

# VOICE

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## THEATRE REVIEWS

*Three Short Plays by Susan Glaspell*  
*Anton in Show Business*  
 Minifest 2017

ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE  
 ENGLISH CONFERENCE

### AUTHORS @ ACADIA

Lee Maracle  
 Armand Ruffo  
 Camilla Gibb  
 Elizabeth Hay  
 Heather O'Neill  
 Lisa Moore  
 André Alexis  
 Eden Robinson  
 Meags Fitzgerald

### ENGLISH SOCIETY EVENTS

Halloween Party  
 Fundraising  
 Bad Poetry Night

### STAFF

Sarah Bishop  
 Laurence Gumbridge  
 Stuart Harris  
 Nicole Havers  
 Sarah MacDonald  
 Emily MacLeod  
 Mackenzie Molnar  
 Amy Parkes  
 Kevin Whetter  
 Georgia Woolaver  
 Lance La Rocque

*If you would like to help  
 with Voice 4, contact  
[lance.larocque@acadiu.ca](mailto:lance.larocque@acadiu.ca)  
 Phone: 585-1146*

## THEATRE REVIEWS

### THREE SHORT PLAYS BY SUSAN GLASPELL

(Directed by Anna Migliarisi)

by Emily MacLeod

Acadia Theatre Company's production of three Glaspell plays, *Trifles*, *Suppressed Desires*, and *Women's Honor* took place in November at Lower Denton Theatre. These three plays were written by playwright Susan Glaspell in the early 1900s. In Acadia Theatre



*Trifles: Andrea Switzer, Marcus Wong, Zachery Craig, & Jenna Newcomb*

Company's production of these plays, director Anna Migliarisi pushes the boundaries in terms of the period's traditional womanly ideals. These productions really played around with the relationship of power between men and women of the time. In *Trifles*, we are introduced to a rural setting and the lives of Winnie and John Wright, neither of whom are actually present in the play. The play consists of an investigation by both men and women to uncover the murder of John Wright. The detective (Marcus Wong) and Mr. Peters (Lewis Coverdale), spend most of their time searching the male

dominated areas of the property, while the women, Mrs. Hale (Andrea Switzer) and Mrs. Peters (Jenna Newcomb), search the domestic to uncover the truth. The interplay between the men and women of this play is purposefully ironic, in that the women make numerous discoveries while being belittled by the men for paying so much attention to the domestic sphere. The detective jokes about the domestics while coming up short in the investigation to secure Minnie's motive. There are a couple of key pointed feminist moments that are not lost on the audience. The play

achieves a slow, but powerful, simple moment of feminist subversion when the two women, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, pull off an eloquent act of defiance against the men. It seems that a conclusion can be drawn that suggests women have as much to offer in the way of usefulness as men at the time. The tones of engagement of each gender is effective in portraying the tension between the roles and realities of each sex during the period. Themes of female solidarity, sisterhood, and the feeling of isolation for women that almost feels Victorian, are present through this production of Glaspell's most famous play.



On a lighter hearted note, *Suppressed Desires* follows *Trifles*. The transition between the plays is something worth noting and is a source of entertainment for the audience. The transition, music, and movement all set the mood for what is to come. The almost jazzy 1920s music got the audience excited for what they were about to experience. The setting in *Suppressed Desires* was infinitely more colourful and guides the audience's understanding of period and context. The costumes also enhance the audience's understanding of context; Henrietta (Andrea Switzer) is dressed in a way that matches the urban setting. The hair and hemlines were shorter; women had more freedom as we see with Henrietta's engagement in psychoanalysis. There is a lot of passion in this play. The dialogue between Henrietta and her husband Stephen (Lewis Coverdale) is engaging and interesting. They are opposing characters in a way: she is a vibrant woman seemingly obsessed with the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, while he is portrayed as a calculating engineer skeptical of his wife's involvement in the field. The comedic



*Suppressed Desires: Andrea Switzer, Lewis Coverdale, Aphrodite Ioannou*

aspect of the play picks up when Henrietta's sister Mabel (Aphrodite Ioannou) comes to visit and is coaxed into the world of psychoanalysis at her sister's request. The complications that arise from Mabel and Stephen's visits to Henrietta's psychoanalyst are truly humorous. The revealed suppressed desires from these two characters allow for some ironic and humorous wordplay or better yet nameplay. In the end, after

Henrietta feels betrayed by psychoanalysis, even after all she has given the field, it is concluded that she does not like its application in her own life. The acting in this particular production is lively and captivating as the actor's move freely on the stage.

The third and final play *Woman's Honor* is chronologically the last of the three. Glaspell wrote the play in 1918 during a time of significant change in the lives of post war women. The women in this play illustrate the idea that women could be a number of things in society during the time. Each woman introduced has a distinct personality, style, and motive for wanting to be the woman used as an alibi for Gordon Wallace on the night of November 25<sup>th</sup>. There are six women in the play who represent six different subsections of women in society. The conversations between these women reveal interesting details about their own lives, but more importantly about women more broadly. The commentary from these women lends to a dissection of what a woman's honour actually means in society, and how honour for women is really synonymous with virtue.



