APPLICATION FOR FALL 2014/SPRING 2015
SCHOLARS AND ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

(please type)

Name: PHILIP DICKINSON

Department/Program: ENGLISH

Academic Rank: SR. LECTURER

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Please indicate your availability for residency:

Fall term:        Spring Term:        Either term:  X

THE ATTACHED APPLICATION MATERIALS MUST INCLUDE:
• Abstract of Project (350-word limit)
• Description of Project (8-10 double-spaced pages)
• Current Curriculum Vitae
• Budget, if relevant

SIGNATURES

Applicant:                      Date: 10/28/13

Department Chair:               Date: 10/28/13

College Dean:                   Date: 10/28/2013

APPLICATION DEADLINE
Monday, October 28, 2013, by 5:00 pm. Please submit one print and one electronic copy of the application packet to: Ellen Berry, Director, ICS, 230 East Hall, eberry@bgsu.edu
Phil Dickinson  
ICS 2014-2015 Abstract  
October 28, 2013

For the ICS Scholar/Artist-in-Residence 2014-2015 Fellowship I am proposing to write a book (working title: *Mere Pseud*¹ . . .), an adaptation of my blog of the same name that ran from 2008 until the summer of 2013.² The blog purports to be the daily diary of one Paul F. Martindale, a melancholic and angst-ridden youth from a normal lower-middle class family in the fictitious Yorkshire town of Easterby in the early 1980s, and follows him from ages sixteen to twenty. We vicariously experience Paul Martindale’s life as he goes on family holidays with father Ernest, mother Audrey and brothers Robert and Andrew, suffers through his O- and A-level exams, endures bouts of unrequited love, and sets off for a new life as a student at the south coast University of Watermouth. At Watermouth Martindale falls in with a group of friends who stimulate his burgeoning interest in countercultural ideas, radical politics and underground music and introduce him to the ambivalent pleasures of alcohol and drugs. A series of inadvertent misadventures follow—the burning down of a residence hall kitchen, another bout with unrequited love, heavy drinking, a brief and tortured flirtation with the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party, trips to demos and workshops and concerts, an experiment with squatting—all of which take place against the backdrop of the clamor that was England in the early 1980s. Martindale is eyewitness to the 1982 Falklands War,

the 1984 Miner's Strike and the IRA campaign against the British occupation of Northern Ireland, all of which we view from the alienated, self-critical perspective of Martindale's everyday life. The blog has received favorable reviews and I have been asked to produce a book adaptation by Zero Books of London. The ICS Fellowship will give me the opportunity to turn a sprawling half-million word diary into a novel-length manuscript, complete with developed story and character arcs.
Phil Dickinson  
ICS 2014-2015 Proposal  
October 28, 2013

Mere Pseud . . .

Introduction: Post punk, pot-pies, and England’s dreaming

All stories are really fragments of one story, the metamorphoses . . .
  - Rebecca Solnit. The Faraway Nearby (2013)

For the ICS Scholar/Artist-in-Residence 2014-2015 Fellowship I am proposing to write a book (working title: Mere Pseud . . .), an adaptation of a blog of the same name that ran from 2008 until the summer of 2013. The blog purports to be the daily diary of one Paul F. Martindale, a melancholic and angst-ridden youth from a normal lower-middle class family in the fictitious Yorkshire town of Easterby in the early 1980s, and follows him from ages sixteen to twenty. We vicariously experience Paul Martindale’s

1 Mere Pseud . . . takes its name from the English post punk band The Fall, whose song, “Mere Pseud Mag. Ed.” appeared on their 1982 LP, Hex Enduction Hour. In the very last line of the last entry of the blog,
life as he goes on family holidays with father Ernest, mother Audrey and brothers Robert and Andrew, suffers through his O- and A-level exams, endures bouts of unrequited love, and sets off for a new life as a student at the south coast University of Watermouth (also the setting for Malcom Bradbury’s 1976 campus novel *The History Man*) 3. At Watermouth Martindale falls in with a group of friends who stimulate his burgeoning interest in countercultural ideas, radical politics and underground music and introduce him to the ambivalent pleasures of alcohol and drugs. A series of inadvertent misadventures follow—the burning down of a residence hall kitchen, another bout with unrequited love, heavy drinking, a brief and tortured flirtation with the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party, trips to demos and workshops and concerts, an experiment with squatting—all of which take place against the backdrop of the clamor that was England in the early 1980s. Martindale is eyewitness to the 1982 Falklands War, the 1984 Miner’s Strike and the IRA campaign against the British occupation of Northern Ireland, all of which we view from the alienated, self-critical perspective of Martindale’s

