

Planting the Reading Seed:

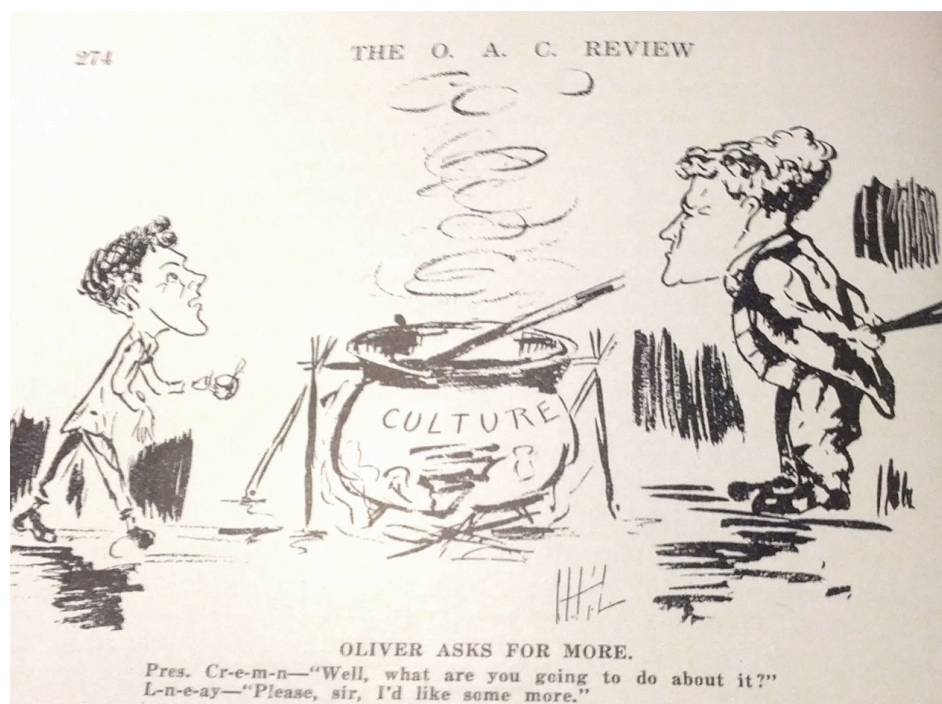
A (Potted) History of English at Guelph

by Natalie Shore



Massey Hall and Library, Ontario Agricultural College, as depicted by A.Y. Jackson (detail).
Courtesy University of Guelph Archives and Special Collections

School of English and Theatre Studies, University of Guelph, 2015.



Foreword

2014 marked not only the 50th birthday of the University of Guelph and its Department of English (now the School of English and Theatre Studies); it also marked the 108th anniversary of the founding of the Department of English in the Ontario Agricultural College, and the 137th anniversary of the introduction of English courses in the OAC's core curriculum. To honour these milestones, we commissioned undergraduate English student Natalie Shore to descend into the archives to research and write the history of how – and why -- English has developed as it has on this campus. The story she tells is one that contains many surprises and delights. With a flexible, utilitarian and progressive curriculum, the OAC was the first institution in Canada to teach courses in Canadian Literature; its English Department pioneered activist community engagement with outreach programs in literature and drama, and it introduced radio broadcast journalism and creative writing courses at a time when they had no place in universities. The legacy of creativity, innovation and social engagement that Natalie traces continues in the English program to this day, and we are delighted to share this narrative with the wider community.

Alan Filewod,
Director, School of English and Theatre Studies

“To think and enquire into the causes of things...”

One-hundred and thirty-seven years ago, in a young province in a young country, the runes of a humble English program were cast into the foundation of a brand new agricultural college. Rhetorical figures, their use and abuse; qualities and varieties of style; analytical study of English classics: the Ontario Agricultural College’s founding President William Johnston taught these to his students personally, because he saw a future where Canada’s farmers were freed from the muddy stereotypes that wandered the backwoods of common imagination. He saw a future where farmers could speak just as eloquently about Shakespeare as the proper method of sheep-shearing, identify examples of synecdoche and skillfully manage hired hands, and do justice to the value of their labour with the art of their expression.

For sixteen years Johnston upheld a certain level of proficiency for the College’s graduates to achieve, a difficult task considering the wavering, and sometimes completely missing literacy of its freshmen. “At least an English Department in such an Institution is an absolute necessity,” he proclaimed in 1877, addressing the problem presented by such varied student literacy levels. The need for an official, permanent post would not be satisfied for another three decades, but its aims were amply supplemented in the meantime by other stomping grounds, in the form of the College’s oldest and longest-running student society – the Literary Society.

“[...]so important an aid has this proven in its educating power, that it deserves almost to be classed as a fifth department of instruction. For five seasons I was its President, and can therefore speak with certainty of the benefits derived by the students from it; and forming a spirit de corps, in furnishing motives for intellectual exertion, in overcoming intellectual habits engendered by comparative isolation, in rubbing off the angles and dogmatic opinionativeness apt to be acquired by farmers, it did lasting service.”¹

William Johnston, in the College’s fifth annual report, 1879.

One member reported, on what he assures the reader is good authority, that it was not uncommon to see students reading pocket editions of Shakespeare plays between numbers at meetings, yet this hunger for literature was a problem for young men who were supposed to be feeding the country. From its inception the OAC was accused of “book-farming” by fathers convinced that the more literature, scientific or not, their sons studied, the less likely they would be to return to the land. In 1885, President James Mills insisted that theory and practice must go hand in hand, and while he assured them that he agreed nothing could take the place of practical apprenticeship, he refused to back down when it came to the first “R”.

“The mere reading of a book.... without any teaching whatever, would be a benefit to our farmers’ sons. It would excite their curiosity, and, as Hugh Miller says, teach them to make a right use of their eyes in noticing the common objects and scenes of everyday life, would foster in them a love of nature, and lead to the formation of most valuable habits of observation; would cause them to think and enquire into the causes of things; and, above all, would develop in them a taste for reading books and papers that treat the operations which they are called on to perform in the daily routine of farm life”²

James Mills, in the College’s eleventh annual report, 1885

Quite the romantic, he was.

The boys' fathers could be kept at bay with routine reassurance, but the boys themselves were the proof. If graduates could return to the family farm equipped with a miraculous combination of practical knowledge and the perpetual curiosity to nurture it, then maybe books could be saved. Saved, but not absolved, of all charges. Reading books on Soil Quality and Crop Rotation is all well and good – if you're into that; classical literature and romantic poetry, on the other hand, were harder to justify. Yet Mills wove the themes of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Byron, Irving, Scott and Keats into discussions about the relationship between humanity and the earth, the farmer's social status, and appreciation and curiosity as the stepping stones to knowledge. The study of literature made way for "the fullness of independence which belongs to the sons of the soil."³

How did Wordsworth look on nature in boyhood? In Youth? And in Manhood?
(an English exam question from 1887)

And lectures were not sat through with slack jaws: students had thoughts and feelings and the desire to articulate them. Mills reported in 1885 that the majority of OAC students were members of the Literary Society, where they explored questions from English class that were not as easily answered as those in the more practical ends of their education: Which is better, nature or art? Who has done more to please and benefit mankind, Longfellow or Wordsworth? Which is of more benefit to the farmer, Agricultural Chemistry or English?

Sometimes the debate was set aside in favour of open discussions of favourite authors, poetry readings and essay recitals. Narrow-minded fathers be damned, sometimes they wore costumes and spoke of the customs of India or presented a few impromptu acts of Sheridan.

Despite all the drama, the Society became somewhat of a public relations branch for the College. In 1885 it put on its first Literary and Dramatic Recital, a night of entertainment offered to the people of the town and surrounding country as a gesture of thanks for their kindness and support, and in 1892 the Patrons of Industry, a progressive farmers' organization, requested that the Society perform their specialities at a local public school. But its most influential venture was the publication of the OAC's longest running newspaper. The *OAC Review*, established in 1889 and published by the Literary Society, let the students' love affair with the arts edge its way into the public eye. An anonymous piece -- "The Education of the Farmer's Son" -- in the July issue of 1891 validated that particular relationship among the other subjects:

"In conclusion, we would not overlook the subject of English literature. In this age of enlightenment every farmer's son should be able not only to read and write, but speak his mother tongue correctly. And how can proficiency in this line be more readily attained than by the careful study of the best English authors?"⁴

As the Literary Society published it, there was always space devoted to recounting details of every meeting and future plans, but it never lost sight of that golden mean Johnston had sought. One of its first ventures was a contest advertised in the Review for best essay on “The Ontario Agricultural College as a Link in Our Educational System.” A farming advice column was initiated to both make use of and solicit donations for the college library. Discussion around the need for rural public roads reflected the union of the practical, the educational, and the literary, for, as one article pointed out, how else would farming families in search of self-improvement attend the debating society of their local institution?

The Arrival of J.B. Reynolds

In 1893 Joseph Benson Reynolds arrived at the OAC. As a student, Reynolds had excelled in Physics and Mathematics and received honours in both subjects upon graduating from the University of Toronto, but when he was hired at the College as Assistant Resident Master, his duties included teaching English literature as well as physics.

A self-described man of determination and intellectual curiosity, Reynolds was not intimidated by teaching a subject of which he had essential knowledge but no formal training. In fact, he found being only slightly ahead of his students to be an advantage, perhaps because it allowed him to share with them the excitement of venturing into the literary unknown.

There was something else that bonded Reynolds with his English students: it was the one course in the College that allowed for artistic expression, encouraged subjective interpretation, and validated emotional experience as worthwhile of study. Reynolds himself said that English “afforded relief from the hard matter-of-factness of the practical and scientific subjects.”⁵ An examination question from his first year at the College reads: “Tell frankly what sort of pleasure, if any, these poems give you, and what feelings they awaken.”

With an eye to what skills his pupils lacked and what piqued their interests, Reynolds created a remarkable English curriculum in his first several years. He noted that students preferred historical novels to formal essays, and encouraged them to discuss the social and political conditions as contrasted with their own time. He recognized that a wide variety of authors was crucial to enhance the students’ ideas and vocabularies, which would in turn make them better at public speaking and journalistic writing. He suggested that each other professor in the College assign topics to be discussed by students in lectures, “so that their powers of expressing might be cultivated in connection with practical theses, and thus we might pave the way for each student to take a similar part in large spheres and on wider questions.”⁶

By 1901 there was an emphasis on prose over poetry, and textbooks on rhetoric were introduced into all English classes “with a view to making the study... more definite and exact,” but by no means was the course losing touch with its flowery side⁷. Reynolds

often noted in his annual reports a continuous interest and appreciation in the study of literature on the part of his students. Such statements may have been necessary, if not entirely true, in a time where English studies at the agricultural college were still vulnerable, but if from some angles Reynolds' booming agenda was a sitting duck, it was *Swan Lake* for the students it inspired.

One might be tempted to picture the farm boy himself as one who scoffs at the delicacies of language, but in 1897, a "Poet's Corner" cropped up in the *OAC Review*, featuring the work of nascent rhymesters whose talent might have otherwise remained dormant.

Third Year Chemistry Exam.

*It once befell upon a day,
When nature with herself did play,
A paper for the Third Year set
Made each unlucky student sweat.*

*Each one had plugged it up with care,
But knowledge vanished in the air;
And though the brave boys did their best,
The examiner had done the rest.*

*For there were very few that passed.
O, may this paper be the last
To cause us all such fearful woe,
And cool our spirits as the snow.*

-Anonymous⁸

Soon not only student-penned poems, but short stories as well began to take up permanent residence between scientific articles, and a book review column complemented the spike in books added to the library. Eventually the *Review* began a yearly contest which offered prizes for the best short stories, poems, cartoon, and later, photographs to showcase students' creative talents.

The activities of the Literary Society became more sophisticated, and in 1901 it sponsored its first visiting lecture: "The Novel: Its Origin and Use" by a University of Toronto professor. It soon propagated three sub-societies to better accommodate its growing membership, and its annually-offered essay prize, once awarded to such titles as "The Fat-Stock Show" or "Farm Hygiene" were given to "The Best Models of Victorian Prose Literature" and "Reading in the Farm Home".

