

VOICE

∞ VOLUME 27
∞ SPRING 2020
∞ DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH & THEATRE
∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY

Acadia Hosts the 2020 Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference



Back Row: Josh Foote, Tristan Hopkins, Emily McClean, Emma Hope, Dr. Kait Pinder, and Olivia Devine. Front row: Dr. Coplen Rose, Selena MacDonald, and Lauren McKenney

Sixty presenters from 12 different universities gathered in Wolfville for a full weekend of sessions and social events, February 28th-March 1st. English students from every province in Atlantic Canada shared academic papers, creative work, and their love of literature with lively audiences whose engaged questions reminded us all how valuable and fun it is to collaborate through conversation.

Special thanks and huge congratulations to hardworking student conference organizers Emily McClean, Emma Hope, Margaret Findlay, Lauren McKenney & Josh Foote, and to tireless Faculty Advisor to the Acadia English Association, Dr. Kait Pinder. Your dedication, imagination, and skill helped make this event a very special one for everyone involved.

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THEATRE REVIEW

HEATHERS: THE MUSICAL by Rhea Davis

On Thursday, November 21st, 2019, I attended opening night of Acadia's production of *Heathers: The Musical*. The cast was small but powerful in their portrayal of an intense version of High School life, complete with murder, suicide, homophobia, bullying and friendship. The show was executed with precision; I was especially impressed by the talented singers, who captivated the audience with intricate

harmonies and dominating belts. As the production was held in the lower Denton Theatre, the show was intimate, allowing for interaction with the crowd. The sound and visuals were exceptional, although minimal; the production team used limited props to create various unique settings and illusions which shocked and intrigued the eager audience.

Heathers highlights an unlikely friendship between a school-driven, academic teen and three popular yet intimidating girls, Heather, Heather, and Heather. The plot is perpetually twisting, intertwining love



Yasaman Mousavi as Veronica Sawyer and Lauren Amirault as Heather McNamara

and friendship with dark and gruesome subjects; as I had never seen the show previously, I never abandoned the edge of my seat. I felt compassion and fear, ultimately drawing to my feet by the final act.

The performance was repeated nightly from November 21st to December 1, and tickets sold out almost immediately due to the positive audience reaction. Thank you to all who helped in creating such a beautiful piece of art here at Acadia University. You did not disappoint!



Brian Sehestedt as Jason "J.D." Dean, Yasaman Mousavi as Veronica, and Ben Stephenson as Ram Sweeney

incorporated literary math as well as picture association to engage the five teams, encouraging every member to get involved. All who participated were eager to respond and left with smiling faces. The event was a tremendous success

and we are looking forward to many more upcoming Acadia English Association gatherings.



Jon Saklofske as Ram's Dad in the arms of Chris Arsenault as Kurt's Dad

TRIVIA NIGHT By Rhea Davis

Throughout the year, the Acadia English Association devises numerous events which bring faculty and students together as a community. On Wednesday, November 20, 2019, the society hosted a holiday themed trivia night which drew an impressive crowd.

At 7pm, approximately 25 Acadia students and staff gathered on the fourth floor of the BAC, with game faces, ready to compete; the grand prize was four tickets to the Acadia Theatre Department's production of *Heathers!* The event consisted of five rounds of trivia, accompanied by delicious holiday treats and hot chocolate. Each question category corresponded to a different literary topic; the society

CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS

Acadia Theatre Company's production of Sam Shepard's play that was to have been directed by Dr. Anna Migliarisi in March had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

WESLEY: I could feel the space around me like a big, black world. I listened like an animal. My listening was afraid. Afraid of sound. Tense. Like any second something could invade me.

~Sam Shepard
Curse of the Starving Class

MALORY 550 CONFERENCE

By Josh Foote



Acadia University was home to the Malory 550: Old and New conference – an event filled with Malorians critically examining the cultural, social and political value of Thomas Malory’s highly regarded fifteenth century text, *Le Morte Darthur* – from August 8-10, 2019. Malory’s text is a fifteenth century examination of knighthood, medieval gender dynamics, chivalric values, and political instability. This conference sought to examine the continued relevance of the text, and the necessity of reading Malory today.