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3 *The History Man* follows the fortunes of radical Sociology professor Dr. Howard Kirk, who makes a cameo appearance in *Mere Pseud* . . . , David Lodge writes that the novel, dealt with an international phenomenon, the movement for revolutionary change in social, political and cultural life which erupted in western Europe and the United States in the late 1960s, and set the progressive agenda until it ran out of steam at the end of the 70s. It was a complex phenomenon, made up of many different elements from Marxism and Maoism to rock music and recreational drugs, but it was essentially a rebellion of youth against a patriarchal old order, largely inspired by middle-aged gurus, and launched from the expanding universities of the post-war world. (David Lodge. “Lord of Misrule.” *The Guardian*. January 11, 2008. [http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jan/12/fiction1])

By the time of Kirk’s brief reappearance in the pages of *Mere Pseud* . . . , his radical days are long behind him and he’s enthusiastically embraced the new world order ushered in by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. But the muted notes of that earlier age of “a rebellion of youth against … [an] … old order” still echo everywhere in Martindale’s early-1980s Watermouth.

This intertextual quality is a key tactic of *Mere Pseud* . . . and situates it amongst other texts that reference or emerge from the period in question. Martindale’s university friend Rowan Morrison, for instance, is the same Rowan who lures the unsuspecting PC Neil Howie to his death at the hands of the Celtic pagans of Summerisle in Robin Hardy’s camp (but genuinely terrifying) classic 1973 British horror film *The Wicker Man*. In *Mere Pseud* . . . Rowan is a disturbed nineteen-year-old who lives on the same residence hall corridor as Martindale. Martindale himself is a bastardization of Peter Martin, the protagonist of Jack Kerouac’s first novel, the autobiographical “mythography” *The Town and The City* (1950). Kerouac is a huge influence or the teenage Martindale.
everyday life. *Mere Pseud* . . becomes a sort of absurdist psychogeographical bildungsroman, a drift through the detritus and debris of an England dreaming its way through the early 1980s nightmare of Margaret Thatcher’s neoliberal revolution. It is at once a work of social history and a gauche comedic pratfall, part E.P. Thompson, part *The Young Ones*⁴. One reviewer has used the adjective *haustological* in reference to *Mere Pseud* . . , ‘haustology’ of course referring to Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* and to the now free floating and widely acknowledged notion of a present haunted or infected by the past, a time out of joint, a symptom of the “cultural logic of late capitalism” and its exhaustion of the future, “its inability to find forms adequate to the present.”⁵ Given the prevalence of such nostalgic modes in contemporary culture, such a term seems more than appropriate as a way to characterize the blog’s strategy of haunting the present with a past reanimated through “pastiche and reiteration.”⁶

**Origins: Writing out the years**

I want to go home. / I feel trapped by mutual affection. / And I don’t know how to use freedom. / I spend hours looking sideways / to the time when I was sixteen. / ‘Cause I’m in a trance. / I’m frightened.


Here’s how the journal and blog came to be. On Sunday, June 8th 1980 I started writing. Quite what the impetus was has long since been forgotten. I think in retrospect it

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⁴ *The Young Ones* was an influential and acclaimed British sitcom that ran from 1982-1984 featuring the lives and misadventures of four undergraduate students.

⁵ Mark Fisher. “What is Haustology?” *Film Quarterly.* 66.1 (Fall 2012). 16. To be haunted, Fisher goes on to say, is to be “intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time” (19). In *Mere Pseud* . . , the ghost-memories set in the non-place of Easterby function as just such a site, dependent for their currency on the physical materiality of Bradford and Yorkshire and an actual historical memory of real events.

⁶ Fisher. 17.
came from my father, an inveterate diary-keeper and amateur writer.7 “Today I got up around ten o’clock,” I wrote in neat blue biro the evening of that first day, the day and date neatly double-underlined in contrasting red ink. “I had been going to get up for some time, but I kept drifting in and out of sleep.”8 Thus began, in inauspicious and almost crushingly mediocre fashion a five-year narrative that records in all of its quotidian detail the passing days, weeks, months and years of a rather ordinary middle class life in the north of England between 1980 and 1985. I was just a month shy of my sixteenth birthday when I began; by the time I was done, I had generated almost twenty five hundred pages, a half-million words that sprawled across ten 9”x7” bound notebooks and that captured, in prose at times painfully self-reflexive and at others cluelessly unaware, the confusions and contradictions of a lower middle class family life, school days at the local comprehensive, leaving for University, and the slow and (looking back) hilariously awkward awakening to underground currents in rock music and politics and art. What strikes me now, looking back, is the almost compulsive diligence I exhibited in writing, day-in, day-out, every single day for the first couple of years, and then a few times a week (sometimes breaking off for two weeks or more), but always a return to the word and the epic struggle to record my reality as it unfolded right under my nose.