*Woman's Honor: Nile Whidden, Zachery Craig*

These women also meditate on how a man's honour seems to be about everything but male virtue and this echoes notions of masculinity, strength and bravery that were idealized for men coming home from war. All three of these plays challenged the role and perception of both men and women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century life. There are stark differences in each play that lend to the overall mood of each production, but they are tied together by the notions of female identity and what it really meant to be female during this period of transition from the Victorian era. I truly enjoyed the intricate dialogue and irony in all three productions. All three had crafty elements that made the overall production thought provoking, engaging and very funny. The setting of each play changed the respective moods entirely. The transitions between each were unique and they geared the audience up for what was to come. Overall, the production of these three Glaspell plays was thoroughly enjoyable.

***ANTON IN  
SHOW BUSINESS***  
(Directed by Robert Seale)

by Nicole Havers

The Acadia Theatre Company's performance of *Anton in Show Business* is outrageous, funny, and also extremely sad. It focuses on the struggle of being an actor on Canadian stages, while also addressing topics such as feminism, sex, capitalism, and the

environment. However, as much as I enjoyed the content, what stood out to me the most was the play's unique way of conveying it. If I had to pick one word to describe this play, it would likely be "dynamic": the play within a play, actors performing multiple roles (sometimes switching them up in front of the audience with the help of very visible yet theatre-blacks-clad stagehands), simple set pieces constantly transforming and shifting around to suit the content and tone of the current scene, and other unique and refreshing choices all contribute to my impression of the play as fluid, unconventional, and boundary-breaking.

The very dynamic set is worth talking about all on its own;

combination with being established as moveable (with the actors still onstage) from the very beginning, the simple act of moving these pieces in certain ways communicated so much in terms of mood and pace. Sometimes we were rushed from scene to scene, with those comically conspicuous stagehands wheeling things around as actors continue to walk, talk, and exchange witty bits of dialogue, while other times the previous movement and comedy was contrasted starkly with a bleak stillness.

It was also extremely impressive to see certain actors accomplish playing multiple roles, often in quick succession. Stephanie Clervi, Sarah Surette, and



*The full cast of Anton in Show Business*

whether this was down to direction or meticulously written into the script I'm not sure, but the set managed to perfectly reflect the mood of each scene without having much to it at all. In most scenes, the set was completely minimal— a door, a few moveable chunks of wall, etc.—but because they were so simple, in

Anna Van Hoof (who I would like to say gave my personal favourite performance as director Wikéwitch), all portrayed several characters, each of them also playing at least one male character.

That isn't to say that the performances of Rachel Leibovitz, Ashley Wells, and Robin Moir, who played the three main





Ashley Wells, Robin Moir, & Rachel Leibovitz

characters (who, in turn, play the Three Sisters), or that of Kate Chevel (as the critic who shouted out objections on behalf of the audience until her touching final scene), were anything less than impressive. The few expected mumbled lines were greatly overshadowed by the raw emotions these actors conveyed when the set calmed down and the tone of the play saddened in the final act.

I was blown away by the convincing defeat, frustration, bitterness, and even real teary-eyes I saw in the airport scene and even when, although Moir's character Lisabette was still speaking, the set was being carried away.

