be the one to show us the way out of the dark times we're now passing through.

When I answered the call to write a piece for *Erudition*, I wondered whether it would turn out to be a retrospect or a prospect, and as I now see, it has something of both in it. At a time when prudence dictates that I should be thinking about retirement, I find myself instead caught up in new beginnings. I've become a student again, sitting in too-small chairs and struggling to acquire a working knowledge of Japanese, a language more seriously different from English than the eight or ten I've studied before. The other students in the class, a third my age and about half my weight, have been amazingly good-natured and supportive, and they've taught me a lot about this latest generation of undergraduates. What I've learned about myself is sobering: it turns out that I'm as bad a student as I ever was, subject to panic attacks, sudden bouts of drowsiness, and a persistent failure to cultivate the study habits that would lead to success. It's been good to experience the classroom from the other side of the podium, maybe we should all do so every few years just to remind ourselves of the parallel universe(s) our students inhabit.

And winds of renewal are sweeping through the department as we launch the new Ph. D. program in English. This initiative will quicken the pulse of research around here; it's also a venture in what



might be called applied utopianism. The program has been planned, the plans have been refined, checked, and approved, and even as you read this the invitations are going out to prospective students. Who shows up, what desires they bring, how the wider world views this undertaking and what it wants of us—these are some of the as yet incalculable forces that will shape our trajectory. What will this experiment make of us? History rewrites us even as we rewrite history.

I for one  
look forward  
to reading the  
next page.

—  
by John Lewis  
Associate Professor of English

## Letter from the Department Chair (2006)

These are exciting days for the English Department, with major initiatives and innovations underway. The new undergraduate English major is now in place. The new Ph.D. program is one year away – or, for the



Professor Ezra Greenspan,  
Chair of English Department,  
Edmund J. and Louise W.  
Kahn Chair in Humanities

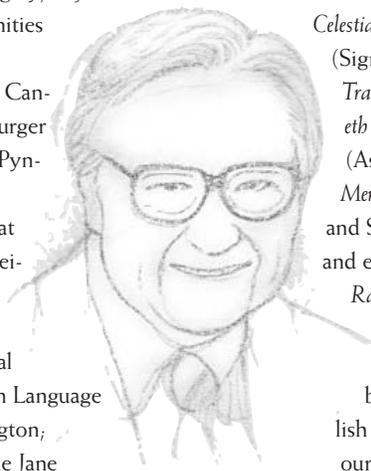
many people involved in its formulation and implementation, one year closer to realization. Its curriculum and structures have now been approved by the Graduate Council. All

that remains is for our first class of students, whose recruitment is now underway, to arrive and help us breathe life into the program (more on this subject in next year's fall issue).

This fall semester the English Department welcomes into its ranks three additional members – all senior scholars. Darryl Dixon-Carr joins the department after a fine career start in the English Department at Florida State University, where he served as both undergraduate and graduate program director. A specialist in twentieth-century African American literature, he is the author of the recently published *The Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction* (Columbia UP, 2005), which won one of the American Book Awards for 2006 from the Before Columbus Foundation. Ross Murfin joins the department as an active member after nearly a decade as SMU Provost. Series editor of the prestigious Bedford/St. Martin Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism, he augments the department's presence in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British literature. Jasper Neel joins the department after a decade as Dean of Dedman College, during which he meticu-

lously oversaw the growth of the English Department and the planning for its Ph.D. program. A noted rhetorician, he also shoulders a heavy burden as the teacher of the extremely popular course on Shakespeare and provides an expert presence in the instruction of writing.

Our colleagues have been giving talks and expending oxygen around the globe. Long-distance travelers included Dennis Foster, who spoke at the James Joyce conference in Budapest, Hungary; Rajani Sudan at the National Humanities Center at the Australia National University in Canberra; Steven Weisenburger at the annual Thomas Pynchon Conference, in Grenada, Spain, and I at Peking University in Beijing, China. Domestic travelers included Lisa Siraganian at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in Washington; Michael Holahan at the Jane Austen Society of North Texas; Suzanne Bost at the annual meetings of the American Studies Association and the Modern Language Association (both in Washington, D.C.) and at the Latin Ameri-



Marsh Terry

can Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Darryl Dickson-Carr at the annual Heart's Day Celebration at Howard University in Washington, D.C. A special section reserved for Willard Spiegelman's travels domestic and foreign will appear on the online edition of *Erudition*.