In 1903, due to his increased workload and a growing student population, Reynolds began to express concern that the quality of the English courses would be compromised, and hinted that the solution is to place all of them under the charge of one professor (Reynolds, by the way, was also head of the Physics Department), but still he commenced an English program across the road at the Macdonald Institute in 1905, so that the young women of OAC had an equal opportunity to study and enjoy literature.

Finally, in 1906, President Creelman announced the creation of an English Department to accommodate the new English minor option, and gave Reynolds the reins.

“We read plays from Shakespeare and selections from Milton, and traversed the fruitful fields of the poets, novelists, and essayists of the 19th century. Fortunately for our freedom of choice, there was no outside authority to set our curriculum, or to prepare our examinations. Our affiliation with the University (of Toronto) meant only formal acceptance of our courses of study and of examination results.”⁹

While literature was popular with the students, they still struggled with composition and public speaking. Reynolds realized that “the department of English must accept responsibility for the *manner* in which the message of agricultural science and research reached the public,” for although it taught so much more than elocution, its efficacy was still judged solely on its practical applications.¹⁰ Reynolds was determined to satisfy this criteria without allowing the rest to be forgotten, so he found ways to combine the two, such as arranging demonstrations by professional speakers who spoke on the subject of literature. In 1907, under the auspices of the young English Department, Frank Yeigh, president of the Young Men’s Liberal Club of Toronto, known for organizing such events as “An Evening with Canadian Authors” in 1892, gave a lecture in Massey Hall (then Massey Library) on “20th Century Canada”, and ES Williamson of Toronto presented “An Evening with Dickens.”

Sure enough, Reynolds noted in 1909 that Public Speaking was a “recognized department of instruction and practice” in the English course, though it still wanted for time¹¹. He reasoned that if the college could afford a gym teacher and football coach, it could hire a public speaking instructor, and two years later it was a two-year course. He began to include lectures on Agricultural Journalism in the English courses and invited three visitors to speak on the subject, like William Donald Albright, an OAC grad of 1903 who was editor of *The Farmer’s Advocate*.

In that same year, Reynolds is sure to state in the annual report that “(t)here is no doubt in my own mind that the whole of the time allowed to English in these four years could profitably be devoted to the study of Literature alone” and emphasized that “English is one of the few purely cultural subjects on our curriculum.” It seems that he wanted to make sure journalism and public speaking have their place, but only wanted to be responsible for planting the seeds, not harvesting the plant. Therefore, while these practical subjects were taking root in the curriculum, Reynolds was scouting other fields for cultural growth, including some untouched territory, and it was time to map out one in particular.

Reynolds had been teaching Canadian literature in his classes for several years. He wrote an article on “Nature Poetry in Lampman” in the December 1903 issue of the *Review*, and from then on discussion, criticism, and advocacy of Canadian literature was commonplace in its pages. Like the once-wandering black sheep that was English at the OAC, Canadian literature lacked a department, it could not yet feed itself, and its growth depended on those who chose to recognize it. The OAC, however, itself a product of and dealer in experimentation, was a uniquely hospitable environment.

"I suppose the course began out of my own curiosity about Canadian literature. I wanted to know if there was such a thing--some people doubted it. Some people doubt today if there is yet a real Canadian literature. So I thought I would delve into it myself and present it to the students"¹²

Perhaps, having been taught that Canada's prosperity depended on them, OAC students' patriotism led them to understand the significance of a national literature. It was free from tired traditions of old countries that the boys had never seen: like them, it only knew Canada, and, as it was only in its budding stages, anyone who tended to it could influence its direction. A 1904 editorial calling for more Canadian periodicals in the library reading room referred to the shortage as an opportunity for "Canadian brains and ability" to lead the movement to build up their nation's literature. The next editorial insisted on a Canadian College Journalists' Association, arguing that the voices of college newspapers were just as important as those paid for their writing, and that Canada's press must originate within her borders if she is to have any voice at all.

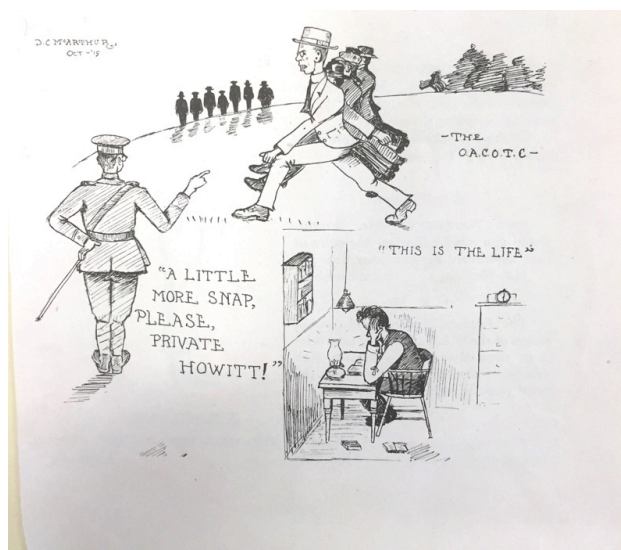
In any case, it was only a matter of time before Canadian Literature became a legitimate subject for formal study. The OAC is recognized as the first institution in Canada to teach it as a course. It was taught by Reynolds in 1910, although he'd been teaching its content before that. By 1913 it was nestled safely in the English syllabus and has remained there ever since.

Nor were the young women of Macdonald Institute forgotten. Their course was updated and expanded in proportion to the rest, and a popular addition proved to be

*"... the heretofore masculine art of public speaking. ... Our prof had told us that we must not "talk shop"... such a subject would not give our new exercise any distinction from the ordinary demonstration lecture. How wise this premonition was we soon learned, for immediately we were wandering in the realms of biography, poetry and art. ... seriously, we feel that this phase of training is one of the long-felt wants in a woman's education. ..."*¹³



Having already cultivated courses in public speaking, journalism, and Canadian Literature, the English Department looked to what else it could do, and found the answer not in expansion, but extension. Although Canada's literacy rates had been climbing steadily, there was concern that rural populations did not have the same opportunities (or incentive) as urban ones to pursue education in their spare time.¹⁴ The OAC must have seen itself as a pioneer of sorts when it came to the union of rural and scholarly cultures, and from within its walls came murmurings of travelling libraries, advisory boards for organizing rural clubs and societies, and teaching better farming through drama and debates, but unfortunately with the arrival of the First World War these things were swept aside by the great broom of science (and necessity); providing food for a nation at war was serious business and scientific research occupied the front line. The college threw itself into investigating more efficient farming methods and getting that information to farmers – the latter part was thought to be simple enough, but something was missing, it was misunderstood.



For the next four years, the English Department's section in the annual reports was reduced from its usual two pages to a mere paragraph, and to nothing at all in 1917, in part due to some staff juggling (three different English chairmen in three years from 1914-1916), and mostly because its activities were simply a low priority. But even during the anxiety of war and science and destitution, English was *happening* – its fortitude would just have to go unnoticed for a little longer.

"Is this old art of story-telling declining? We hope not. In fact, it cannot, when people all over the country are awakening to its possibilities. Through it, the story literature of the world should become more accessible and better adapted to the child, and it is even possible that the professional story-teller may flourish again as in the old days..."¹⁵

Storytelling actually did undergo a revival at the OAC, where the problem was that nobody was being heard: the OAC was excitedly doling out data to farmers far and wide, farmers who didn't know an apex from a zygote and didn't have time to look it up,

and too much was at stake for time to be wasted teaching scientists how to write for greenhorns or farmers to read like scholars. All that was left was to let communication take the form of the tried, the true, the parable. Reynolds had predicted his Department's role in this back in 1910 when he said he realized "that the department of English must accept responsibility for the manner in which the message is delivered," that is, through "literary journalism."¹⁶

And so, the English Department demonstrated that accessibility and adaptability of storytelling that Gardiner spoke of, by coaching students in oratorical mastery so they could speak to their communities on "Literature and Rural Life," "The Book Farmer," and "Farm Journalism in Relation to Agriculture." The Prose section of the English curriculum began focusing on the study of class, promoting eloquent discussion on the differences between social class as pertained to rurality. This, along with tips on story-writing provided in the English Department's *Review* column, resulted in wartime articles on farming methods which were full of creative experimentation with style, dialogue, humour and elements of fiction, to the effect of bringing information to life, making it memorable to anyone who happened to share the human experience. Students eager to assist in the war effort wrote articles such as "Getting Information to the Farmer", "Teaching in the Rural School", and experiential pieces such as "How I Became Interested in Agriculture," Ruth Waite's perspective on entering the field as a woman in wartime. Even President Creelman, who had been accused by students of actively discouraging artsy culture in 1914, seemed to catch on, for in late 1916 he wrote "The Unsuccessful Farmer," a story written in dramatic dialogue and published in the December issue of the *Review*.

Many storytellers evolved. Ethel Chapman, a Mac grad of 1912 who wrote numerous poems in her student years, became a successful journalist (she was later invited to teach journalism at the OAC) and wrote several novels, contributed "A Letter an Ordinary Man Might Write," written from the point of view of a farmer concerned that no educated woman would want to share his lifestyle.

"There are no operas here, but there's an abundance of material to start a community theatre. I'm not an acting man myself, but a girl who has starred in a college dramatic club could set a powerful leaven working."¹⁷

Muriel Krouse, another Maconald student, contributed several poems and stories illustrating the joys and challenges of being a woman farmer to the *Review*, winning first prize in its annual competition for both of those categories. When she died suddenly in 1920, Stevenson printed one of her latest poems, which she had shared with him by mail, as a tribute to the young woman who may well have become a great author.

After the War

In 1915 the Manitoba Agricultural College offered Reynolds the position of president, and he accepted. Dr. Orlando John Stevenson took Reynolds' place as the main English man on campus in 1916, and was eventually appointed head of the Department in 1919. These transitional years were rocky ones, but when the end of the war saw a record attendance at the College, and a trend of "city men of wealth" offering handsome salaries for educated farm managers, English at the OAC was knighted as a useful discipline. President Creelman stated in 1919 that "any success which we have met with... has been because we have insisted on our students working hard at subjects of general culture, such as English... with the result that our ex-students have a good general useful education and are loyal to the Institution which gave them such a start."¹⁸

Like Reynolds, Stevenson had some sensational ideas when it came to teaching, and set out to spread them by, for one example, offering third and fourth year Mac and OAC students an optional, English-credit course in "the Science of Education." He participated in the annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English and was an outspoken candidate of reform. Teaching, he said, required "imagination, an eye and ear for the concrete elements in the poem, and the power to see it vividly and to make it vivid for the pupil," a practice that would crystallize in the minds and memories of many of his students.¹⁹ The old methods had gone unchallenged for too long, he declared: a proverb that the OAC itself had been repeating since 1874, but was just now beginning to understand in terms of literary culture. The tremors of war had shaken out two niches for the English Department: for one, it was expected to continue to bridge the information gap between the scientific and rural communities; and, naturally, to put the life back in country living.

A gloomy-sounding Review article from 1920: "*More Amateur Theatricals: Hints from prison camps that might liven our country life.*"²⁰

Stevenson's ideas about imagination and vision made sense in a time when the arts were proving to be a much more inclusive, effective, and enjoyable way to share news and information. As it had turned out that previous bulletins, full of the scientific language of academia, had unwittingly been shutting out the very people that they wanted to reach, members of the Department formed a Committee on Farm Literature and began contributing work to the College's extension program, such as Stevenson's "Books, Pictures, and Music for the Farm Home" (1919) and "Debates, Plays and Community Music for Rural Social Organizations" (1922), leaflets containing lists of plays that were found suitable amateur groups and their audiences, and Professors Unwin and McLean's "The Rural Literary and Debating Society" (1923). Even after the bulletins were distributed, questions from newly-formed rural theatre and literary societies continued to flood into the College's Packet Loan Library, and the English Department personally answered them all.