## THE 24TH ANNUAL MINIFEST

by Sarah MacDonald

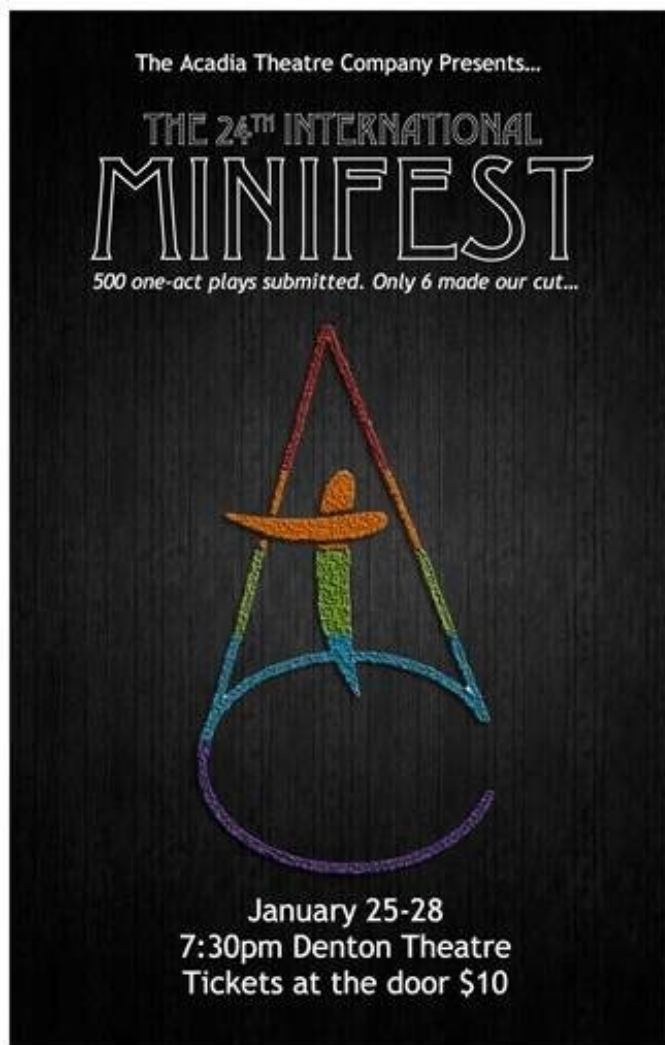
Minifest held six short plays that were different from anything I had ever seen before. The Acadia Theatre company is known to push boundaries and tackle topics not usually discussed under the umbrella of school systems. Yet, with each performance at Minifest, they brought something brand new out to play. Topics such as suicide, growing up, same sex couples and heart wrenching media coverage were

presented in ways that aren't typically expected. The six plays were *Yogafu* by Alex Rubin, *Assumptions* by Lynne Bolen, *Paper Planes* by Michael Pisaturo, *Death and the Psychiatrist* by James Hutchinson, *A Whole Other Shade of Blue* by Gwendolyn Rice, and *The First Last Time* by Bruce Boeck.

As each play opened there was a wave of curiosity in the air because as the audience, we knew what we were seeing would not immediately be the end message. This became especially true in *A Whole Other Shade of Blue* as the stage opened to young lovers discussing their honeymoon.

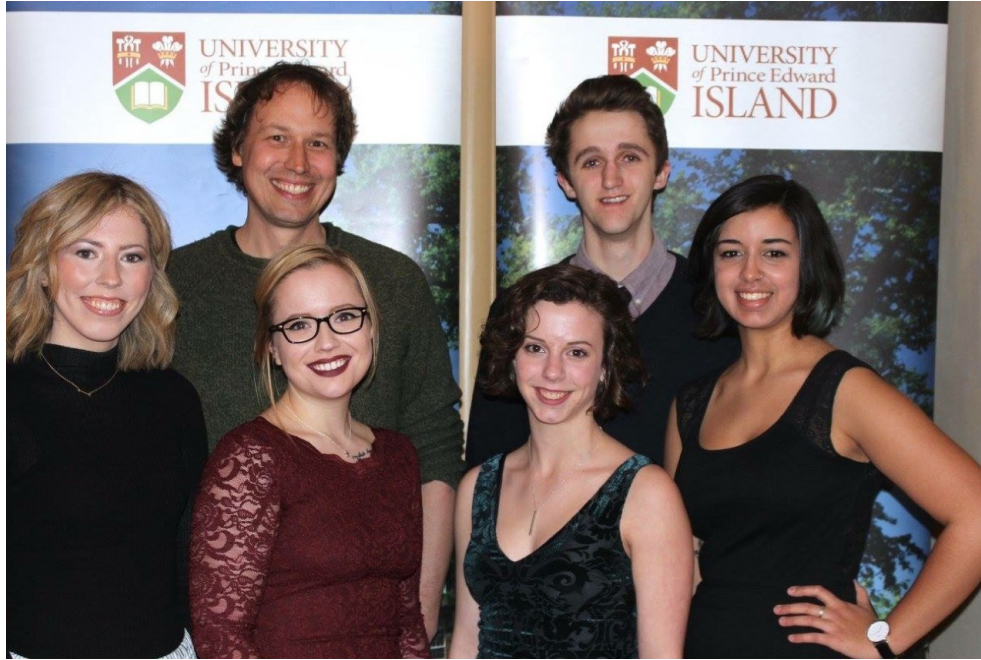
No one could have prepared me for the emotional impact that the photograph behind them would have. What was presented as a simple and cute play turned out to be a memorial for the young Syrian boy who was found washed up on the beach and captured in a haunting photograph that dominated the media for weeks.

I have been to many Acadia productions, but these six plays involved some of the best acting I have witnessed so far. The actors brought so much emotion to their roles which fed into the mood of the audience. You could feel the passion of each project as they unfolded; every moment was used to fill in a new piece. Leaving the building I could feel a new weight in my chest created by their stories. These weren't average plays; they dealt with real issues in powerful, accessible ways.