New books by faculty include two revised and expanded editions by Ross Murfin, one of his own Bedford critical edition of *The Scarlet Letter* and the other of R. P. Blackmur's edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Celestial Railroad and Other Stories* (Signet Press); Pauline Newton's *Transcultural Women of Late-Twentieth Century U.S. American Literature* (Ashgate); Marsh Terry's *The Memorialist* (Three Forks Press); and Steven Weisenburger's revised and expanded edition of *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion* (University of Georgia Press).

This year will mark the bittersweet parting of the English Department and Marsh Terry, our longest serving member (by far! I can hear him insist). We will settle accounts with Marsh at our 30th Anniversary Literary Festival, *Marshall Terry: Fifty Years of Vision*. It will take place March 29-31, 2007.

### Background for Success — continued from page 1

simply not enough for an anthropologist. She also, in between all of her writing and research, finds time to visit nursing homes, where she spends time with many immigrant grandmothers. Whether she reads to them or engages them in conversation, listens to their stories or just lends a helping hand, she has become very involved in the lives of the women and men she visits.

Dean Brettell may be right in asserting that one lifetime simply isn't enough for an anthropologist; another thing, however, is

certain as well – one article simply isn't enough to expound upon all of the academic and community services that Dean Brettell has provided for students, teachers, individuals outside of the classroom or anthropologists. With such an impressive resumé and eclectic span of interests, who wouldn't welcome Dean Brettell into the Dedman College Dean's Office with open arms?

## Taking Cues from the *Messenger* Magazine, OR How to Rake in some Mucks

by Darryl Dickson-Carr, Associate Professor,  
African American Literature

I miss good, old-fashioned muckraking journalism, in which corporations or public officials are mercilessly exposed betraying the public trust. Muckraking was born as the Industrial Revolution and modern capitalism grew in the 19th century. Writers such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Upton Sinclair, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman enlightened readers of their most famous works, including Wells-Barnett's *A Red Record* (1895), Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), and Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898), of lynching, the meat-packing industry, child labor, and systematic discrimination against women. They helped make all of us safer.

My affection for these writers is found in their power as writers. Their success in transforming our world depends upon careful, measured use of the English language that nevertheless reveals underlying passions and outrage. Their methodical

presentation of cold, hard facts about their subjects corresponds to methods in those subjects' actions. In the hands of Sinclair, the meat-packing industry becomes a cold, unfeeling, calculating machine consuming human lives and bodies. Wells-Barnett posits lynching as a system meant to oppress the rising African American population under

false pretenses. These journalists pursued a calling essential to the practice of democracy: continuous, uncompromising investigation of the political or economic *status quo*.

I am currently researching a relatively unknown magazine that comprised some of the most damning, ironic, and hilarious journalism ever seen. From 1917 through 1928, the *Messenger*: A Journal of

*Scientific Radicalism* stood as one of the most prominent and respected serial publications. The founders and editors were the genteel A. (Asa) Philip Randolph and his flamboyant comrade, Chandler Owen, two young men interested in fomenting

economic progress for African Americans. Together they produced an iconoclastic publication that owed as much to the muckraking tradition as it did to the style and substance of the irascible journalist and critic H.L. Mencken.

One of the first editorials Randolph and Owen published assailed the recent entry of the United States in World War I: "Lynching, Jim Crow, segregation, discrimination in the

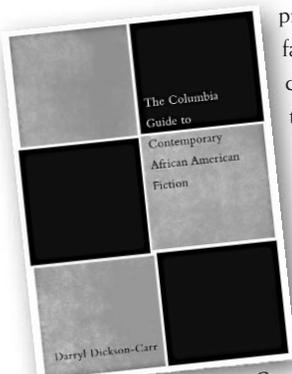
armed forces and out, disfranchisement of millions of black souls in the South—all these things make [President Wilson's] cry of making the world safe for democracy a sham, a mockery, a rape on decency and a travesty on common justice."<sup>1</sup> Soon thereafter, the editors received a visit from the Department of Justice, which charged them with sedition. Although acquitted—the judge could not believe that two African Americans were intelligent enough to write and publish such a piece—Randolph and Owen fought the Post Office and other foes to keep the magazine alive. The *Messenger* later evolved to include explicit satire and literary contributions by the likes of George S. Schuyler, Theophilus Lewis, Wallace Thurman, and Zora Neale Hurston. These changes reinforced the magazine's principled but unrelenting iconoclastic stance.