Ontario Department of Agriculture

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

SPECIAL BULLETIN

Debates, Plays and Community Music

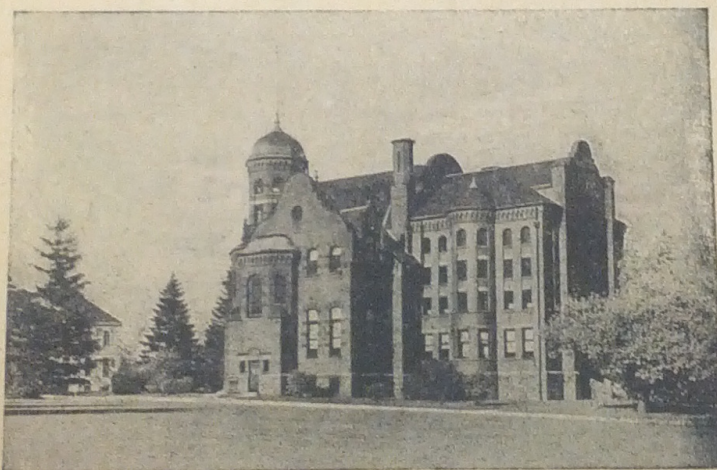
FOR

Rural Social Organizations

BY

O. J. STEVENSON, M.A., D.Paed.

Professor of English



Massey Hall and Library, O.A.C., Guelph

TORONTO, ONTARIO, MAY, 1922

Students were catching a fever for theatre as well. They had dabbled in dramatics for years but without proper guidance, the activities of the Drama Club had been unpredictable at best, the prevailing acting technique involved a lot of black makeup, and the only thing College Theatre night seemed to produce was fear in the hearts of the townspeople. But in the twenties, the OAC found its footing and trotted over to theatre's good side, and the 1921 College Theatre Night was lauded in the Review as "a landmark in the history of college progress" for its cooperation, organization, and originality.²¹ "Nothing livens up a community socially more than a few good amateur plays" said the same editorial, and it was true, for even the Athletic Society and French Club incorporated plays into their meetings, the annual oratorical contests and mock parliament sessions were restored, and annual competitions for best production were organized. President Reynolds himself arranged a playwriting contest within the Department of Rural Social Organization for best original play suitable for amateur production in a rural community, and first and second prize were awarded to an OAC grad and a Macdonald student respectively.

A group of students lent themselves to the Department's extension work as well, taking part in the plays presented at the meetings of the Experimental Union and helping to gather the material sent out to rural organizations. "The Sodbusters" were just one star born of the campus theatre revival. Student George Patton managed this group of entertainers who produced plays for the Experimental Union exemplifying the how-to's of rural theatrics, and eventually toured nearby Rockwood, Elora, and Hespeler to raise money for the construction of War Memorial Hall. Immediately after his graduation in 1922, Patton was hired as director of the Ontario Provincial Motion Picture Bureau, but returned to the OAC in 1924 to lead the Sodbusters in the very first entertainment produced on War Memorial Hall's stage.

It was Agnes Grieve McLean, a spirited Scotswoman with a MA in English and a passion for theatre, who really put OAC dramatics on the map. Although she was not an official faculty member, her career directing the majority of campus plays spanned twenty years and oversaw the first Canadian presentation of, just to name a few, Nichols and Browne's *Wings Over Europe*, the first North American amateur productions of Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, and J. B. Fagan's *And So To Bed*, the rights to which the Philharmonic Society secured from Fagan himself.

G. Nixon.

BULLETIN 348]

[DECEMBER, 1929

Ontario Department of Agriculture

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

GUELPH, ONT.

Amateur Dramatics

By MRS. E. C. McLEAN, M.A., B.E.,
and
E. C. McLEAN, M.A., Associate Professor of English

INTRODUCTION

The production of plays by amateurs is by no means a recent development; groups of amateurs were producing plays in England before Shakespeare was born. Recently, however, interest in amateur dramatics has been on the increase. In Ontario at the present time this increased interest is particularly noticeable in rural communities. Plays are being put on in communities where they were never attempted before, and in other communities, where the production of plays has been going



THE CAST OF "MR. PIM PASSES BY" AS PRESENTED BY THE O.A.C. PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.
Note the stage set which is made of flats and arches. The two smaller arches are curtained and taped to represent windows; the larger arch is the left side exit.

NOTE.—Mrs. McLean has been identified with the Philharmonic Society of the Ontario Agricultural College for the past five years. She has successfully directed a number of plays which have been presented by this student group. She has made a study of the subject and has given large assistance in the preparation of this bulletin.

When Reynolds became President of the OAC in 1920, the English Department received more attention than it had from any previous leader. Salaries were raised and an assistant was recruited to relieve the members' workload, but Reynolds also personally involved himself in its activities. He served as chairman of the Canadian Author Lectures, given until 1946, introducing the likes of Charles Roberts and Peter McArthur to the stage. With the separation of the Associate and Degree programs in 1921, the English curriculum enjoyed a new flexibility when it came to suiting the interests of each class of students.

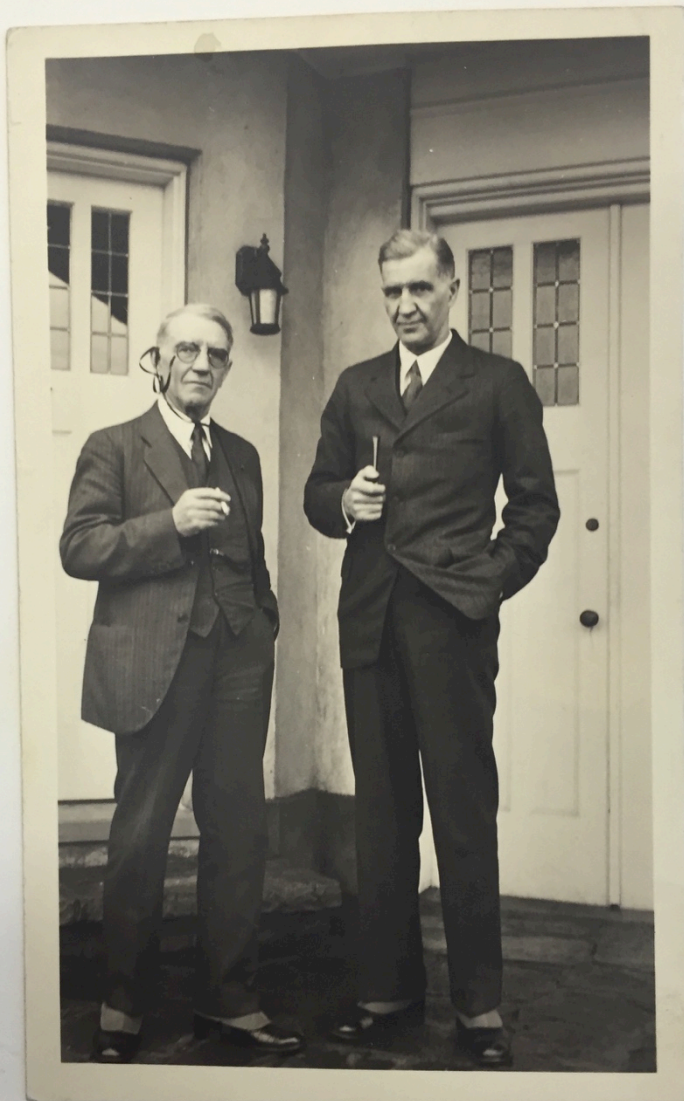
"Instruction in composition is given during the first two years. In the third and fourth years, the work in composition takes the form of journalism... In Literature the first year is devoted to the study of Canadian literature and a play by Shakespeare. In the second year the poetry and prose of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is studied; in the third year, the Romantic period; and in the fourth year, the Victorian period; and in connection with the work in literature, a study is made of the music, painting and architecture of each period, illustrated by phonograph records and lantern slides."²²

That phonograph, purchased in 1917 by the English Department, saw a lot of action in its OAC days. Dr and Mrs Stevenson hoped to eventually see one in every rural school of Ontario, they were so confident in the influence of music. They found many opportunities to play it, not only in the classroom but in Massey Hall during art and music lectures given to the short-course students and locals. In the meantime, their enthusiasm caught on at the OAC, judging by the winning speech that year, entitled "An Appeal for a Broader Education in Classical Music." While students may not have dug Handel's *Messiah* at first, many graduates would later testify to a slow burn of music appreciation and the usefulness it had in their professions.

"[...] I began to see that there were other concerns in life besides metre and metaphors. I realized that not only must one earn a living but live. In order to really live one must appreciate the various things that enter into his daily life. I found that certain phonograph records gave me more pleasure because of the little time Dr. Stevenson had taken to introduce me to them. The same with certain works of art and literature."²³

In 1926, students formed an Art Club to share interests in photography, drawing, and painting; it became popular fast, and was invited to exhibit its members' works at the 1926 College Royal. Prizes were awarded for oil paintings, water colours, photographs, pencil sketches, and miscellaneous. The exhibit was popular for years, often placing in the top five categories for best exhibit, and eventually earned more space and new backdrops.

The College was also welcoming works from professional artists, using donations and funds from lectures, concerts, and plays to purchase original pieces. Tom Thomson's *The Drive* was the first painting secured as part of a series initiated by Stevenson and supported by bacteriology professor Dan H. Jones with the intention of collecting Canadian artwork. The collection grew to include Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Côté's *The Old Willow* and Mary Wrinch's *Still Afternoon* among others. Twenty Canadian paintings from the National Gallery of Ottawa were loaned to deck the dining hall walls.



Charles G. D. Roberts and his brother,
Theodore Goodridge Roberts, on the
occasion of T. G. Robert's lecture in
War Memorial Hall.

1932

The celebration of Canadian art saw the revival of visiting authors in the Canadian Author Lecture Series, sponsored by the English Department, with the first one given in 1916 by Evelyn Vrooman, an elocutionist who specialized in Canadian poetry. It was not uncommon for tickets to sell out, meaning Massey Hall and later War Memorial Hall would be packed with students, faculty and townspeople eager to hear Bliss Carman, Charles Roberts, Peter McArthur (whose son Daniel was attending the College at the time), Robert Falconer and Stephen Leacock speak on their craft.²⁴

In the late twenties, students began to grasp the notion that education was not, or was not supposed to be, having information passed down to them with no room for question. Stevenson's 1927 questionnaire marked a departure from the stubborn doctrines of traditional education, for it asked students for their own opinions on the teaching and learning process. The most consistent and striking reply was that they wished their education had allowed them to "read more widely."²⁵ Students at the OAC were realizing the role of the arts in not only education, but freedom of thought. This epiphany, as well as a solid decade of having their creative abilities appreciated and encouraged by their English professors, would serve them well as they embarked on their first independent student newspaper, the *Oacis* (edited by young John Keneth Galbraith, no less), and especially as they dealt with the implications of its fate.