I quit writing my journal in the mid ‘eighties, falling victim to a weary sense of limitation with the format of the daily journal and my endless repetition of the same frustrating story of a self trapped by the patterns of culture, upbringing, personality and language. “I’m writing in an effort to escape this claustrophobic sense of self” I write in

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7 My older brother was a diarist, and even my 76-year old maternal grandmother got in on the act; for Christmas in 1982, I gave her a blank book in which, over the next two years, she wrote a 200+ page account of her working class life in Edwardian and post-WW1 Bradford, West Yorkshire.

February, 1985, "but, in turning to words for relief, I find only undisciplined thinking & a
suffocating, limited vocabulary. As long as I live I’ll never overcome this dissatisfaction
with words WORDS WORDS!!"9 I was also getting older and a little more cynical.

After graduating from University I moved back home for a grim year of unemployed
reinterment in the privet-lined family plot before escaping to London and a temp job in
the city until, in 1988, graduate school and the States allowed me to dodge the mediocrity
and dull daily dose of office life. I’d be back within the year, or so I thought.

The years slid by. The journals languished under the bed in my old room at my
parent’s house in West Yorkshire; love, death, birth, heart ache and the spinning sky,
winter following spring following summer and then fall, the inexorable seasons and
semesters turning into a life of sorts, unplanned, accidental . . . teaching at the local
University, girls, music (I taught myself to play drums), marriage, a daughter, separation
and divorce, “home” a mirage carried in the heart all these years while the roots of this
new life grip down, awaken. Horizons of corn and houses and midwestern strip malls;
“clarity, outline of leaf.”10

One day I asked my mother to send me the journals. They arrived in my mailbox one
-by-one, wrapped in brown paper, and as my daughter splashed in the local pool with her
friends in the white light of a hot Ohio summer afternoon I loitered in the shade, reading
them again voraciously, drinking in the slightly moldy smell of the paper and the ribbed
pen scratches beneath my fingertips as I was transported back almost thirty years to a life
once lived and now captured, a fragile yet perfect facsimile, by the very words whose

10 William Carlos Williams. “XXII.” Spring and All. 1923.
imperfections I once had cursed. After three decades, some of the books were beginning to fall apart, so I began to type them up to preserve them.

During this tedious process, and quite on a whim, I decided to begin posting them to a blog I titled *Mere Pseud* . . . after a song by the English post punk band The Fall. I posted each entry twenty-eight years to the day after it was written. Because some of what I’d written implicated both the living and the dead (tales of debauchery mainly but occasional forays into melodramatically framed acts of petty criminality) and many of the people who featured heavily in the stories of *Mere Pseud* . . . were still friends of mine, I fictionalized both names and places and, in a few instances, rendered separate people as composites. Thus, on June 8th, 2008, was Paul Martindale and Easterby born, fictional people living real lives in fictional towns that were, nonetheless, real places, another world that existed in parallel temporal and spatial dimension to this one. Thus did my past and present begin to intertwine, a subtle dance that saw my memories of the early 1980s (a period I’d lived through in a misery of self consciously quiet desperation) increasingly replaced by the golden-hued “hauntological fiction”11 that was *Mere Pseud* .

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11 In an effort to promote the blog, in the summer of 2010 I sent out a few exploratory emails to online venues—mainly blogs and websites that traded in hauntology, now not just a reference to Derrida (as already noted), but a peculiarly widespread genre of cultural remixing that showcased obsessive insider knowledge of British popular culture weirdness and arcana from the 1970s and 1980s. One such blog, *toys and techniques*, is run by the American Ben Graves. His review:

Typing this at speed, but just wanted to say how much I’ve been enjoying *Mere Pseud* . . . , a blog with a very original conceit. It’s presented as the teenage diary of Yorkshire-born Paul Martindale, from Monday, June 8th, 1980 onwards (and so far up to June 20th, 1982). Each entry of the original diary is being posted in chronological order exactly 28 years on to the day. Not quite clear whether this is an actual record of an actual life or an elaborate serialized hauntological fiction. Either way it makes for addictive reading. In fact in its attention to school and schoolwork it reads a bit like Jonathan Coe’s *The Rotter’s Club*, which I mean very much as a complement. Each entry records the mundane particulars of Paul’s life in early-80s England — agonizing over exams, listening to records and watching TV when he should be agonizing over exams, arguing with his father, working at Tesco, etc. It’s all there before you, suspended in amber: the Falklands, first impressions about films and records (including, surprisingly, obscurities like David Rudkin’s *Artemis 81* and *Distortions* by quasi-library outfit Blue Phantom), melancholy reflections on family, friends, drinking, kisses, entomology, English weather, etc. The portrait that emerges is of
. . Thirty years on, this fiction (although the portmanteau *fa*ction* is perhaps more appropriate) reads like a dream record drawn from someone else's memory although, oddly enough, it is the very fictional quality of *Mere Pseud* . . . that make it feel the most real.