The medieval festivities began with a lovely reception full of intellectually stimulating conversation and comradery, which spilled over into the three days of conference sessions. Academics from across the globe – including Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States – travelled to Wolfville to share their hard work with their colleagues.

Over the course of fourteen thematically organized sessions – set over three days – a total of forty academic papers were read and discussed with a room full of passionate medievalists. These papers – which were wide-ranging in topic – opened the floor for lively critical discussion on the importance of Malory’s text in the twenty-first century.

Dr. Dorsey Armstrong examined Malory’s work through zombie theory, while Dr. David Eugene Clark presented a detailed analysis of punctuation variances across various printings of the text. A particular highlight of the conference was Dr. Kathy Caswey’s astoundingly relevant discussion of reading Malory’s text in light of the modern cultural and political landscape. Dr. Andrew Lynch – from the University of Western Australia – closed the conference with a Plenary Lecture on temporality in Malory’s *Sankgreal*.

This conference was notable for its constant academic support and lively discussion, and was praised by the attendees as the best medieval conference they had ever been

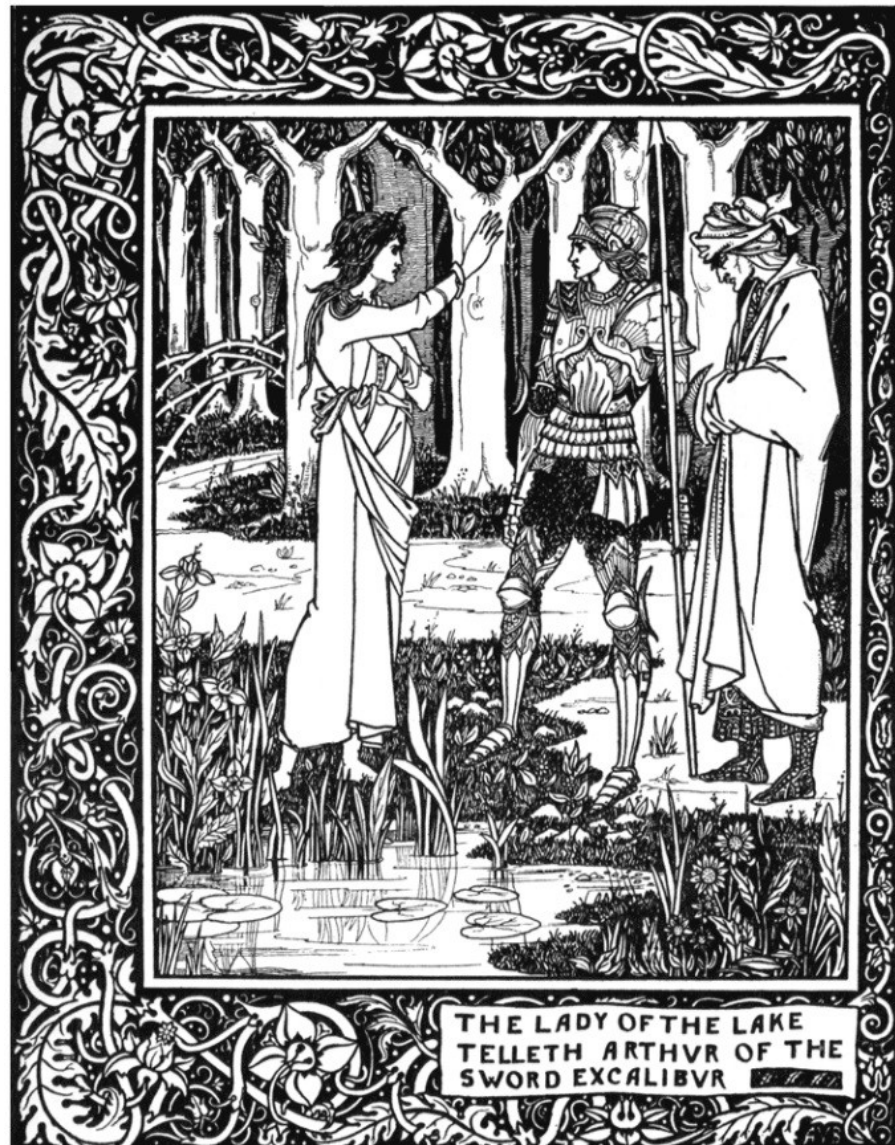




Malory scholars from as far away as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States gathered at Acadia.

to. In the final remarks of the conference, it was proposed that future Malory conferences be held at Acadia.