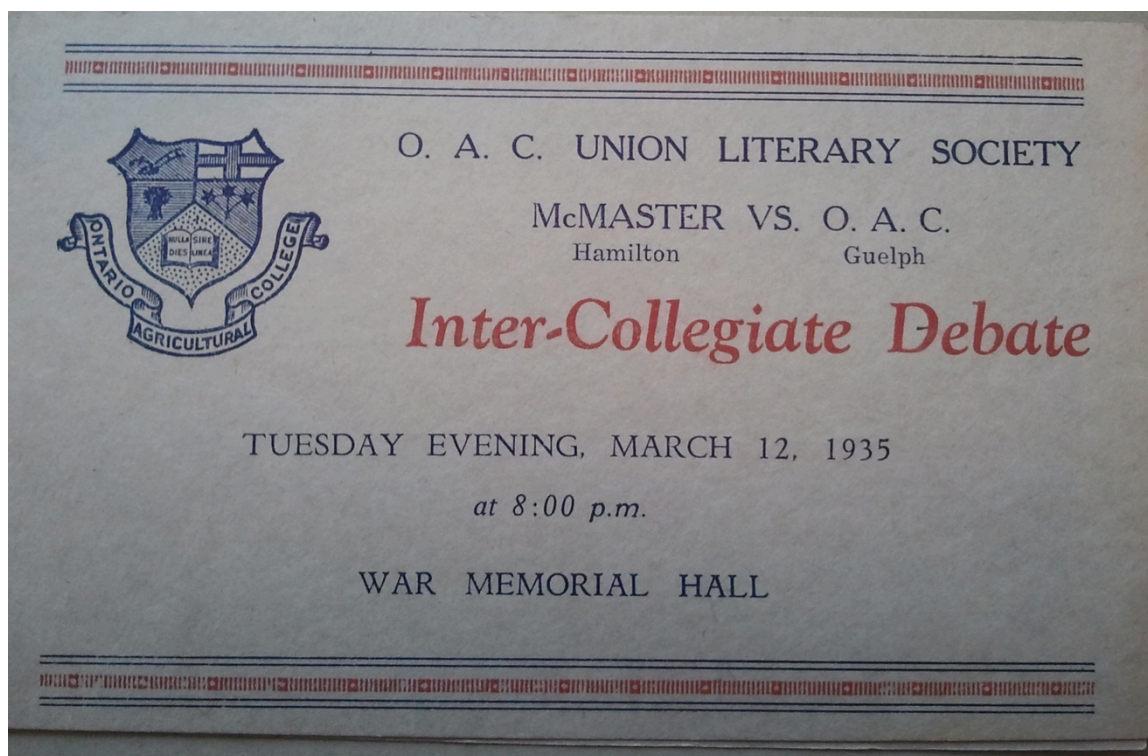
The Thirties: The Hum of Dissent

When I look about me, at our crumbling world, of contrasts and paradoxes; when I see our fathers, wise in their own errors, trying to restrict all new thought because of the dangers which might accrue to them and to their standards, I thank God, that I am a radical.²⁶

This passage is from one of many articles in the *Review* expressing frustration with racial prejudice, capitalism, standardization, nationalism, high unemployment rates, and anti-coeducational sentiment. The last several years had been an eye-opener to some harsh realities realized under the thumb of authority: President Christie had shut down the independent student weekly, the *Oacis*, in 1932 (citing a reference to Charles GD Roberts as "Charles God Damn Roberts" as one reason for its end) and seized the Year '26 Lectureship, overruling the Philharmonic Society executive who had been nominated for the job personally by Year '26. This, along with a sharper awareness on campus of the world's political and social conflicts, inspired a reevaluation of the major student societies as critical outlets for the practice of democracy instead of just mere entertainment.

This decade saw more collaboration between the ULS and the Philharmonic, a larger stage presence by Macdonald Hall, and hence a recovery from low attendance and funding. They endeavoured to culture themselves, producing more political satires such as *The Apple Cart* and *Iolanthe*, and inviting international students from the University of Toronto to perform ethnic drama and music. Debate topics surrounding the power of the press, the two-party system, the League of Nations' failure, capital punishment, and examination methods reflected an urge to have a voice in one's own system. An audience of 400 attended the final Union meeting of 1937 – more than twice the usual number. More attention meant more money, more influence on campus, and the freedom to

sponsor its own awards, organize competitions, and recruit the Guelph Symphony Orchestra's director to oversee the creation of a college orchestra.



Always an ally and trusted advisor to the societies, the English Department was attuned to the hum of youthful dissent. It seemed that disillusionment led to the podium, and when the societies, debating clubs and public speaking clubs boomed with student voices, the Department was there as a sponsor, a coach and, ultimately, a listener. Several new public speaking clubs arose, including the Open Bar Club, which focused on international issues. When students were searching for alternative interpretations of things, they often turned to the English faculty. When the newly formed International Relations Club invited Professor Karre Gunvaldsen to address them on the subject of Nazi Germany, he emphasized the role of propaganda in corrupting humanity, drawing comparisons between it and *Brave New World*; and Professor Ernest McLean was invited to explain the conditions of the Spanish civil war in terms of Fascism, Communism, and "Power Politics".

Students held a brief resentment towards the Canadian Author Series if only because they associated it with the destruction of their *Oacis*, but dropped the grudge just a year later in 1933 when they filled Memorial Hall to the brim to hear EJ Pratt, who the English Department had brought in as a refreshing voice of non-traditional poetry who shared students' passion for social issues. Stevenson's regular column in the *Review* showed his own readiness to move forward, to chuckle at the white-knuckled grip with which some clung to the past, to value the artefacts of the present: he called slang

“language in the making,” for instance, and admired it for its “raciness and effectiveness.” He encouraged students to experiment in free verse, where they might find their voice beyond rules of structure. He insisted that contemporary writing was just as important, if for different reasons, as the classics, and had given modern literature a significant presence in the required readings of his courses since 1924. To accommodate students who were making independent studies of Canadian History or Literature, he spearheaded a collection of Canadian books, pictures and prints in Massey Library in 1931.

The Students’ Christian Movement knew that it was an object of suspicion under the roving eye of young skeptics, and in a gesture of solidarity – for they, too, were searching for answers – hosted a series of six lectures by a doctor of psychology from the University of Toronto, in hopes that knowledge of the human mind would inspire a sense of sameness among campus communities, which was, after all, what others were trying to achieve on an international scale. The guest speaker was Dr George Reaman, who would return two years later to succeed Stevenson as head of the English Department.

The Forties: Wireless Station No. 4

“True culture is not a code of mental etiquette which smothers all original feeling beneath a superficial array of accomplishments. One cannot acquire it as one learns arithmetic or wood-carving. Culture cannot be moulded into conformity. We pride ourselves on being a free and independent generation. Let’s not exercise our freedom by becoming a society of ‘rubber stamps’. Be Yourself.”²⁷

In the 1940’s, with fascism prickling the backs of their sensitive necks, students were realizing that their freedom depended on mutual and individual respect. Reaman’s background in psychology helped the English Department to stay in harmony with ever-evolving collective student conscience. He saw that the Department concerned itself with specialized, modern interests. His inclusion of writers’ autobiographical information appealed to students intrigued by individualism. He lauded idealism as a key to progress, and strove to equate the art of writing with personal experience, by emphasizing that every writer “had their difficulties like you and me, and that their poems are but expressions of their own personalities, should make these same poems have an added interest for us.”²⁸

In 1939, the Department inaugurated a course in Radio Broadcasting, taught by Reaman. The first of its kind in Canada, it only admitted fourth-year students with the highest academic standings. This way its success was almost guaranteed, and within the year the OAC had regular shows on Kitchener’s CKCR station, and two OAC and two Macdonald students went on the air on the first live broadcast of College Royal, courtesy of the CBC. College Royal also included a prize category in journalism for best broadcast, in which 25 students participated. With the onset of war however, the radio course was restricted to women and men who were not fit for military service.



Dr. G. Reaman leading a Broadcasting class.

War-Time Course for Radio Announcers

Course of Study

1. The Job of the Radio Announcer.
2. Rules and Regulations governing Radio Broadcasting in Canada.
3. The Radio Station
Executive Departments—Program, Sales, Publicity,
Mechanical Department.
4. Personality and Speech Effects, Psychological Conditions Involved. Bernreuter Personality Inventory.
5. Vocal Quality and Control: Breath Control, Emphasis, Resonance, Pitch, Pronunciation, Enunciation. Voice Recording.
6. Effective Reading of Prose, Poetry, Drama. Practice in Choral Speaking.
7. Continuity Writing, Script Writing. Timing.
8. Instruction in Foreign Language Pronunciation
9. Use of Sound Effects. Transcription Records. Teletype Machines.
10. Special Feature Broadcasting: Sports, Music, Farm Reports, Interviews, Newscasts. (To be given by specialists from radio stations.)
11. Actual broadcasting experience in nearby radio stations.

During the war years OAC shared the campus – somewhat awkwardly --with the Royal Canadian Air Force, which established schools to train wireless operators and cooks for the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The OAC marched to a martial beat – all students were required to take military training, and every issue of the *Review* carried tributes to Aggies who had fallen overseas.

To offer a balance to the “limited facilities offered by the course in journalism”, Reaman guided the formation of the College’s first Writers’ Club with the aim to “promote interest in writing of both prose and poetry of a sort suitable for publication in the *Review* or in any other magazine. The members are all interested in the improvement of their style, and emphasis will be placed on no particular line of endeavour, but will be left to a great extent to the preferences of the individual.”²⁹

Creative freedom suited the students, who could choose with confidence whether they preferred the cold hard facts of journalism at the time, or meandering through fields of fiction. No matter the medium, though, an effort was made to keep them identifiable with each other as part of a larger literary culture on campus. In 1940, the English Department, the major societies and the *Review* resolved to work more closely together, likely in an effort to combat an atmosphere that deemed their activities a waste of time and energy during wartime. For the first time, members of the department took turns writing the English section for the *Review*, each contributing their own philosophy on life and literature. The department also began offering a prize of bonus credit to the winner of the poetry contest, which was arranged by the *Review* and the Literary Society in unison. The pages of the *Review* had never included so much news of campus dramatics, and within a year it was reported that literary activities were flourishing on campus.

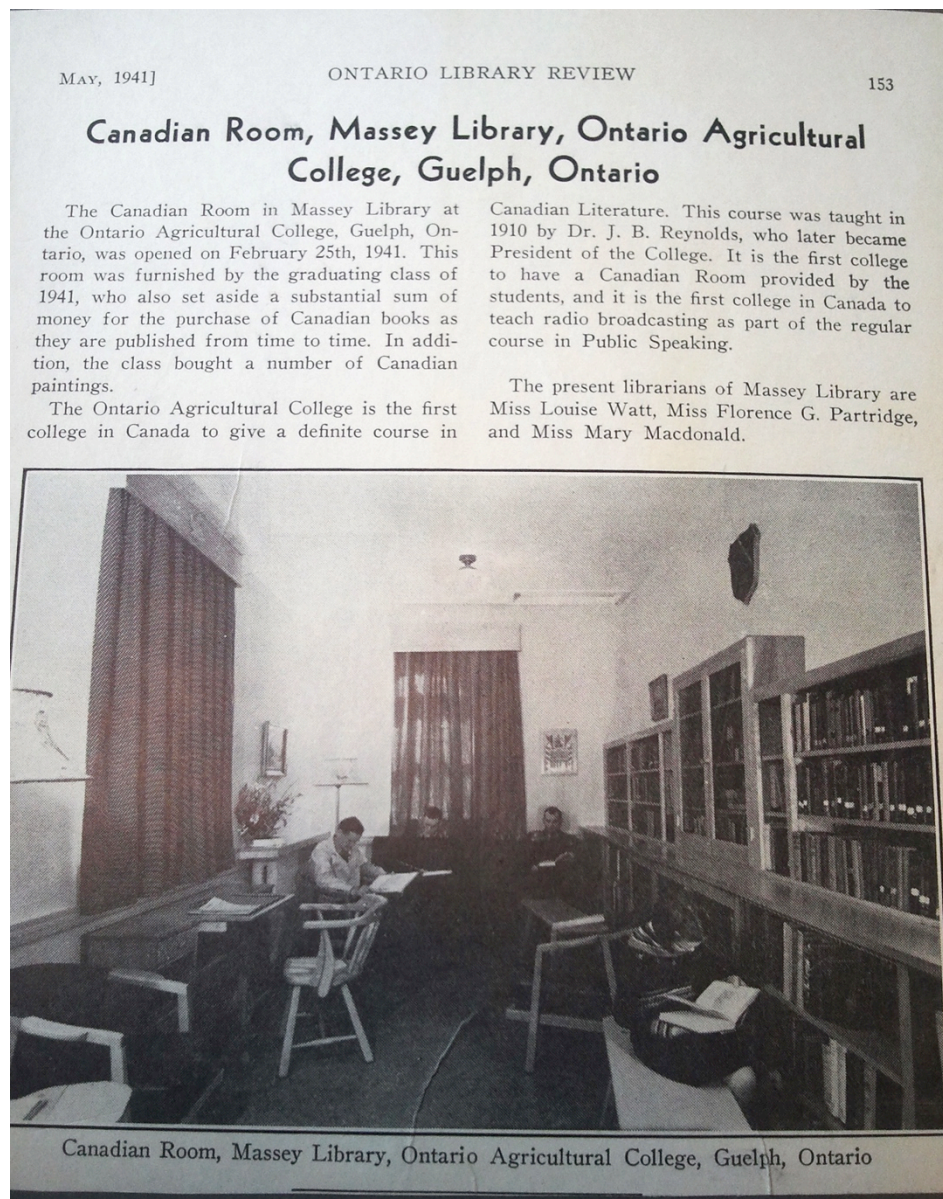
Students of the forties enjoyed a concert series called the “Sunday Nine O’Clocks” which, although initially sponsored by the English Department, fell into the hands of societies -and not just the literary ones - eager to take their turn designing the program. “A striking combination of the varied interests on the campus was shown,” for example, at a concert sponsored by both the Athletic and Students’ Co-op Societies which also was credited with being the first to include modern music in the series.³⁰ Macdonald students later brought in Florence Leslie-Jones to demonstrate the art of Choral Speaking, and soon a Choral Club was the new hit on campus, accompanied by a course in choral reading.