# THE ANNUAL ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE

By Amy Parkes



Representing Acadia, Erica Marrison, Dr. Jon Saklofske, Amy Parkes, Emily Cann, Josh Foote, & Sawyer Carnegie

In a steady line of pairs, trios, and quartets, students and their companion faculty from all over the Atlantic region trekked through the unseasonable cold to The Old Triangle in downtown Charlottetown, PEI on Friday, March 3, 2017. Not a happy accident but instead the culmination of months of hard work by the UPEI coordinating team, the 2017 year of the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference was already in full swing. From Acadia's English Department, Emily Cann, Sawyer Carnegie, Josh Foote, Erica Marrison, Amy Parkes, and Dr. Jon Saklofske were in attendance.

That evening, with good eats and better company, four col-

lections of poetry and one play were shared with conference participants. Acadia's poets read from their respective theses: Emily Cann's *Catching Feeling* and Amy Parkes' *Il-Bennej u il-Bahhar: The Mason and the Mariner*. It was a great kick-off to the conference – promoting feelings of community and academic kinship alike among the different schools and their students.

The following day started early, with four panels running simultaneously. Josh Foote's presentation on Judith Butler and Alison Bechdel started the Acadia readings for the day. After a second panel and some time to mingle with students from other schools, it was back to the panels.

In the day's third reading, titled "Theorizing Literature: Critical Approaches to Text," Sawyer Carnegie gave her talk, "Exploring Judith Butler's Gender Theory Through Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*." Erica Marrison closed out the Acadia cohort taking a different look at Butler in her talk "Objectification as a Perpetuation of Gender Performance in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*" and Andrée Kahn Blumstein's "Misogyny and Idealization."

The last panel was an even split between academic and creative fiction, and it left everyone excited to talk and engage.

After some time to collect our thoughts, we headed down to the banquet. Acadia sat with the students from Dalhousie and King's College, and after introductions conversation was happy and greatly varied, from academic theory to personal anecdotes. After dinner, stragglers stayed in the reception room, talking long into the night.

Sunday morning had us back on the road, headed home to the Annapolis Valley. The Acadia English Society and the participants of AAUEC 17 want to extend their thanks to the professors who supported and encouraged us along the way.

# ACADIA ENGLISH SOCIETY EVENTS

## HALLOWEEN PARTY!

By Sarah MacDonald

The Acadia English Society held our annual Halloween party on October 27<sup>th</sup>, just a tiny bit away from the real Halloween! It was definitely one of our most successful parties of the year. Party-goers were encouraged to wear literary costumes of their choosing for a chance at winning a prize. Jon Saklofske took first place with his Hagrid costume and matching Hedwig.



Other amazing costumes included The Paperbag Princess, a fisherman and his mermaid, a knight from Alice in Wonderland and many more. The creativity was outstanding!

Later on, we dimmed the lights and told scary stories to set the mood. After that we began splitting into teams; everyone participated in a murder mystery riddle game. Some people were stumped at first but the game went surprisingly fast once we were all on the same page! After a few rounds of charades and an intense game of Zip Zap Zop, everyone left with a Halloween goodie bag in hand, ready to celebrate Halloween in just a few days!

## FUNDRAISING

By Mackenzie Molnar

Fundraising this year has been essential for the Acadia English Society and the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference, and our events would not have been possible without the support of the faculty and students at Acadia University. First semester we had a successful bake sale where the money we fundraised went to supporting five students who had the opportunity to attend the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English



Georgia Woolaver, Stuart Harris, Mackenzie Molnar

Conference. Second semester we did a shared bake and book sale with the help of *Estuary*. The money raised from this fundraiser will be split with *Estuary* where it was used to print this year's edition of *Estuary*. The remaining half went towards the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference and to help make other events in the future possible. We would like to thank the faculty and the students for making fundraising possible.

## BAD POETRY NIGHT

By Stuart Harris

Sometimes awful poems need to be recognized. It might not be pretty—outlets for mockery tend not to be—but inferior attempts at “the right words in the right order” can be illuminating in themselves, if only because they provide us with a new appreciation for something far better. And let's be honest with ourselves: we'd be lying if we said those examples don't inspire some cheap laughs, too.

If nothing else, they certainly have the potential to draw a crowd. Last fall's Bad Poetry Night at T.A.N Coffee, traditionally the Acadia English Society's first event of the year, was once again met with enthusiasm in celebrating the lowest of the form and putting parodic twists on old favourites. Whether they were published works or embarrassing personal experiments, nothing escaped the well-meaning scrutiny of the attendees. Highlights of the night included readings from William Topaz McGonagall of *Tay Bridge Tragedy* infamy, hailed as one of the worst poets in the English canon; lesser-known odes by the late sci-fi extraordinaire Ray Bradbury; and an encore spoken-word rendition of Ram Jam's *Black Betty* (bam-ba-lam).



## ∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

### A WEEKEND WITH ARMAND RUFFO AND LEE MARACLE

By Laurence Gumbridge



September 17-19<sup>th</sup>  
Lee Maracle and  
Armand Garnet  
Ruffo read from  
recent works and  
presented the fas-  
cinating film *A  
Windigo Tale*,  
Ruffo's directorial

debut (Maracle plays one of the characters, Evelyn). An award-winning film, *A Windigo Tale*, in the guise of a mystery, explores the long-range effects, across generations, of the residential school system in Canada. Ruffo, a professor, made the film, in part, to break out of the limits of conventional academic life.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Maracle read from *Memory Serves: Oratories* (NeWest Press, 2015). The collection is made up of talks Maracle has given over the last twenty years, focusing on the most crucial issue for her: "It is impossible to give a lecture or speak on any serious issue in the Indigenous world without placing it in the context of colonialism and our need for decolonization" (*Memory Serves* xi). Like the writer Leanne Simpson who last year gave a talk on decolonizing the academy drawing on her remarkable essay "Land as Pedagogy" Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," Maracle connects orality to the First Nations way of thinking, breaking away from the narrowness of print-consciousness: "I love speaking. I love our orality,

its rhythm, its ease, the way we can slip into poetry, story, even song and dance, break the tedium with a joke, particularly an anti-colonial joke" (xii). She also read from *Celia's Song* and from her new poetry collection *Talking to the Diaspora*. Maracle proved to be a powerful, challenging speaker, not afraid to get prickly with the audience—she rather forcefully demanded an audience member to define the term "decolonization"! This made for an intense, meaningful talk. Her book is highly recommended!



### ARMAND GARNET RUFFO

By Georgia Woolaver

On September 19<sup>th</sup>,  
Authors @Acadia was delighted  
to hear Armand Garnet Ruffo, an  
accomplished Anishinaabe  
scholar and author, reading from

his collection of poetry *The Thunderbird Poems*. This poetry collection was inspired by the art and life of Norval Morrisseau, a celebrated Ojibway artist.

Catherine Martin, an award-winning Mi'kmaq film maker and Nancy's Chair of Women and Gender Studies at Mt. St. Vincent University, performed "Eagle" to honor Ruffo and his works in song, setting a tone of welcome and community for everyone in the room. Following Martin's performance, Ruffo himself addressed the audience directly, drawing listeners in with his sincere love for both the art and the artist on which his recent work is focused. The collection of poetry *The Thunderbird Poems* is in a sense a continuation of and a companion piece to *Man Changing into Thunderbird*, a biography about Morrisseau which Ruffo wrote in 2014. In the forward to his poetry collection, Ruffo writes that "what I could not fit into the prose naturally went into the poetry," while also stating that the biography is not required reading to fully appreciate the poetry. To this end, each poem is prefaced with relevant biographical details about Morrisseau. Telling the audience about the circumstances which led to writing the poetry collection, Ruffo recounted how he was able to meet with Morrisseau himself while writing the



previously published biography. This was an experience the author described as inspiring, intimidating, and at times overwhelming, due to Morrisseau's forceful personality.



In this meeting, Ruffo received a “shamanic blessing” from Morrisseau to continue with the project, a blessing Ruffo described as both an honour and humbling.

As Ruffo read from his collection of poetry, the story created by Ruffo’s interweaving of Morrisseau’s art, life, and the poetry itself was enthralling. Each poem in the collection is ekphrastic, meaning that it was inspired by an existing piece of art, in this case specific paintings by Morrisseau. Ruffo connects the poetry to the paintings in a concrete way by giving his poems the same title as the corresponding inspirational painting, and each poem is preceded by an epigraph containing relevant details about the artist’s life which can be found represented in the poetry. The result is an emotional poetical narrative, where the reader is gently guided through both the art and biography of Morrisseau in poetry.

Ruffo’s readings powerfully incorporate a careful blend of harsh truth, cultural context, and respect for the artist. These readings included, “Thunderbird, 1960,” “Indian Jesus Christ, 1974,” “Bear Vision, 1964,” “Windigo, 1979” and several other works. Ruffo explained that he attempts to “inject meaning” into his work, so that readers gain a more in depth understanding of what inspires him. He described this process as a bringing together of the visual and the story, as each contributes to the other as a part of a greater context. As such, Ruffo told the audience that the poems tend to reflect in their tone the painting style and content—including traditional symbols of power and connection, and Morrisseau’s use of color as his artistic style evolves. Ruffo

also explained that part of his reasoning for using his poetry to create a greater context for Morrisseau’s art is that Morrisseau himself wanted his art to be widely accessible, and to allow people of all backgrounds to connect through his art.

After the conclusion of the reading, the author was happy to stay and speak to members of the audience. His warmth, kindness, and humor made meeting him a wonderful experience. Though Morrisseau passed away in 2007 due to a longstanding battle with Parkinson’s disease, by bringing attention to Morrisseau’s art and connecting the art to the life of the artist, Ruffo’s poetry helps to keep alive the legacy of a great Native Canadian artist for future generations.