A special thanks to Dr. Cory Rushton from St. Francis Xavier University and Acadia's own Dr. Kevin Whetter for organizing this wonderful event, along with the excellent team of conference assistants: Meg Finlay, Josh Foote and Amy Parkes. Additionally, it is important to note the contributions of the Dean of Arts, Laura Robinson, for her immense social media support and Head of the Department of English and Theatre at Acadia University, Dr. Wanda Campbell for her assistance in securing funding for the conference. Finally, this conference would not be possible without the work of the presenters.



ANNUAL ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE 2020

My Experience Presenting at the AAUEC

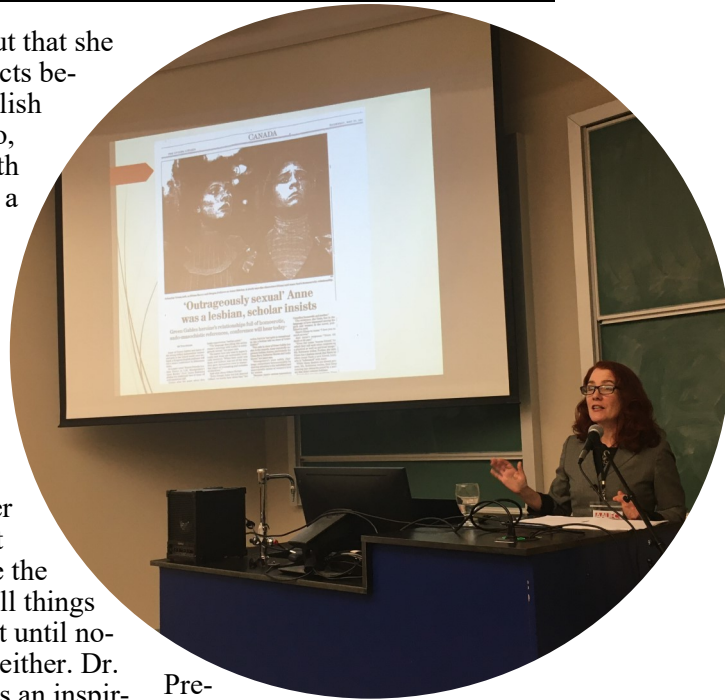
By: Olivia Devine

During the weekend of February 28th to March 1st, Acadia University held the 2020 Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference for students and staff from universities around the Maritimes. The weekend was filled with fun activities, interesting presentations, and an all-around wonderful academic environment.

The conference began with a speech from Acadia's Dean of Arts, Dr. Laura Robinson (*right*). Robinson opened the weekend with her presentation called "What Are You Going to Do with That?": The Joys and Possibilities of Being an English Major." During her all too relevant speech, Robinson explained how important English, Arts, and Humanities majors are for society within a world that seems to believe otherwise. Robinson shared statistics about the success rates of various

majors. She pointed out that she included persuasive facts because that is what English majors are taught to do, develop arguments with proof. She also shared a serious, but comedic biographical account of how she became successful. Her work on homosexuality in *Anne of Green Gables* landed her major publicity where the media deemed it highly controversial. She used her account to explain that English majors change the world by noticing small things and picking them apart until nobody can ignore them either. Dr. Robinson's speech was an inspiring way to open a weekend full of young academics beginning to find their career paths.