And why should the author and the dramatist be denied support during the war? A 1941 issue of the Literary Society showed proud support of its campus poets when it dedicated its entire section to previously unpublished poems by OAC and MAC students alike. Literature could do great things for democracy. Reaman said as much at the 1941 opening of the Canadian Room in Massey Library, which was presented to the College by year ‘41 and dedicated to Dr Stevenson: “It is tremendously important,” said Reaman on the opening day, “that a graduating class of an agricultural college will obligate themselves and their futures to the extent of providing books and comfortable surroundings to provide literature for classes to follow. If the youth of Canada follow the standard set by the fourth year of this college, democracy is safe in Canada.”³¹

“Before the war began, continually increasing numbers of students were devoting themselves to scientific branches of study and under the stimulus of war this number has increased still more rapidly. The sciences have been given a priority, and the number of students allowed to study the arts and social sciences has been limited. This policy, no doubt, will help us win the war, but when it comes to deciding on the policies necessary for the establishment of permanent peace,

scientifically trained men will be of very little use. It will be men of culture and wisdom born of a study of politics and the humanities who must be called upon to win the peace."³² (*and not just men!—ed.*)

This is the beginning of a shift into talk of a University. The OAC saw itself as fulfilling that criterion of broad education; originally an institution whose goal was in fact to train men and women for work, it had grown to be inseparable from ideals of freedom. The winning essay of the Literary Section of the 1942 College Royal, entitled "the Functions of a University," reflects the College's desire to preserve its tradition as an agricultural college, but at the same time desiring to break free of the purely vocational image which the outside population saw.



As the College expanded (just as in the thirties), the English program had to find ways to remain effective. In 1941 the third and fourth years were divided into two sections, so that the groups were smaller, “making it possible to give instruction of a much more personal nature.”³³ Reaman reported that each student was given the opportunity to fill out the Benreuter Personality Inventory and to discuss his or her results personally, and the Department wrote a thesis on the findings: “A Study of the Personality Inventories of the First Year Men and Second Year Girls at the Ontario Agricultural College.” The fourth years were given a new opportunity to take a course in Contemporary English, American and Canadian Literature, and special attention was given to the first-year Canadian Literature course, for which a prize was offered for the best work done by the year’s end. “Much time and thought were given to personal interviews with students. It is felt that this is closely linked with the integrating value in the study of English.”³⁴

“Those of us who find pleasure in the arts must fight a delaying battle—perhaps a losing one. Those of us who thrill as the house-lights go down, who can find relief in painted skies and lilting song, must fight to keep the arts alive as long as possible. It may be a losing battle. But whether we are producers or consumers of art we must stand by them and fight with them and for them.”³⁵

This time, unprecedented gestures were made by outside forces, and several new scholarships came available: The Publishing House of Longmans, Green and Co. of Toronto made a cash prize for work in third and fourth year English, The Canadian Weekly Newspapers’ Association did the same for work in journalism by a member of the *Review* staff, the graduating class of 1943 donated a trophy for the fourth year student who did the most valuable work in dramatics, and John Goad of ‘36 donated annual cash prizes for excellence in music and drama.

The OAC had come up with a fine song: students plucked out a tune, the English Department never missed a beat, and the *Review* played it out for the rest of the world. The arts were the backbone that held together a community who, once in danger of confusing passion for art with disregard for war, now needed it to see them through wartime with spirits intact. In 1944 the Department stated that it recognized “that it has an opportunity for service in initiating and encouraging certain extracurricular activities,” and so provided musical and dramatic relief at the otherwise depressed Farmers’ Week and the Farm and Home Week.³⁶ It arranged for loan exhibits from the National and Ontario Art Galleries, inspired students to write to the needs of rural communities who were feeling more than the usual isolation, conducted a course to train radio announcers for war-time broadcasting, and, to encourage attendance and involvement in campus dramatics, English exams during this period included a bonus question regarding that year’s ULS play.

Spirits at the ULS were downright admirable. In 1940 they announced in the *Review* that even with Little Theatre activities at a standstill and Canadian Drama Leagues forgotten for the present, they planned to carry on with play production, as members of a new Inter-Varsity Drama League alongside McMaster, Western, and

others. They often reported that while attendance at campus plays was down, participation was up, suggesting a rather positive kind of displacement, and it is possible that the war-themed plays produced, like Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down* in 1943 and John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano* in 1945, impelled student involvement. It wasn't uncommon for these plays to sell out weeks in advance, as the townspeople, too, depended on the College for hard-time entertainment.

With the war over and College attendance up, the English Department shifted its focus back to advancing its academic program. It now began to offer courses in Literature, Journalism and Public Speaking at the Ontario Veterinary College, where before it had only taught the basics of composition, organized a new English course for Home Economics students at Macdonald, and offered extra-curricular courses in Music Appreciation and Radio Broadcasting – all with only three or four full-time faculty. 1947 marked the first year that the Department had official representation in College Royal, in the form of a musical talent contest. It undertook translation work for other departments in French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as the editing of the annual reports. In 1948 Reaman wrote "Speak the Speech: The Technique of Public Speaking and Radio Speaking," the first textbook on radio speaking published in Canada, and buckled down on research he had initiated three years ago on "The Contribution of the Pennsylvania Germans to the Agricultural Life of Ontario," and the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada commissioned the OAC's English Department to write a history of the breed.

Great care was given to maintaining a close student-faculty relationship. The personal inventory survey and interviews were continued as a means of effective contact, and the Department was as committed as ever to assisting the Union Literary and Philharmonic societies, assisting in the planning and execution of the years' programs. Reaman noted in 1948 that students were showing an added interest both in curricular and extra-curricular activities in the Department, judging by the numbers participating in debates and a large number of entries in the English Division of College Royal, and the OAC's placing first in the Ontario division of the Inter-University Debating League and second in the Inter-University Drama League.

Theatre culture had survived the war and was enjoying an easy prosperity, attracting larger audiences than ever before. The ULS opened a drama workshop which seemed to pay off, for its 1945 production of *A Bell for Adano* was the premiere amateur performance in Canada, earning mention in New York's *Theatre Arts* magazine. Students were proud of its accomplishments, and theatre seemed as naturally occurring and necessary part of college life as anything else. Veterinary students took a particular shine to campus dramatics in these years, making up a significant portion of cast and crew, and in 1949 inaugurated the OVC College Prizes in Dramatics to encourage the maintenance for high standards in the dramatic productions of the ULS.

The Fifties: “Dynamic Gigantism.”

The country’s scientists and researchers had advanced to become among the best in the world, yet the efficiency of Canada’s “general agriculture” was slow to change. At a time where experts were demanding stricter professionalization of agricultural careers to answer the public demand for research on agricultural problems, there was a fear that the arts might be a hindrance.

Yet at the same time, there was increasing acknowledgement that in order for farmers to live up to the standards set by agricultural research, the role of language and communication needed to be assessed. The English Department must have been giving its temples a good rub as this realization was being made, yet again, as though for the first time. Relief would not come soon, either, for the perplexingly vehement struggle on the part of ‘science’ to shut out ‘art’ would rage on, trampling over those wacky conspiracy theories that said the two might work together. English professor Aubrey Hagar wrote a piece on the OAC’s early years, noting the differences between it and other contemporary institutions – ie, the failing of agriculture courses in general universities, and oft-recurring, “almost unanimous” agreement between agriculturalists that agricultural colleges should be kept completely separate from arts and science universities.³⁷ The concurrent shrinking of the English program did not fly with everyone.

“[...] the triumph of the curriculum and the extras working together is, as we have noted, to produce these future leaders. The future bodes small good for this elysian plan, the traces, those constant threads of English, are to be reduced; how then debates, public speaking, journalism and expression?”³⁸

So declared an anonymous regular column entitled “Fables from Halfways House,” an anonymous, opinionated voice, somewhat of a vigilante, who reported on anything it saw as smothering the arts at the OAC. The expression it mentions is twofold: the practical kind (“English for its own sake will not gain a following here, my artiste comrades, so it must, of necessity, be given a ‘use’. This is easy to do, or haven’t you been reading any examination papers lately?”) and the ideological kind bred by it, for when the English program suffered, so did clubs and societies.³⁹ “Are we to have less “Art” taught? Are we to become more restricted to technology—utterly bereft of liberal ideas? Decidedly so!”⁴⁰

Some did become suspicious of the curriculum change that stifled the unique feature that was the arts at the OAC. They were to be put to work harder and for longer and with less free time, and if the arts were not to be a part of the workload, then what were they to feel but as cogs in the machine – a mere product of an institution fueled by utilitarian principles?

“Thus it is at this College... we are presented with page after page of facts but are given little incentive or scope to develop them.... the need is for a course that will present not only academic knowledge, but also will stimulate the development and expansion of the human mind.”⁴¹

Student discontent plagued the valiant, sensitive soul that was the English Department, who wished to fill the void created by the hands of that mysterious entity,

administration. To reach more minds, it offered already-established courses at different levels than it had before at Macdonald, the OVC and the OAC. Ways were found to turn departmental difficulties into opportunities to promote student self-governance; in 1951 for example, when the department lacked the resources to offer a course in advertising and salesmanship, Reaman took the idea to the Students' Administrative Council, who suggested he counsel the Economics Club on how to carry out the program themselves. English professor Aubrey Hagar helped them organize lectures by industry professionals and wrote articles on "Business English" to serve as helpful study material. Talk of universities appeared as a possible solution for those looking to preserve the creation of independent thought. A late 1951 editorial praises the kind of environment that advocates its many extra-curricular activities because it recognizes that this is where undergraduates develop personality, and that "very often it is on personality that a person will stand or fall."⁴²



The OAC at this time was reneging on its historic commitment to extra-curricular activities, and was therefore not respecting a rounded and liberal education. The Canadian Literary Celebrity Series, initiated in 1950 to replace the Canadian Author Evenings, lasted only two years before any mention of it mysteriously disappeared. Students complained of impractically large course-loads, citing it as the cause of their withdrawal from the college newspapers, the *Libranni*, and English night at College Royal. The English section of the annual reports really only talked about the work of the Philharmonic and Literary Societies, as those had become its vein of existence in hard times. Luckily there was a fair amount to talk about, for dramatics at the OAC were still going strong. In 1953 they presented their first Canadian-written play, Robert Louis Fontaine's *The Happy Time*, and were one of the first amateur groups to present Christopher Fry's *The Lady's Not for Burning*, which was so well done that McMaster University invited them to reproduce it on its campus. The ULS was elated by the prestige of performing at an Arts college in front of an audience largely made up of English students and faculty, and hoped to make the exchanging of plays a regular event, and the *Review* reprinted *Mercury* journalist Verne McIlwraith's article about *The Lady's Not for Burning*, a three-page review which outlined the history of the English Department, crediting it as the behind-the-scenes mentor which made such success possible. Even still, extra-curriculars like dramatics and *Review* journalism were only a lifeboat for a castaway department, doomed, it seemed, to drift through the fog and into eventual obsolescence, but "Fables" had an optimistic eye to a kaleidoscope, which they may have mistaken for a telescope but which nonetheless revealed a certain brilliance in the distance.

"There is a need for journalism if these colleges are to (1) become favourably well known, (2) amalgamate in seeable time to a university. Journalism is English, English is currently, undeniably in disfavour, hence journalism is unwanted. ... We suggest a revival of disfavoured English from its lowly position to a high level and united there on that elevated plane. ... We suggest, in a word, a school of speech, literature and journalism of dynamic gigantism wedded to a school of audial and visual arts."⁴³

The Department did cling to its Journalism program and extended it where it could, offering, for example, a workshop in Human Relations and Radio Broadcasting at the annual School for Rural Clergymen hosted by the OAC, but how much longer until it was reduced to a little box? How could passion be reawakened for those subjects orbiting outside the plutocratic pull? Jack Lanthier reported in 1953 that too many students "feel that they must tolerate English lectures simply because they are a compulsory part of the curriculum... they do not make a special attempt to absorb any of the wisdom which is expounded their way by learned and lettered English professors." Dubbing himself the Department's "publicity man," Lanthier profiled the faculty and commended the unique teaching style of each professor.