## CAMILLA GIBB

By Nicole Havers

When I found a seat in the large classroom that author Camilla Gibb was to present in, and looked around at the eager faces scattered throughout the elevated u-shaped rows, I couldn’t help but notice the distance between us and the podium. Being unfamiliar with Gibb as a speaker, I predicted that she would stand at the front and speak in that authoritative, inaccessible way that is sometimes expected from established authors who stand at far away podiums. However, I was proven wrong almost instantly when Gibb began to speak. Her professional and competent yet gentle and down-to-earth way of speaking closed the gap between her and those of us who came to listen to her. We found ourselves leaning forward with our chins on our hands, eating

up every word as she discussed and read a passage from her recent memoir: *This is Happy*.

As a novelist and a person who still has a great deal of life left to live, Gibb explained, writing a memoir was not something that she intended to do. However, when a dramatic change occurred in her life, she felt unable to write her usual fiction. “My life fell to shit, so I wrote a memoir,” she explained frankly. “Fiction was a luxury I couldn’t afford.” However, Gibb did say that her memoir was partly informed by her fiction (novels such as *Mouthing the Words* and *Sweetness in the Belly*), but also that it was more cyclical than that, with her life informing her fiction, and themes of her fiction (identity, belonging, dislocation, etc.), informing writing about her life.



Although I knew that Gibb was reading from her memoir, the line between truth and fiction seemed a little blurry for me as well. I forgot at times that I was not listening to a rich, finely crafted work of fiction when she read part of *This is Happy* aloud. I was skeptical when I heard that a memoir would be the focus of the reading, but what I did not realize is that Gibb is first and foremost a gifted storyteller, whether she is working with fact or fiction. Listening to her read, I would forget

that the “I” in the story was, in fact, Gibb in her twenties, battling mental illness while attending Oxford, and remembering the truth of the story made the excerpt all the more moving.

Gibb mentioned after reading from her book that the title might be a little ironic, as it is less about striving for complete happiness, and more about “enough”: Being happy enough; being good enough. Leaving the event, signed copy in hand, I was still going over her words in my head, feeling contemplative and bittersweet. I look forward to reading *This is Happy* until I reach the “happy enough” ending.

## ELIZABETH HAY

By Nicole Havers

Fifteen years ago, Elizabeth Hay was driving from Boston to Ottawa with her ten-year-old son when he asked her out of the blue: “What was the worst thing you’ve ever done?” This question, which she could not answer and neither could he, stuck in her mind. She asked herself: “What was troubling my son that I knew nothing about?”

On October 17th, Hay came to Acadia to read from *His Whole Life*, a novel inspired by that moment, amongst other things. She said that she let her memories and regrets seep into the story. Referring to the fictionalized version of her son, who in reality was partial to the United States (where his father was born), and was never allowed to have a dog, she said: “In this book I will give the boy a dog, and the boy is going to love Canada.” That boy became Jim, who experiences simple moments in life, juxtaposed against having to deal with a family that is coming apart, and set against the backdrop of a divided Canada that threatens to come undone as well.



One of the main motifs of the excerpt Hay read aloud was related to what it means to be Canadian. For me, one of hundreds of answers to that question is “listening to Stuart McLean’s *Vinyl Cafe* on CBC radio while making grilled cheese sandwiches and feeling the cold of winter coming through the kitchen window.” So for me it was fascinating that, at least to my ears, Hay’s way of telling a story sounded very much like McLean’s. She spoke as if there was no book in front of her, rarely looking down at the page, like she was reclining in an armchair in front of a fireplace and calmly reciting a story that feels true to her heart. Her voice was smooth and measured, and she paused often to let her well-crafted and earnestly read words sink in. Listening to her, I felt like I was back in the kitchen smelling burnt cheese and snow.

## HEATHER O’NEILL

By Nicole Havers

On November 23, 2016, Heather O’Neill, author of the award winning novel *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, came to Acadia to read from her new book of short stories

*Daydreams of Angels*, and her upcoming novel *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*.

She cited her self-purported dark sense of humour, her penchant for thinking up whimsical conceits, and for always asking “wouldn’t it be funny if...?” as the driving forces behind her new collection. O’Neill’s slightly nervous sounding and almost childlike tone of voice contrasted wonderfully with the true stories she told from her highly dysfunctional childhood and the delightfully shocking jokes and twisted metaphors in the excerpts she read from *Daydreams*.

Every bit of what she read, despite or because of the humour (depending on your perspective) sounded like poetry. “I’m just a poet in disguise,” she said, in answer to a question from a woman who came to the reading with her book club. Apparently, O’Neill wrote poetry before she was a novelist, and it shows. It makes sense that she professes style to be as important as content. The selections from both books that she read from were full of rich imagery and intricately constructed figurative language. Though they took many drafts to complete, both the excerpts themselves and the way she read them seemed effortless in all the right ways.