On Saturday, February 29th, I had the incredible opportunity to present my essay on the "Theorizing Culture" panel.



Presenting at an undergraduate conference proved to be equally as exciting as nerve-racking. Before the conference, the other Acadia presenters and some staff members met to practice the presentations. This was the most stressful but beneficial experience during the presentation process as it was the first time most of us read our essays out loud, and the first time we were given direct feedback on the pros and cons of our work. However, the practice session brought the presenters closer together and it was a good opportunity to improve presenting and writing skills. I was thoroughly grateful for the practice round because when the real presentation came I was significantly more prepared. Earning the chance to stand at the front of the room for fifteen minutes to share our work is something every presenter should be proud of.



Margaret Finlay, Jon Saklofske, and Coplen Rose

The students and staff who organized the conference also did a great job at planning events to allow the presenters and professors from various schools around the Maritimes to meet and discuss their papers. For example, Friday night there was an AAUEC trivia event at the Wolfville Farmers Market. I had one member on my team from Dalhousie, who was also on my panel, and two other members from PEI. My team also talked to the team next to ours which consisted of students from MSVU and SMU. Being surrounded by English majors from around the Maritimes was inspiring.

From creative stories about metaphorical zombies to presentations about Meryl Streep, the AAUEC was an unforgettable weekend. Hearing other student's presentations during the panels was exhilarating. I learned that there are a wide variety of topics and interests among the students from around the Maritimes. There was also a banquet Saturday night where a lot of the students further discussed our papers and creative works. We got a chance to ask each other more questions in a casual setting without any extra pressure from professors or other audience members. This allowed students to form stronger bonds with each other and make new friends in areas they are interested in.

Being a part of this experience will be one of my favourite memories during my undergrad at Acadia University. The AAUEC taught me new speaking, listening, and engaging skills that other undergraduate opportunities seldom offer. I am certain I will be able to use these skills in my future and that most of the presenters will, as Dr. Robinson would say, change the world. I am grateful to have been part of this experience, the AAUEC helped me learn more about myself and the career path I hope to take.

Sfê R. MONSTER AAUEC Keynote Speaker By: Olivia Devine

During the weekend of March 28th to February 1st Acadia University hosted the 2020 Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference. On Saturday night student presenters and professors received an insightful presentation from Sfê R. Monster, the keynote speaker. Sfê is a comic author and illustrator and they focus on telling trans stories in their work. Sfê's presentation was called "Bringing Your Table to the Table: Finding Ways to Tell Your Story" where they centered the presentation around finding out how to make your voice heard in a unique and new way.

Sfê began their presentation discussing how they began creating comics online as a hobby. Their experience started when they were browsing the internet and discovered a website called Patreon. Patreon allows anyone to create comics for free online and have the chance to share them with the public. Sfê took this opportunity to begin writing a trans story, a story they described as important for LGBTQ+ representation. As Sfê continued, they described how they were inspired by other writers and traveled to a comic writer convention. However, Sfê realized there were certain expectations associated with writing and they were getting frustrated with these expectations of bringing a certain genre to the table. Sfê shared how it was hard to find trans representation in popular culture growing up, especially comic books. So, Sfê made a new table for themselves

and other trans people so the LGBTQ+ community would be able to see themselves represented in various literary forms.

Sfê has now published many works that include trans characters. Sfê's first personal project was *Eth's Skin*, an unfinished comic where the main character goes on adventures to find themselves. Sfê shared more of their work for the audience which included more queer stories including the new *Minecraft* book. Sfê described how the *Minecraft* book is a major step in the right direction for the LGBTQ+ community. Sfê explained that since Minecraft's team wanted a lot of representation in this book and Minecraft's target audience is 8-12 year olds, this book is a way for kids who identify as LGBTQ+ to see themselves in popular culture.