"Such is the eternal problem of our OAC English Department. To give lectures interesting enough to make students want to learn the subject is important in drawing up any English course."⁴⁴

The English Department had worn a few hats in its day, as a way of keeping things interesting. So many new subjects had sprung out of what was once the only course in the curriculum that could be classified as a humanity: President Johnston had synchronized Political Economy and English in 1878 after noting students' interest in themes of propriety and social upheaval in *King John*; President Mills offered an elective in Latin which worked from texts being studied in English, and Reynolds integrated history lessons in his English courses based on students' interest in historical context and biographical information of authors. Journalism, public speaking, German, French, Russian, educational science, radio broadcasting, the history of civilization, and rural sociology (as a result of extension) sprouted up in one or another row of English. By 1953 the department had offered all of these and more at all three colleges as optional or compulsory courses of its minor program. Of course, students in other programs could take them as electives, but most of the other disciplines did not hold much value in the elective system, and the majority of options did not require any English credits of graduates. Only Horticulture broke the mold, for it was the sole science program with compulsory, regular courses in English, and was one of the first in the college to adopt the elective-based curriculum more commonly associated with universities.

By now, the buzz around campus was indeed around the OAC transitioning into a university. Universities, everyone knew, needed schools of humanities, arts, and languages in order to offer esteemed major and minor programs and fulfill requirements for others. Behold the accomplishments of the once oh-so-humble English Department, which had all along been patiently laying the foundation for this otherwise unforeseen demand! In fact, it so threw itself into the task of exploring the other subjects that make up an arts college that not much time could be spared rescuing the old-faithful extra-curricular activities which were already suffering. While the *Ontarion* was stuck in "literary low-gear," the College yearbook was abandoned altogether in '55, and English Night at the College Royal could barely fill its timeslot with enough musical entertainment to satisfy the evening, the English Department was busy partnering up with the new Arts Society (born from the Macdonald Institute but enjoyed by all of campus), to fund and arrange painting exhibitions in Massey Hall, monthly foreign film presentations, and an Arts Festival on campus.⁴⁵ In response to expressed student interest on the subject of philosophy, English Professor Alexander Ross ran a series of lectures in Massey Hall in 1957, at which attendance was both voluntary and large. Curiosity about philosophy may well have been inspired by increasing discussion about art and the artists' place in an agricultural curriculum, and it certainly complemented the in-vogue practice that was philosophizing academia.⁴⁶

Our students are not at all freakish in wanting to know something about a subject which until the end of the nineteenth century was perhaps the most important study in any university.⁴⁷

The Union Philharmonic and Union Literary Societies united in 1961 to re-form The Arts Society, "for better co-ordination of cultural activities and for the support of new ventures in the Arts."⁴⁸ It was clear that whatever might happen in the upcoming transition, the wise old English Department would have a guaranteed place to continue tending the garden in which it had worked and played since 1874.

The Sixties: “A new and different breed.”

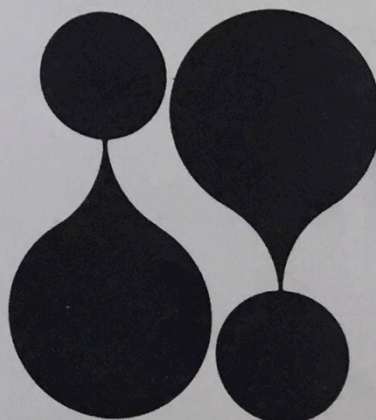
The passage of the University of Guelph Act in 1964 united OAC, OVC and the Macdonald Institute as founding colleges of a new modern institution, but the role of the arts and humanities was still unclear to some and opposed by many. Thirty percent of the new university Senate had voted against the motion to accept the newly proposed Wellington College, which was to consist of three schools: the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as a constituent part of the University of Guelph in its opening year. Perhaps some saw no point to an Arts college because in 1964 the OAC was still doing a fine job of carrying on its traditions (English Night was still going strong and now filled War Memorial Hall instead of Massey Hall, and students still competed in the Canadian University Drama League Festival – that year with Vladimir Mayakovsky’s *The Bed Bug*, the next with English professor Eugene Benson’s original play *The Gunner’s Rope* (which won first place). It seemed that others insisted on clinging to the idea that a campus without an arts college need not worry about dealing with “pot-smoking artsy hippies,” nor would it have to face a more-than-manageable percentage of women students.⁴⁹ Their defeated vote and the shocking forecasted enrolment of 15,000 students warned of the inevitability of both kinds of long-hairs and the scene they brought with them, sure enough, the last flickering hope of a freak-free campus was extinguished by events which symbolized hippie-presence: campus Arts Festivals and regular folk-singing concerts.⁵⁰ The *Ontarion* overflowed with articles on sexual liberation, feminism, and politics, as well as pieces on folk music and original poetry. The bright vision of a university which cherished the arts, activism, and an open-minded, liberal approach to education began straight away with its first generation of students.

“Many people do not fully realize what the establishment of an Arts College will do for this institution. A new and different breed of people are suddenly going to enter a new and different type of faculty. They will be people who have no interest in agricultural work, Veterinary Science or Home Economics. ... Unfortunately, they will not come in trickles but rather in hordes. A new value of fine arts and humanities will blanket this university... They will change this campus and probably do it very rapidly. The question is, ‘Will this school accept this new future existence? Will the students of the established faculties wither into a protective shell and watch the proceedings or will they gladly participate and fortify what lies ahead?’ The Change must come now... We must form a united and participating university.”⁵¹

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The newly formed University of Guelph was different than the other new universities cropping up in Ontario in the sixties: this one had a history. Elizabeth Waterston (today a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and still active as a scholar) was the first professor to be hired by Guelph's English Department; in 1966 all the other faculty were OAC legacies. She recalls the unique kind of excitement induced by the juxtaposition of beautiful old buildings and people who had been there all their lives with the thrill of a blossoming community of scholars.

In its first year accepting students, 1965, Wellington's Bachelor of Arts degrees were formally approved, and the College was the first at Guelph to adopt the three-semester system. This was also the year that the English Department began offering courses in drama, which would be developed into a full curriculum by Eugene Benson and Michael Booth when he was hired as Director of Drama in 1967.

Department of English

- A. M. Ross, B.A., M.A. (QU.), A.I.E. (LOND.)—Professor and Head of the Department.
 A. E. Austin, B.A. (MICH. ST.), M.A., PH.D. (ROCH.)—Assistant Professor.
 N. I. J. Bailey, B.A. (TOR.), M.A. (ILL.)—Lecturer.
 L. E. Browne, B.A. (W. ONT.)—Lecturer.
 W. Carpenter, B.A., M.A. (MCM.)—Assistant Professor.
 D. Daymond, B.A., M.A. (W. ONT.)—Lecturer.
 J. P. Harney, B.A., M.A. (QU.)—Assistant Professor.
 H. V. Hogan, M.A. (CHIC.)—Assistant Professor.
 M. A. King, B.A. (W. ONT.), M.A. (MCM.)—Associate Professor.
 J. Kumar, B.A., M.A. (PUNJAB), M.A. (TOR.)—Assistant Professor.
 P. Lanthier, B.A. (LOY.), M.A. (TOR.)—Lecturer.
 L. R. Marshall, M.A. (ST. AND.)—Lecturer.
 D. A. Riggs, B.A. (W. ONT.), M.A. (COL.)—Associate Professor.

English faculty, 1965.

While plans for the new Arts I Building (Mackinnon as we all know it) were underway, the English Department staff holed up in Zavitz (and some even in temporary offices in downtown Guelph), foraging for equipment amongst whatever was leftover from its former occupant, the Crop Science Department. Faced with more spatial unrest than a departmental head should wish, Ross spent much time ensuring that the new building would be top-notch. He requested a music and reading room, display cases for rare books, sculptures, or historical artifacts, air conditioning that was "as silent as possible", and that each lecture room include a souped-up record player and a projector screen. Finally, English would have its very own space, and one can hear the excitement in Ross's words when he calls for "easy congregating space" for students outside

classrooms, common rooms with easy access to out-door garden space, and high ceilings to avoid that “oppressive effect” of tunnel-like hallways at certain other universities.

Growth did not wait, however. Within its first year the Department of English was the largest arts department in Wellington College, and found itself struggling to keep up with large enrolment numbers. When 50 OAC students and 40 Food Management diploma students were piled on to the already-stressed department, Ross and his staff began campaigning to Dean Murdo Mackinnon for more faculty members in an effort to protect the best interests of their program. The demands of the OAC and diploma students posed another problem, a reminder that the arts college was not to forget its roots and should remain loyal to the needs of its agricultural students – had to, in fact, for the “aggies” represented a significant portion of enrolment, and enrolment was, of course, and still is, dollars. “If we lose these [OAC] students, we will lose faculty.”⁵² The agricultural deans insisted that they were in favour of well-rounded students and thus required English credits in their programs, but they had only the most practical English in mind – the kind of stuff we call ‘communications’ today. The English faculty would maintain that those courses did not technically belong in the English program, yet some professors appreciated an opportunity to teach aggies, who were known to emit a rather boisterous energy. Mary Rubio, for one, always liked teaching the public speaking course and was good at it, too; Agriculture Dean Clayton Switzer reported to Doug Killam, the English chair at the time, that “whoever is teaching them must be doing a good job because there haven’t been any riots lately.”⁵³ Mary relates, with nothing but fondness in her voice, that once while walking to her car from class she fished out of her purse a bloody chicken leg instead of her keys. She looked around and saw several of her students looking disappointed at her nonchalance (Mary had grown up on a farm herself) but they all had a good laugh nonetheless.

The image of an English professor brandishing a dismembered chicken leg while joining in the laughter of her Ag students -- well, it should be on a mural somewhere on campus.

Still, the English Department would have to put much of its time and energy into finding a balance between its roots and its future, the old and the new, in such a way that it could build an identity as a prestigious arts program despite some financial and ideological handicaps. In the years to come, it would find the right resources in its staff, brilliant professors with exciting ideas, innovative areas of research, and a dedication to constant improvement.

“In the period 1964-70, the name of Wellington College has been closely identified with the growth, development, and new character of this dynamic university.”⁵⁴

In 1967 the English Department taught 600 full-time students, and introduced a Masters of Arts program. Not only that, but as the arts department with the deepest foundation, English was embraced as the nerve centre of the College, a point of reference for the newcomer humanities and their faculties, who became acquainted with each other not only through interdepartmental work but through a lively local arts scene that hosted the Guelph Spring Festival, founded in 1968.

Although the student-faculty ratio of 19:3 was the highest in Wellington College, everyone was comfortable with the current class sizes as long as they did not exceed 40 students per class. That year's report cited the reasons for the English program's size and strength as the habitual valuation of good teaching with good scholarship in the hiring process, and the faculty's dedication to treating all students, freshman or seniors, general to specialized, with equal consideration. The faculty noted the significant interest of students in Modern British, Canadian, and American literature courses and expressed a desire to encourage this development. Students were also encouraged to take electives in the other humanities, such as history, philosophy, the classics, arts, and modern languages, so that they might get the most out of their years at Guelph. It was announced that faculty members were beginning to engage in their first team projects, such as studies of Travel Literature and Scottish Studies; such collaborative research among English staff would result in many future distinguished works and collections.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

English Language and Literature

General B.A. Program

Area of Concentration — A student, electing English as one of his three areas of concentration, takes 6 semester courses in English and 12 electives in two other major areas: for example, English, History, French.

Major — A student, electing English as a Major, takes 10 semester courses in English and any other 8 supporting elective semester courses.

Honours B.A. Program

Specialized — A student, electing English as a Specialized Major, takes 20-22 semester courses in English and 8-10 supporting electives.

Major and Minor — A student, electing English as a Major with a Minor field, takes 16-18 semester courses in English and 10-12 courses in the Minor field: for example, English, Drama.

Combined Honours — A student, electing English in a Combined Honours Program, takes 14 semester courses in English and 14 courses in another field: for example, English, Philosophy.