## LISA MOORE

By Nicole Havers

On January 17th, 2017, award-winning author of *Alligator* and *February* Lisa Moore read from her new young adult novel: *Flannery* in the KCIC auditorium. She began by dedicating the reading to the late Herb Wyile and his work on Atlantic Canada which she, as a Newfoundlander, was extremely grateful for.

After making this gesture, Moore began to speak about *Flannery*. She told the sizable audience that the novel is both her first young adult book, and the first book she has written in the first person. When she writes a new book, Moore explained, she tries to “write something that is, formally, a challenge” for her. Because she took on the challenge of writing a novel unlike one she had ever written before, *Flannery* is a slightly different kind of read from her other books, with more humour and more of a gentle tone, though she says she did not intentionally hold back because of her target audience.

Moore then read a few excerpts from the book in a clear, expressive voice, looking up dramatically every now and then for emphasis. While *Flannery* might

be milder than some of her other works, it was apparent that this did not take away the power from these dramatic scenes of teenage life. After reading, Moore explained that the idea to venture into a new genre came to her when she decided that she wanted to explore the idea of friendships between young women, which she believes are some of the most intense and close kinds of relationships.

When answering questions from the audience after the reading, Moore stated that to bring some authenticity to *Flannery*, she borrowed story ideas from her children’s lives, and from other true and often shocking stories about moments in the lives of real teenagers.

It was refreshing to see an acclaimed author writing young adult fiction, a genre which is often overlooked or not taken seriously, and promoting it to an excited and intrigued adult audience. As Moore said herself: both adults and young people can relate to the struggles of being a teenager.



## ANDRÉ ALEXIS

By Laurence Gumbridge

Wednesday night, February 8<sup>th</sup>, acclaimed writer André Alexis read from his current work in progress, as well as *Pastoral*, *Fifteen Dogs*, and *Hidden Keys*, an entertaining story about a plot hatched by a thief and a heroin addict. Willow, the addict, tells Tancred, the thief, that she and each of her four siblings have inherited a mysterious object; these taken together hold a clue to a large treasure. Now Alexis has written a mystery novel. This choice of genre is in itself interesting, a part of a vision that suddenly appeared years ago. He read from a document explaining this vision and how all five of his projected novels, some yet-to-be-written, relate.

All his works are of a piece, a single essential story to be explored through five different genres. He explained in an interview with *Quill and Quire*: “I wanted to tell it as a pastoral (that is, a tale set in an idealized rural world), as an apologue (a moral tale involving animals), as a quest narrative (with *Treasure Island* in mind), as a ghost story like *Ugetsu Monogatari*), and as a kind of Harlequin romance. The novels were suggested not by personal experience, not by grief or exile or post-traumatic stress, but by the art of storytelling itself.” The new novel is part of his quincunx. When he read from *Fifteen Dogs*—a dog lover and friend of mine at the reading said it was the one book she hadn’t read: “things just don’t go very well for the dogs!” A unique, philosophical person, Alexis made this event one of the more fascinating readings of the year.

(with a little help from *Quill & Quire* [www.quillandquire.com/authors/2015/03/26/last-word-andre-alexis-on-a-matter-of-style](http://www.quillandquire.com/authors/2015/03/26/last-word-andre-alexis-on-a-matter-of-style))



**EDEN ROBINSON**  
By Nicole Havers

After being introduced with a prayer and chant, Eden Robinson took the floor in front of an especially large audience at the K.C. Irving Centre auditorium. Because she had been introduced as unafraid of “confronting the bleaker parts of life” in her books, it was surprising and refreshing when she began to speaking in a cheerful but down-to-earth way and punctuating her sentences with whole-hearted laughter.

Robinson read from her novel *Son of a Trickster*—after joking about the challenges of reading from a book in which the characters swear more than she does and how she had selected a fairly “clean” section—and, as the “clean” section was not very long, she also read from *Monkey Beach*. When she turned to the books, she put on a more toned down “reading voice” made the funny parts all the more funny, and helped the serious moments hit home. Still, she often paused and switched back to her normal, more upbeat speaking voice to

talk about things like how the youth-oriented ebook version of *Monkey Beach* contains a footnote that explains what Betamax and VHS are.

After the reading, Robinson answered questions from the audience. In her answers, she spoke about her newfound love for her hometown of Kitimat Village: “When I moved home, I thought it would just be for six months-- but I never left!”, about how *Monkey Beach* ended up saving the real Monkey Beach from being logged, and her “messy” process of novel-writing transformed one novel into a trilogy. Afterward, she was presented with a gift, and spoke one-on-one with several fans of hers.