As the presentation continued Sfê received lots of laughter from the audience while telling their story. However, it quickly got serious when Sfê began



sharing the darker sides of being a freelancer and creator. This was a crucial part of the presentation because the audience was populated with young people soon entering a workforce that is continuously being influenced by freelance creating. Sfé opened a discussion about how tiring social media can get and how serious feeling burnt out is. They shared the seriousness of living in a society that makes it feel like we should be doing something productive all the time or we are wasting time.

Sfé also shared about how dangerous it is to turn everything into a commodity that you create once you are successful. This erases many possibilities of having fun with what you love to do and can make you forget why you enjoy creating. This topic generated many questions from the crowd. One was, “How do you avoid feeling burnt out?” Sfé emphasized how important it is to have a friend to help you through creative burnout. They said that this friend should be familiar with your life and share common interests with you to allow both of you to talk about how you are feeling knowing that the other person understands you.

All in all, it was a wonderful presentation that sparked a lot of interest from the crowd. Having Sfé as the keynote speaker for the AAUEC was resourceful because it is important to have conversations about queer representation with society and it is important to have conversations about burnout culture with students. Ultimately, Sfé’s enthusiasm and charm was a delight to have at the conference.



∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

SARAH FABER

By Rhea Davis

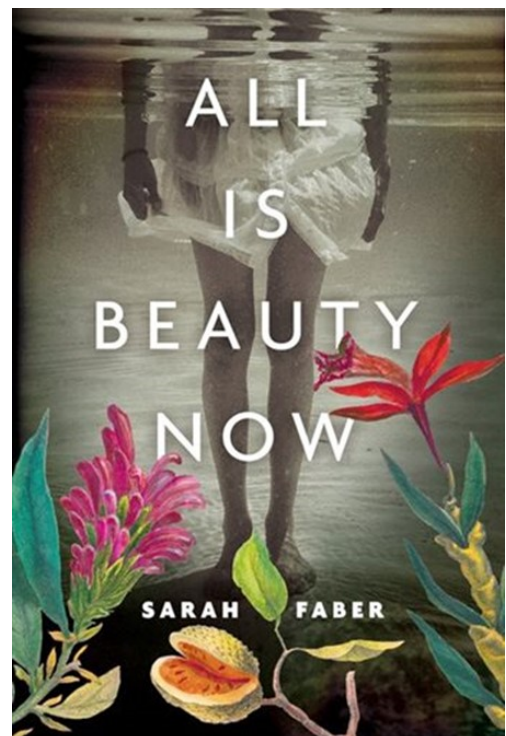
On September 18th, 2019, at 7:00pm, I attended the first Authors@Acadia event of the 2019-2020 season. The Theatre and English departments were delighted to present the engaging



author, Sarah Faber, here at Acadia’s BAC 132. The fiction reading featured the Cape Breton native’s first novel, *All is Beauty Now*. This exotic read is a story based in 1960s Brazil and follows a Brazilian family through their triumphs and countless obstacles while on a journey to Canada.

The Concordia University graduate explores large-scale and important topics such as class conflict, mental illness and immigration. She spoke in depth on matters concerning the research element necessary in creating this particular work; to speak for

different groups while aiming to represent a true imitation of various illnesses and social positions took a lot of non-fiction study and personal interviews. To keep an air of authenticity in a work of fiction, Faber discussed her tactic of writing in a very close third person point of view; it takes immense talent to create individual voices in a novel with many varying characters. She adapted this style of switching perspectives and employing each one with distinct rhythm and diction from one of her many inspirations, Virginia Woolf. As one character, the father, has bi-polar disorder, the author wanted to ensure that the person portrayed was not reduced to his symptoms, or to certain overwhelming scenes. As this topic is close to her family, she understands the importance of capturing the common and distinct aspects without romanticizing the experience.