**Contexts: Drifts and Diversions**

Memory, even in the rest of us, is a shifting, fading, partial thing, a net that doesn’t catch all the fish by any means and sometimes catches butterflies that don’t.

- Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby*

Collectively, the stories captured in *Mere Pseud* . . . record the particularities of an ordinary life unfolding within a time of crisis and political reinvention for British society. Margaret Thatcher’s famous rejection of “society” in favor of a worldview that instead celebrated a constellation of atomized individuals, each pursuing the free market neoliberal due, failed to acknowledge longstanding class alliances and institutional arrangements in British society. Under Thatcherism, as Richard Witts writes, their flourished “an assertive urban consumption economy, one which measured prosperity by possessions.”12 This is a world Martindale unthinkingly participates; indeed, many of his movements through and across the Northern landscapes of his hometown in the early pages of the narrative are marked by this kind of consumptive drift, anchored by the prices and locations of the particular commodities he favors (the Socialist Party of Great Britain pamphlets at the local second hand bookstore; the entomology books at the chain

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W.H. Smiths bookstore; vinyl records at HMV etc.). England was dreaming its way out of a postwar era and into a new and uncertain neoliberal future, which in the North focused around the leisurized pursuits of “laddish” entertainment (beer, football, sex) and the televised platitudes of a middle class vision of the British goodlife. Beneath these surface consolations lurked the discord and animosity of open class conflict—the 1984 Miner’s Strike, the continuing war in Ireland with the IRA and INLA, high unemployment, racial strife. . . . Martindale’s father is a policeman at the end of a thirty-year career (he retires in 1982) and his eldest brother Rob teaches at a comprehensive school in South Yorkshire. His father supports Thatcher, his family less so. Many of Rob’s students are the children of miners and as he catches the bus to Rob’s house for the weekend, Martindale sees firsthand the effects of the Miner’s Strike on the local community, the serried ranks of picketing miners and policemen passing by the bus windows as Martindale thinks about books or music. Intertwined as it is with the particular historical moment from which it emerges and on which it reflects, *Mere Pseud* . . . shares certain superficial similarities with Sue Townsend’s successful series of Adrian Mole books which capture a similarly situated version of everyday life in Thatcher’s England during this era. Although they share a similar conceit, *Mere Pseud* . . . has a far grittier, post punk quality, with raw postindustrial content and bleaker themes.

Since the entire text sprawls across almost five years, an unruly proliferation of words numbering approximately half-a-million in ten separate volumes, I will have to edit this down to a manageable book-length manuscript, something in the region of a hundred

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thousand words or so. I plan on organizing the narrative into seven discrete sections or chapters, each of which will be around ten-fifteen thousand words long and keyed to the release date and title of seven of the first eight albums by English post-punk band The Fall, a band whose music evoke not just the discordant regional realities of Northern English working class life in the Thatcher era but also the "layers of weirdness lurking within the everyday."\textsuperscript{14} In this way I aim to heighten both the fictive quality of what are actual events and the marketability of the text for an audience for whom the music and identity of The Fall remain powerfully iconic markers of a particular historical moment.

The ICS Fellowship will give me the intellectual time, creative space and opportunity to turn what exists now as a sprawling half-million word diary into a novel-length manuscript, complete with fully developed narrative arcs and realized characters.