Drama

In the General B.A. Program a student may take Drama either as an area of concentration (6 semester courses) or as a Major (10 semester courses in Drama and any other 8 supporting elective semester courses.)

In the Honours B.A. Program (Major and Minor) a student may take a Minor in Drama (10-12 semester courses.)

NOTE: All students in all programs take a Core Requirement of 10 semester courses in English, Social Science, Natural Science, Second Language, Philosophy 100, and Philosophy 110 or Mathematics.


GENERAL AND HONOURS COURSES

English Language and Literature

English 100 (G-H) — Major British Writings I
 English 101 (G-H) — Major British Writings II
 *English 225 (G-H) — Early Elizabethan Drama
 English 230 (G-H) — American Literature to 1900
 English 240 (G-H) — Canadian Literature
 *English 265 (G-H) — Late Elizabethan Drama ✓ 250
 English 270 (G-H) — Renaissance Literature (Non-dramatic) — 240
 *English 280 (G-H) — Age of Dryden and Pope
 English 290 (G-H) — American Literature since 1900
 English 325 (G-H) — Jacobean Drama
 English 330 (G-H) — The Age of Johnson
 English 340 (G-H) — The Eighteenth Century British Novel
 *English 350 (G-H) — The Early Romantics
 English 365 (G-H) — Restoration and Eighteenth Century Drama
 *English 370 (G-H) — The Late Romantics
 English 380 (G-H) — The Nineteenth Century British Novel
 English 390 (G-H) — Twentieth Century British Fiction
 English 395 (H) — Contemporary Drama
 *English 420 (H) — The Age of Chaucer
 *English 430 (H) — Spenser and Milton
 *English 440 (H) — Victorian Literature, excluding fiction
 English 445 (H) — Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Drama
 English 455 (H) — Early Modern Drama (1916-1939)
 English 460 (H) — Old English
 *English 470 (H) — Growth and Structure of the English Language
 English 480 (H) — Twentieth Century British Poetry
 *English 490 (H) — Literary Criticism

Drama Courses

Drama 100—Introduction to Theatre	Drama 221—Technical Production II
Drama 101—History of Theatre	Drama 300—Directing I
Drama 200—Acting I	Drama 301—Directing II
Drama 201—Acting II	Drama 400—Playwriting
Drama 220—Technical Production I	Drama 401—Advanced Studies



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about courses, electives, and programs available for undergraduates in English Language and Literature, write:

Professor A. M. Ross,
 Chairman
 Department of English
 Wellington College
 University of Guelph
 Guelph, Ontario, Canada

For further information about courses, electives, and programs in Drama, write:

Dr. M. R. Booth
 Director of Drama
 Department of English
 University of Guelph
 Guelph, Ontario, Canada

For further information and application for graduate admission in English Literature, write:

Professor A. M. Ross,
 Chairman
 Department of English
 Wellington College
 University of Guelph
 Guelph, Ontario, Canada

For further information and applications for undergraduate admission, write:

Mr. H. W. Pettipiece,
 Registrar
 University of Guelph
 Guelph, Ontario, Canada

WELLINGTON COLLEGE — UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

English curriculum, 1967,

The English Program experimented with brainstorming, and set up a curriculum committee whose job it was to devise a philosophy for the program as well as to call for and evaluate proposals for new courses by other staff members. The committee, however optimistic in its beginnings, had trouble getting much done due to constraints from time and workloads, for although the number of staff was growing, so was the number of students. Michael Booth, director of the English Department's drama program, knew that

a more proactive approach had to be applied in order for any progress to be made. At that moment, as is the case again today, the Drama program was closely joined with English, as students taking a minor or honours in Drama were required to take courses in dramatic literature, and four of the Department's full-time instructors specialized in teaching practical aspects of theatre. For his part, with the full support of the overwhelmed English Department, Booth began submitting requests to the University's Committee on Academic Priorities for the departmentalization of the Drama Division, but the requests were repeatedly denied, with the provincial Department of University Affairs citing a reluctance to make special subventions for new and developing programs such as Drama. It would finally get the respect it deserved in 1973, but in the meantime Drama learned to function as independently as possible, generating its own statements and yearly reports, and managing its own budget.

A College of Arts

In 1969, having had two years to settle into its new building, the Department re-embarked on the complete revision of its program, this time with some get-up-and-go that may have been sparked by having brand-new digs (minutes from a faculty meeting noted that, in regards to a faculty dining area, "all members supported the need for these facilities and, in particular, showed concern that there be a bar.") The opening of McLaughlin Library in 1968 was also considered a great leap forward for the arts program, which had until now struggled along in temporary library accommodations. This period also saw Hugh McLennan, Northrop Frye, and Farley Mowat among others, giving talks on campus.

One last name change was then announced, so that beginning in 1970 Wellington College would be no more: instead, the social and natural sciences split off into their own, and the humanities and arts formed the University of Guelph's new College of Arts. A news bulletin explained this decision as a response to "scientific bias" at Guelph. The purpose of the Arts and Humanities was not simply to examine the social and ethical implications of scientific achievements.

A revised curriculum committee was organized to evaluate what was needed, and its preliminary report made several points echoing certain radical days of the OAC's past. The curriculum thus far had relied too much on "established wisdom," which was doing nothing to relieve the tension between Guelph as 'the establishment' and the groovy youth that inhabited it.⁵⁵ In an enthusiastic bulletin, acting chairman Stuart Hunter, announced the decided-upon aims of the Department of English Languages and Literature, as it was now officially called: its general purpose was to develop "the mind and personality; the critical and the creative spirit combined," and special emphasis was placed on the experience of personal involvement with literature.⁵⁶ Staff and students were regularly encouraged to share their thoughts on curriculum reform so that strength would be found in variety, discussion, and respect of each individual's ideas, while individuals themselves were urged to think critically about their philosophy on education before advocating it.

The long-term plan was dedicated to the ever-growing portion of students who were taking English for its educational value as opposed to purely professional reasons, such as those which defined the 'communications' courses, which were at this time herded into a subsection entitled "for Associate Diploma Students Only" in the English course calendar. Some faculty anxiously awaited the day that they would be phased out altogether. As for the rest, students and faculty proposed that many prerequisites be lifted to unblock students from subjects in which they had a genuine interest. An introductory course, "The Experience of Literature" was proposed as a prerequisite for all further English courses to alleviate faculty worries about teaching so many unqualified students without restraining anyone's educational desires. The student body remained informed on progress and were always welcome to share their ideas and reactions with the committee -- in fact, the "Experience of Literature" was their idea, as the student-faculty committee pointed out from the results of a questionnaire in which 94% of English students expressed favour for such a comprehensive introductory course.

Although, for some mundane reason or other, the course came to be called "Introduction to Literature," the Experience of Literature is a fitting way to describe the adventure of English students and faculty who quested their way through the next decade, untangling themselves from the red tape, seeking a destination where their subject could be thoroughly appreciated and explored. In 1973 changes were made to "Introduction to Literature" to fulfill the promise made by its former name, and it was agreed that the teaching of intro lit "should be done, not through a survey of the history of English literature (as in the old 100-101), but rather through a presentation of major literary genres, through an introduction to methods of interpretation... to awaken the interest of students in some of the problems of critical reflection upon literary experience."⁵⁷ The move from a historical approach to one of genre and interpretation in an introductory course was like an experimental ripple that would make waves throughout the rest of the curriculum. A course called "Themes and Forms in Literature" consisted of a range of subjects that varied from semester to semester, allowed different professors to teach a course of their own creation. The title "Themes and Forms" was a cover which allowed new courses to be developed, taught, and solidified as soon as possible without seeming to the Senate as if they were being pulled from thin air. This way, the department could engage in a smooth process of proving courses in practice to justify their ambitions, rather than being restricted to hypothesizing over written proposals. Many of the courses born from Themes and Forms, such as Children's Literature, Women in Literature, Science Fiction, The Bible as Literature, Utopian Literature, and Commonwealth Literature, would bring a great diversity of content to the university's English program, where they would enjoy an independent and perennial presence.

One such course, Homer Hogan's Folk Song and Poetry, actually began in 1969 as a series of concerts and workshops that studied lyrics, music and movies of folk culture in order to bring about a greater understanding of the genre. Ian and Sylvia Tyson were among many other Canadian folk artists who gave performances right on the campus. In 1975, when the course was cut from the curriculum, Hogan and his students carried on its activities by forming a club.

And so literary activities were often supplemented outside the classroom to satisfy the ambitious spectrum of study in English. Creative writing in particular took off in the seventies, not only in the classroom. Extra-curricular poetry workshops were a common occurrence, and numerous student-run publications tell of a creative camaraderie between students and faculty, booklets of original poetry which sprung from the program with the cooperation of professors such as James Harrison, John Bligh and Peter Brigg, printed from the university's own printing press, which used to belong to the *Durham Chronicle* before making its home in the Raithby garage at Guelph. Scholarly journals evolved out of new areas as well, such as Professors John Robert Sorfleet, Elizabeth Waterston, Glenys Stow, and Mary Rubio's *Canadian Children's Literature* in 1975. In a reflection of the journal's origins, Rubio describes the group as parents and scholars, who, amongst an awakening of cross-cultural and post-colonial literature within the department, decided to explore the significance of children's stories as they pertained to identity and international understanding.⁵⁸

"I literally discovered Canadian literature at Guelph, and as I discovered it, I got so excited about it. I kept taking more and more. There was a huge renaissance of Canadian literature in the 70's at Guelph, and I took every single course I possibly could. I took at least two or three courses with both Leslie Marshall and Doug Daymond, and at some point, both of them, independently, pulled me aside and said 'you should be writing'.... It was a very inspiring time for me, and I certainly never would have tried to be a writer without their support."⁵⁹

In 1974 Elizabeth Waterston succeeded Alexander Ross as Head of the English Department, which was struggling to recover from a dramatic drop in enrolment the previous year. Correspondence from this period reveal a tense atmosphere between the Department and the rest of the University, due to budget cuts and the encroaching demands of "the practicals." In an understandably indignant letter to Dean Tom Settle, Waterston deplored the description of the Expository Writing course, which Settle had described in writing to the chairmen of other departments as "remedial" and not justifiable as a humanities or science course.

In 1976, the English Department was forced to request the cancellation of courses such as Creative Writing and the 19th Century British Novel due to staff shortages and a lack of resources to supplement it. Linda Marshall wrote the Central Reservations and Conferences office to enquire as to why she was finding it impossible to secure one of the dozens of empty rooms on third floor Mackinnon, and, furthermore, why she was told that all those rooms were kept vacant so that visiting groups would have first dibs in occupying them. "The students wonder, however, and so do I, why their needs are perceived as less important than those of visiting groups," and this they wondered from room 124 in the Horticulture Building.⁶⁰

"Gerry Rubio taught most of the Shakespeare courses, Shakespeare and Elizabethan literature, and he was great. This was when you could smoke in class, and he was a chain smoker alright, he would smoke a pack through the lecture. He was very animated and enthusiastic. He was so concerned that his undergrads got the dirty bits in Shakespeare, he was always pointing them out and asking, did we really understand what was going on? He would stop entire lectures to make sure we got it. He was afraid we'd miss it and it was too much fun to miss!"⁶¹

The Seventies and Beyond: Theory and Other Wars

Oh, what the appearance of a course called “Contemporary Approaches to Literature” signified (hint: also signified by the circulation of a ‘questionnaire on questionnaires’). The year was 1972; it was early yet, but by the late seventies the department found itself spending a lot of money on theory texts and a lot of time on reading them. By the ‘80s theory took up considerable space in the curriculum and adherents of theoretical approaches to literature made up a fair amount of the faculty, yet as some scholars contemplated the point of teaching subjects divided by periods and genres, others grew defensive of their area of expertise.

“There was a lot of discussion about curriculum reform. Some were angry about it and some wanted to change things. Everyone was trying to answer the crucial question: do we teach ‘content’ or do we teach ‘method’? We used to have one one-semester course taught in first semester of second year called Practical Criticism, but that was it! Now there were those of us who thought that the point was to teach people to think about literature, and that idea found terrific importance when the theory revolution started in the eighties, and we had a long struggle over that in the Department...