## MEAGS FITZGERALD

By Amy Parkes

Author and artist Meags Fitzgerald was the speaker at Authors @ Acadia on March 27, 2017. Fitzgerald’s friendly manner and the warm colours of her artwork kept all listeners engaged. She began by sharing work from her first collection, *Photobooth: A Biography*. Not focused on a single individual, this book instead tells the story of the Photomat, as it was marketed, and touches on how that machine in turn has been telling our stories since the 1930s. Then she read from *Long Red Hair*, a graphic novel that recollects the author’s childhood and teenaged years, especially dealing with topics like learning about queerness and puberty.

Fitzgerald even shared videos of her double-handed artistic style, which she plans to tackle in her next project.





**A COZY AFTERNOON WITH  
ERIN WUNKER: *NOTES  
FROM A FEMINIST KILLJOY:  
ESSAYS ON EVERYDAY LIFE*  
BOOK LAUNCH**

*By Nicole Havers*

On December 1st, 2016, Dr. Erin Wunker, assistant professor at Acadia and Chair of the executive board for Canadian Women in the Literary Arts (CWILA), launched her book: *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy: Essays on Everyday Life*. Dozens huddled together in the cramped but welcoming space in the back section of *Box of Delights* bookstore, some squished together on benches, some sprawled out on the carpet, and the luckier ones perched on plastic folding chairs to listen to Wunker speak from the piano bench at the end of the room.

Despite the modest venue, Wunker was humble in her presentation, saying before she began that “this is the most nervous I’ve been” presenting her work for an audience. Her nervousness did not show very much, however, and she began speaking in a steady, competent tone. She first explained the title of the book, and how the book came to be. She described the term “feminist killjoy” (coined by feminist theorist Sara Ahmed). Wunker explained that identifying oneself as a “killjoy” is not about killing joy in general, but recognizing the concept of what happiness is supposed to look like as an “old boys club” which often fails to recognize the happiness of women and other marginalized groups. This is the perspective from which the book is written—one which seeks to pull apart what is considered normal or happy for some but is linked to the oppression of others. While the book contains a mixture of light and heavy

topics (to reflect daily life) there is, Wunker explained, a reason why the chapter about rape culture ended up being the longest.

After introducing the book and herself, Wunker discussed many topics, from the inspiration for the book and the publishing process to her favouring of confessional writing and speaking from one’s own personal standpoint, a style often associated with feminism. She then moved into reading an engrossing selection from the lengthy rape culture chapter that rang disturbingly true, and then into a lighter-toned question period.



Near the end, Wunker generously offered to give a free PDF version of her book to any “starving students” who might want to read it. This, along with the intimate environment and Wunker’s open and kind demeanour seemed to leave everyone who attended the launch with a warm feeling of community as they mingled with each other and helped one another fold and stack the chairs. ♪

# ON HERB WYILE AND THE TENTH THOMAS RADDALL SYMPOSIUM

*By Kevin Whetter*

Herb Wyile and I, together with Richard Cunningham, all started in the same year at Acadia (2001), and my office has ever since then been located next to Herb's. The Department of English and Theatre at Acadia – as readers of *Voice 4* will already know – is incredibly collegial and supportive, but the contingencies of hiring mean that my sense of Acadia and of the Department has always been connected to my meeting and becoming friends with Herb.

Over the last sixteen years I have been repeatedly struck by Herb's erudition and professionalism: he was a popular, inspiring, and rigorous teacher and supervisor, a good university citizen, and – though he would deny it – a publishing deity who quietly but efficiently produced a series of books and articles that came to define the study of regionalism in Atlantic Canadian Literature. Herb's scholarly output was equally impressive for

both its quantity and its quality: over twenty-five refereed articles or conference proceedings, three single-authored books published by leading Canadian (and refereed) presses, and an assortment of editorial duties!

One of the many tasks Herb undertook for the Department was running several Raddall symposia. The Thomas H. Raddall symposium was established by bequest in 1989 to honour Thomas Raddall's contributions to Atlantic Canadian history and literature.

The symposium is held on an occasional basis at Acadia University, and brings together writers and scholars in the field. Herb hosted several symposia, all highly successful. Thus, when Herb died suddenly in 2016, it seemed natural to honour his own contributions to the discipline with a symposium in his honour. So it is that I find myself (a mediaevalist who thinks the modern era was in full swing by 1800) with the distinct honour of hosting the Tenth Thomas Raddall Symposium:



Thoughts from the Eastern Edge: In Celebration of Dr. Herb Wyile. Needless to say, the Wyile Raddall is a co-operative effort, and I am working closely with several of Herb's friends in the Atlantic Canadian community to get this gig up and running, especially Drs. Paul Chafe, Alexander MacLeod, and Thomas Hodd. The symposium could not happen without them. The Wyile Raddall Symposium takes place July 6-8. See <http://english.acadiau.ca/get-involved/raddall-10.html>

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