Curriculum Vitae

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Department of English, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio
2009    Senior Lecturer
2006-    Associate Chair
2005-06  Assistant Chair
2005-    Undergraduate Advising Coordinator
1999-2009  Lecturer
1997-99  Full-time Instructor
1995-97  Adjunct Instructor
1994-95  Research Assistant
1993-94  Tutor, Writing Laboratory
1992-93  Teaching Assistant

American Culture Studies Program, Bowling Green State University
1991-92  Teaching Assistant

Department of Interpersonal Communication, Bowling Green State University
1988-89  Teaching Assistant

EDUCATION

Ph.D. 2000  American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University
M.A. 1989  American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University
B.A. 1985  American Studies (Literature), University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K. (Graduated with Honors)

GRADUATE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Classes
Countering the Counterculture: Methodologies, Practices, Poetics
Teaching Literature (web-based)
Postmodern Fiction
American Literature Survey 1865-1945
American Literature Survey 1600-1945 (also as web-based courses)
Introduction to Literature (also as a web-based course)
Literature of the Iraq War
Literature of the Vietnam War
Literature of Social Change
Reading the Screen: Film As Text
Literature and Terrorism
Dystopian/Utopian Fiction
Autobiographical Narratives of the 1960s/70s
Introduction to American Studies
Varieties of Writing—Holocaust/Vietnam War literature (Honors)
Varieties of Writing
Introductory Writing
Developmental Writing
Small Group Communication

Independent Studies
Adaptations of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet
American Realism and Everyday Life
Contemporary Multiethnic American Literature
Creative Writing and the Beats
Girlfriends, Supports, and Mother Figures: Gender, Iconoclasm, and the Subversion of
Beat Memoirs
Intellectual Discourse in Egypt: 1940-1960
Introduction to Literary Criticism and Critical Theory
Leslie Marmon Silko and Helene Cixous: A New Reading of Ceremony
Literature of the Beat Generation
Long-Haired Warriors: Vietnamese Women in War in Vietnam War Literature
Myth, Memory, and Masculinity in Vietnam War Fiction
Oh, the Guilt of Suckess: Kurt Cobain and the Incorporation of Subcultures
Spontaneous Poetics and the "New Vision," 1945-65
Subjecthood and Subversion: Louis Althusser, Fight Club, and Trainspotting
Teaching Literary and Critical Theory to Undergraduates
The Interpellation of Subjects: Identity Construction in BUST
Wax Olives and Visions of the Saintly Child: The Quest for Spirituality in the Kunstler-
Romane of J. D. Salinger and Jack Kerouac
World of Stone: Reading the Holocaust Through the Eyes of Perpetrators and Bystanders

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

English Department Hiring Advisory Committees
Full-Time Literature Instructor Hiring Advisory Committee, 2000, 2006, 2008
Full-Time On-Line Literature Instructor Hiring Advisory Committee, 2007
Full-Time English as a Second Language Instructor Hiring Advisory Committee, 2006, 2007
Children's and Adolescent Literature Hiring Advisory Committee, 2005
Ombudsperson, Department of English, 2003-05
Faculty Advisor, Women For Women/Women's Action Coalition, 2002-03
General Studies Literature Program Coordinator, Department of English, 2000-01
American Culture Studies Alternate to Graduate Student Senate, 1995-96
Conference co-founder, Organizing Committee, Annual Graduate Conference in Cultural
Studies at Bowling Green State University, 1994-96
Graduate Student Senate, 1991-92

PUBLICATIONS

Review of Crab Man (Phil Smith), Counter-Tourism: The Handbook. Invited. Hyperhiz: New Media Cultures, 10 (Fall 2013).


CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

"'This Thing Called Consciousness': Practice, Repetition, and Everyday Time in the Poetic Journals of Joanne Kyger.” Western Literature Association Conference. Berkeley, California, October, 2013.


"' . . . Myself in the Midst . . . ': Hybridity and the Cultural Labor of Separation in Mary Rowlandson’s The Sovereignty and Goodness of God" at "In Progress: A
“Literature and Authors of the 1950s,” Big Read Grant presentation, Fostoria Public Library, Fostoria, Ohio, October 2012.


“Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’ at 56: Reflections on Middle-Aged Outrage,” Banned Books Week presentation, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, September 2011.


Presentation/Discussion of Mike Leigh’s Naked, Film and Theory Nights, Arts Village, Bowling Green State University, October 2009.

“To Be or (Virtually) Not to Be: English Studies and Online Teaching.” Department of English Spring Colloquia Series, Bowling Green State University, March, 2008.

Invited panelist in class presentations on “Program Planning and Travel and Tourism.” Recreation, Tourism, and Dance Program (RTD) 315, Bowling Green State University, December 2007.

"Still No Cover: Twenty Years of Flyer Art From The Northwest Ohio Underground." Exhibit Organizer, Grounds For Thought Coffee-shop and Bookstore, Bowling Green, and Artomatic! 419 Lite, Toledo, July-September 2007.
Nominee, College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Instructor/Lecturer Award, 2007
Ph.D. Preliminary Exam passed with distinction, 1994
Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam passed with distinction, 1993

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Literature Association
The Beat Studies Association

REFERENCES

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