But that’s what was going on when the theory stepped in, before that, there were already some of us pushing for more courses in criticism. If you look at the curriculum now, the spine is a series of courses in critical theory and method. And that’s a revolution.”⁶²

Some held that theory only interrupted the study of literature, bringing in all kinds of outer-textual social phenomena and disregarding books as books. Some described its scope as “enlarging yet limiting,” claiming that too many theory courses, fascinating as they may have been, were ineffectual for they were often too fast-paced, only scratching the surface of one theorist before moving on to the next. Would this lack of depth on such a deep subject leave students unfulfilled? Furthermore, who had the power to determine what and how to teach, anyway? What did people want, and how should we interpret their answers? A few former professors I spoke to were emphatic on the point that the “theory turn” was brought in by faculty; it wasn’t something the students themselves were demanding. In fact, theory became a problem for a lot of international students who came from countries that were not yet teaching it – the only students that had any familiarity with it, says Doug Killam, were, understandably, the ones from Russia. Of course, many future students would come to thrive on this discipline as it became more entrenched in the curriculum, perhaps because theory mapped out the myriad streams one could follow from the lake of literature.

“My favourite professor was Diana Brydon. She was open to students being more multidisciplinary and doing non-traditional forms of presentation, so I was able to integrate some of my interests outside of English Literature, and I was interested in social justice and community development. ... She was so rigorous in what we were studying. It was great. It was a challenge.”⁶³

Doug Killam was already well recognized for his work in the study of Commonwealth literatures by the time he came to Guelph as chair of the English department in 1977. Within a few years he, Elizabeth (Wildman) Cockburn, and Dr. Bernard Fonlon, head of the African Literature department at the University of Yaounde,

organized the collaboration of the two universities with the intent of preserving oral storytelling traditions and improving the amount and cultural relevance of African children's literature. In 1983 the department hosted the 20th annual conference for the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, and the following year, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe visited Guelph to deliver a speech on the educational and literary uses of folk orature at a workshop on Education for Self Reliance. Killam's time spent in Africa led to friendships with authors such as Achebe, who called his friend Doug one night to tell him that he was sending his daughter to Guelph for her MA studies (where she encountered theory), and Margaret Laurence, who lived for a time in present-day Ghana and wrote a book of criticism on Nigerian drama, to which Killam wrote the foreword.

Doug Killam was a popular chair. Mary Rubio recalls that when he arrived in 1977, only two other department members besides him had had work published, but by the time he left, everyone had published - not because of pressure, but because Killam had created a real atmosphere of support and encouragement when it came to faculty members pursuing their special interests. Courses on travel writing, women writers, American, Canadian, and Commonwealth literatures, revolution, and non-fictional prose reflected the progressive edge that Guelph had then and still has now. The department was happy and productive under him, and several great projects resulted.

In 1983 the Shaw Festival donated its archival material to the university, and shortly after, playwright and notable Shaw scholar DH Laurence came to Guelph as a visiting professor and deposited his own collection, the Dan H. Laurence Shaw Collection, into the McLaughlin archives in 1986. These two additions to the archives made the university home to the greatest collection of George Bernard Shaw material in North America, including oddities such as hairs from the playwright's beard and receipts from liquor sales at productions, would come to house the archive of most professional theatres in Ontario and form the basis of the largest collection of Canadian theatre materials in existence (although the first theatre-related donation to the archives occurred in 1969). This may explain why the University of Guelph was the first in Ontario to offer a graduate program specializing in Canadian theatre.

A *Globe and Mail* article celebrating the tenth anniversary of Guelph's theatre archives told some entertaining stories on how some of the collections came to be: the Toronto Free Theatre collection, for example, had been subjected to a sewage line backup in the theatre's basement and had to be kept in freezers all over the Guelph campus until they could be cleaned and catalogued. Another volume of Shaw material was found by pure chance when Ian Lubek, a Guelph psychology professor who was in France researching psychologist Augustin Hamon, discovered a multitude of Shaw's letters, notes and sketches in Hamon's attic. It turned out that Hamon and his wife Henriette had been dedicated translators of Shaw's work into French.

In 1999 the theatre collection was renamed the LW Conolly Theatre Archives in recognition of Len Conolly, who had been responsible for its growth while serving as chair of Guelph's Drama Department. Mike Ridley, a University of Guelph English

graduate and current instructor and librarian on campus, told me about his experience gathering material for the theatre archives around that time:

“We have a fabulous theatre collection, one of the best in North America. One of the great things about being a librarian at the times was we’d work with a lot of people to get their collections, they’d either want to give us their collections or we would try and get it from them. The funny thing about this is that a lot of people just can’t imagine why you want their stuff, they think it has no value at all.

We once contacted William Hutt in Stratford to see if he’d be interested in donating anything of his. He invited us to his place, this phenomenal actor who I’d seen in several plays, a real icon - I was nervous as hell going to meet him, but it wasn’t long after arriving at his apartment that we discover he’s the nicest guy you’d ever want to meet! So self-deprecating - he couldn’t understand why we’d want his stuff, and his apartment itself was a museum. Right as we were leaving, he pulls out this little book and says I don’t know if anybody wants it but I’ll give it to you – and it was his diary from the war, he’d been a soldier, and he’d written his feelings about what was going on around him, and it was devastating, this amazing insight of a very young man in a terrible situation, before he became an actor, so we have that in the collection. Two years later he died. So we have the diary and it’s well worth going to look at. It reminds you that famous people have other lives.”⁶⁴

Another famous archival collection began at Guelph when Dr. Elizabeth Waterston and Mary Rubio combined their mutual interest in Lucy Maud Montgomery and researched her extensively. Their dedication was greatly rewarded in 1981 when Montgomery’s son, Dr E. Stuart Macdonald, donated his mother’s personal diaries to the project, knowing that they would be best honoured in the hands of Waterston and Rubio. This was a particularly exciting addition, because as Rubio pointed out, it offered research opportunities not only literary scholars but historians, sociologists, and psychologists for Montgomery’s detailed accounts of mental illness, the social fabric of a Presbyterian community, her family relations, and her thoughts on Canada’s legal system at the time. The first volume of the diaries was published in 1985, and the second in 1988. The world-wide popularity of Montgomery’s writing made this project a very famous fulfillment of Guelph’s tradition of Canadian literature recognition, and the remarkable range of issues she wrote about in her journals contributed to an illuminating view of Canadian people:

“Literary and social historians have sometimes commented that Canadians have surrounded themselves by the myth that they are a dull or placid people. These diaries will certainly help dispel any such myth if it indeed exists in the popular mind.”⁶⁵

Growing, too, was the Scottish Collection. Scottish studies were based in the History Department, but so many other departments were interested that an interdepartmental approach was taken, and the collection therefore included every cultural corner. Elizabeth Waterston contributed her knowledge to the organization of the library’s Scottish literary works, which included, of course, an impressive amount of John Galt’s work and several rare books by others.

In 1983, Dean David Murray noted with pleasure the substantial increase in enrolment in the College of the Arts. Perhaps this simply marked an increase of popularity of post-secondary education in general, but it could also be the case that

activities such as those of the English and Drama Departments were illuminating the arts program at Guelph. It was shown to be a dynamic and influential university, not just a “cow college” anymore, where bright people were making significant contributions to the history of theatre and the literature of both their own and other cultures. As divisive as the theory wars may have been (in theory), they proved that the English Department was not afraid to explore new worlds of literary criticism. Students who chose to attend Guelph therefore found themselves with a choice of paths to take in their academic career, depending on where their interests lay, and in some periods they were attending one of the few universities to teach things like commonwealth or post-colonial literature, women in literature, children’s literature, and Canadian theatre, and they were being taught by scholars who had published prestigious texts on those subjects.

“As a lone overseas student matriculated amongst my foreign peers at Guelph University, I was particularly grateful that the English Department professors took my commitment to the study of English literature seriously... Dr (John) Bligh was an excellent teacher and I admired him for his teaching ability. He was also very kind to this foreign student and invited me to his home for dinner with him and his wife, Dr Bailey, a number of times.... I have lovely memories of both Dr Bligh and Dr Bailey.”⁶⁶

In 1989 came the powerhouse that was Constance Rooke, new chair of English at Guelph. Here she would continue Guelph’s championing of Canadian literature, refine aspects of criticism, theory, and creativity within the curriculum, and devise a new program in Creative Writing that would bring the university a special prestige. Her arrival opened a new chapter in the history of English at Guelph, and by the time she moved on to become president of the University of Winnipeg in 1999, the Department of English had a sterling national reputation as a centre of teaching and research in Canadian Literature, Postcolonialism and Gender Studies. The new century would bring many changes, including a recombination with Drama to emerge as the School of English and Theatre Studies, a new PhD program, a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, and the many challenges of a new age of austerity in the university sector.

Through its entire history, English at Guelph has continued to echo the progressive traditions of the OAC. Experiential, hands-on learning, real-world innovations in curriculum, a desire to push the boundaries of canon and convention: all these things had been growing here for longer than many other Canadian universities had even been in existence. The scientific reputations of the OAC and the University of Guelph did not make this campus a burial ground for the arts, but rather, a place possessed by glittering spirits of literature lovers, past, present and future. I hope through this research to express gratitude to all those who had a hand in the preservation, appreciation and advancement of our English program.

Endnotes

1. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1879: 10.
2. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1885: 9.
3. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1885: 9.
4. Anonymous, "The Education of the Farmer's Son," *The OAC Review* 2.9 (July 1891).
5. From Reynolds' autobiographical work, in the chapter "At Guelph." CITATION
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7. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College*, 1901: II.1
8. Anonymous, "Third Year Chemistry Exam," *The OAC Review* 8.3 (December 1896)
9. J.B. Reynolds, Autobiographical sketch. t.s., n.d. J.B. Reynolds file, OAC archive.
10. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1910: 24.
11. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1909: 22
12. J.B. Reynolds, quoted in "Year '41 Presents Canadian Room," *The OAC Review* 53. 5 (February 1941).
13. Ethel M. Chapman "Public Speaking at Macdonald Institute," *The OAC Review* 24.6 (March 1924).
14. Editorial: "A Declining Rural Population," *The OAC Review* 24.2, (November 1911): "Conditions of life on the farm have not improved as in the city. We must realize that farming is a business and as such place it on a systematic basis, work shorter hours, devote more time to leisure, and above all keep abreast of the times by reading."
15. Jacquetta Gardiner, "Story Telling and Its Revival," *The OAC Review* 27.4 (May 1914).
16. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1910: 24-25
17. Ethel M. Chapman, "A Letter an Ordinary Man Might Write," *The OAC Review* 29.4 (December 1916).
18. *Annual Report of the Ontario Agricultural College and Experiential Farm*, 1919: 6.
19. O.J. Stevenson, "The Old and the New in Literature Teaching," *The OAC Review* 27.2 (Feb., 1914), pp. 69-77.
20. Andy Fulton "More Amateur Theatricals: Hints from prison camps that might liven our country life," *The OAC Review* 33.1 (September 1920).
21. Editorial: "A Great Night," *The OAC Review* 34.4 (December 1921).
22. O.J. Stevenson, "The Department of English," *The OAC Review* 34.1 (September 1921).
23. Anonymous, "Letter from a Former Student," *The OAC Review* 36.6 (February 1924).
24. Peter McArthur was a popular essayist and critic, as well as a writer of poetry and prose. His writing was featured in the Farmer's Advocate among other periodicals.
25. O.J. Stevenson, "Fundamentalism vs. Modernism in the Teaching of English Composition." Sixty-Sixth Annual Convention of the Ontario Educational Association. Guelph. 21 Apr. 1927. Address.
26. "Grantor," "On Being a Radical," *The OAC Review* 47.4 (January 1935) ?????
27. Editorial, "Be Yourself," *The OAC Review* 52.8 (Midsummer 1940)
28. George Reaman, "Life, Literature, and Psychology," *The OAC Review* 52.4 (January 1940)
29. George Reaman, "The Writers' Club," *The OAC Review* 52.3 (December 1939)
30. "The Sunday Nine O'Clocks," *The OAC Review* 52. 5 (February 1940)
31. George Reaman, quoted in "The Canadian Room," *The OAC Review* 53.5 (February 1941)
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