Senior Spotlight: Ellen Levine

1) If you could take the place of a character in a novel, who would you be and why?
I would be Ellen Olenska from *The Age of Innocence*. She's so unconventional and confuses everyone around her, plus I wouldn't even have to change my name.

2) What is the single best English class you've taken at Carleton and why?
My favorite English class so far has been studying theater in London. Pretty much a once in a lifetime opportunity to see so much theater for free and then be able to discuss it with very enthusiastic classmates!

3) Tell us something that most of the other English majors don't know about you.
When I was younger, my favorite game was to crawl around and pretend to be a dog named Tomato.

4) Which book would you be okay never reading again?
I would be totally fine with never reading Frankenstein again. I'm probably missing the genius in the work, but I thought the writing was stilted and the characters were unlikeable. Let's just say that I will not be naming my son Victor.

5) Six words describing your experience as a Carleton English major:
Please don't ask about my future!

6) What is your best memory of the London program?
My best memory of the London program is obviously seeing Romeo and Juliet in Stratford and then catching a glimpse of the Queen's purple hat the next day. I also have some lovely memories of eating Digestives in the Pickwick kitchen.

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**Quote of the Week**

This living, this living, this living
Was never a project of mine.

STUDENTS! Call in to ext. 4322 with the author and the name of the week. The first person to correctly name the quotation will win a special package of cookies with a faculty signature! Last week's winner was Sophie Siegel-Warren and Forrest McKnight was the runner up. Congratulations!

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**THAT BABY WROTE WHAT?**
by baby-guesser extraordinaire Aditya Menon

Who is this famous author? Email whiter or lanec with your answer!
1. **What is your favorite reading on the syllabus for this course?**
   My favorite is probably James Boswell’s *London Journal*. Boswell wrote it in 1762-3, when he was an ambitious 22-year-old spending a parentally subsidized year in London. The journal recounts his (mostly unsuccessful) attempts to prove himself professionally and his (considerably more successful) efforts to seduce the women of London. What got my attention when I first read it in college is that Boswell documented several bouts of impotence in his journal, even though he was writing it for a friend to read. That struck me as a strange, self-sabotaging thing to do. Trying to make sense of that impulse is what first got me interested in first-person narrators and eighteenth-century literature.

2. **What first person narrator on your syllabus would you most want to have a conversation with? Who would you least want to talk to?**
   Jane Eyre in her young, feral phase would be interesting. As would Dave Eggers (I don’t think I’d get to do much talking). But I’d want to steer clear of Boswell. The conversation could be… awkward (see above).

3. **If you could take any other A & I seminar being offered in the English department, what would it be?**
   Since there’s a prize at stake and I’m the last A & I instructor to be interviewed, I’ll maintain a judicious silence.

4. **What do you like best about teaching A & I Seminars?**
   I’m not the first to say it, but it’s the first-year students. They’re new, enthusiastic, smart, and wonderfully unjaded. It’s exciting to watch them make the transition from high school and to see that moment of liberation when they discover that the old rules no longer apply. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve answered the question, “Will we lose points if we forget to staple our papers?”

5. **What literary character do you wish got to be a first person narrator?**
   In grad school, a classmate of mine wondered what Grendel might say about Beowulf. The professor—an eminent scholar of a certain age—answered impatiently, “Grendel doesn’t have a point of view. Monsters don’t have points of view!” I think about that moment a lot. I think Grendel might have a very interesting perspective on Beowulf.

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**Editors’ Fun Fact:**
If you want to get a taste of what Grendel’s perspective would look like, John Gardner’s 1971 parallel novel, *Grendel*, is a pretty good argument for monsters having a point of view.

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**#OCCUPYBALAAM’S A&I**

The votes are in: looks like the profs wish they were reading Melville with the freshman in Peter’s seminar. It was a tight race and, for what it’s worth, we were pretty jealous of the students in all of the English Department’s A & I Seminars. Thanks to the profs for participating in the survey!

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**WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON’T HAVE TO READ FOR CLASS: READ FOR FUN!**

While we spent this fall with our noses deep in the English canon, living(!) authors have been publishing new things. Winter break is a great time to catch up. Here is a taste of the eds’ winter break reading list:

- *NW: A Novel* by Zadie Smith
- *This Is How You Lose Her* by Junot Diaz
- *Telegraph Avenue* by Michael Chabon
- *Flight Behavior: A Novel* by Barbara Kingsolver
- *Sweet Tooth: A Novel* by Ian McEwan
- *Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm: A New English Version* by Phillip Pullman
- *Eight Girls Taking Pictures: A Novel* by Whitney Otto

What are you planning on reading with your time off? Tell us on the English Department Facebook page! Have a great break! See you in 2013!