Regardless of our interests, we can take a number of cues from this fascinating magazine. As the success of such films as *Fast Food Nation*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and *Super Size Me* have demonstrated, Americans still hunger for exposés of their most cherished institutions. In Fondren library rests a magazine that can help assuage that hunger and show us the eternal power of the word.

<sup>1</sup> Editorial, *the Messenger* vol. 2, no. 1, January 1918, p. 20.



Darryl Dickson-Carr,  
Associate Professor of English



Professor Darryl Dickson-Carr has won the 2006 American Book Award for his book, *Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction*.

# Reader, I married him

(The ending of Jane Eyre, as far I'm concerned)

But the man himself was  
dead-leapt  
headfirst into a gaping eyre,  
drowning  
in the hairy arms of that  
fiendish whore,  
flaming, wretched passion,  
till death do us burn.  
There at Ferndean, crouching  
Garden of ruin,  
I found his ghost doing yoga,  
it looked like Lazarus,  
so I said; Lazarus, come forth,  
dear Lazarus,  
he was as beautiful as France;  
man or ghost,  
I wanted to see France,  
re-live its dazzling glory—  
maybe it was also the pills. I  
said to the ghost,  
I love you better now, take  
me to that place,  
France was a red-room, the  
fire was forever,  
reader, I married him, a  
child-bride dressed in sunset  
he, a sightless ghost, tripping  
over my wedding gown  
the boy came shortly after,  
rushing like a late river  
and out of breath, a golden  
haired Greek jewel,  
his eyes black like the Indian  
night that devours his father.

— by Elizabeth Tshele  
Spring '08, MA English  
@tshelebana

## Phi Beta Kappa

by Diana Grumbles, Lecturer in English

For more than 200 years, the Phi Beta Kappa Society has pursued its mission of excellence in the liberal arts and sciences. The Society's distinctive emblem, a golden key, is widely recognized as a symbol of academic achievement. Through a selective process of granting charters to the institutions that shelter Phi Beta Kappa chapters and then supporting and nurturing those new chapters, the Society reaffirms that mission.

Phi Beta Kappa has a long and rich history here at SMU. The University was honored to receive a chapter, the Gamma of Texas chapter, in 1949—before the University was even 40 years old! The first signee in the chapter register is Umphrey Lee, former president of the University.

Since its inception, the Gamma of Texas

chapter each year has elected to membership some of the University's finest students. These students represent the top 10% of those whose major area of studies is in the liberal arts. The Gamma chapter has many time-honored traditions in accord with the overall Phi Beta Kappa Society. Among those is the Initiation ceremony each spring, where faculty Phi Beta Kappans extend to initiates "the ancient grip of the Society" and explain to them the organization's motto, "Philosophia Biou Kubernetes," which translated means "the love of wisdom is the guide of life." SMU's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa significantly contributes to the intellectual environment on campus and proudly counts among its members many of the top faculty and student scholars at SMU.

For more information about Phi Beta Kappa please contact Diana Grumbles at [dgrumble@smu.edu](mailto:dgrumble@smu.edu).

This is a newsletter for Alumni,  
Students, Faculty, Staff and Friends  
of the Department of English

**ERUDITION**

Department of English  
Southern Methodist University  
P.O. Box 750435  
Dallas, TX 75275

*Editors*

Candice Bledsoe  
Alexandra Cassar

*Contributors*

Leslie Reid  
Katherine Lehr  
Perry Mcknight

*Photographer*

Hillsman S. Jackson

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Dallas, Texas  
Permit No. 856

[www.smu.edu/english](http://www.smu.edu/english)

Department of English  
P.O. Box 750435  
Dallas, TX 75275