The tale itself takes place in a fictionalized community on a real location in Brazil, where three generations of the author's mother's family originate and reside. Loosely, the story follows aspects of her family's life story and struggles. The plot follows a crisis: the kidnapping of a missing girl, the daughter of the primary characters, Nora and Hugo. As she is presumed dead after nearly a year, the author guides the reading with a tone of grief and mystery, while sharing an intriguing style in which all senses are engaged. The audience gets a sense of the family dynamic, and the importance of familial bonds. Ironically, the novelist has never visited Brazil. However, following extensive research, and embodying the notion that her relatives hyper-identify with their childhood homes and experiences, she was able to capture the landscape and culture accurately and respectfully.

In conclusion, Sarah Faber offered an excellent performance to open up our events for this year with her shy and endearing demeanor. Her story was at times relatable, while simultaneously dark, and suspenseful. She is an extremely talented writer and we are lucky to have experienced her genius if only just briefly!

In a time of real uncertainty and crisis, one of the things about poetry is the ability to express things that are really hard in a straightforward way. It gets to the core of emotion.

~Madeline Bassnett

MADELINE BASSNETT

By Rhea Davis



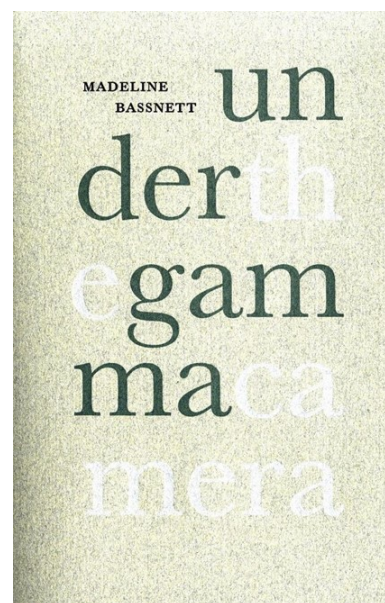
On October 7, 2019, a crowd of eager listeners assembled in the Vaughan Memorial Library quiet reading room to enjoy a poetry reading. For our second instalment of Authors@Acadia, the department was pleased to welcome an engaging poet from London, Ontario, Madeline Bassnett. The work which she presented is her first collection of poetry, titled *Under the Gamma Camera*. Immediately the audience was engaged in the personal aspect of the reading, as her collection addresses the author's personal battle with breast cancer.

Throughout her reading, Bassnett captivated the audience with her vivid imagery and descriptive works which she wrote following her 2014 breast cancer diagnosis. As well as the medical and personal aspects, her work also encompasses the natural world; she speaks of the body and the mind throughout her journey, while also incorporating nature including animals and natural disasters. The author spoke to the middle section of her collection, titled "pilgrimage," which alludes to overcoming pain and adversity. This also ties into the notion that Bassnett walked every day while undergoing chemotherapy. Therefore, walking became part of

her creative process, as she was actively engaged physically in relating her own adversities to the natural world and her surroundings.

Her style, as described throughout the presentation, is to be commended. She includes sonnets, long poems, and shorter pieces, and delivers them with a melodic, emotional voice, allowing the audience to create personal connections to her pieces. Furthermore, Bassnett employs clever and enticing use of alliteration, which adds a playful tone to a serious work. Personally, I enjoyed the long poem with fourteen short segments, as this was a unique form which I had not previously witnessed.

As a reader with a history in which cancer is heavily involved, I found her sonnet in which she describes cancer as a jellyfish, taking over an area and pushing everything else out as extremely emotional and important. Her point that cancer cells as well as jellyfish do not actually die was a heart wrenching and illuminating statement. Bassnett's presentation was exceptionally delivered, and her collection is one that I will remember and think back on frequently.





LYN BENNETT
By Rhea Davis

At 7:00pm on November 6th, 2019, Acadia students, staff, and an abundance of Wolfville community members filled the KCIC Science Auditorium. The excited crowd welcomed Dr. Lyn Bennett, professor at Dalhousie University, with enthusiasm for our third instalment of Authors @Acadia. Bennett's scholarship focuses primarily on 17th century English literature, incorporating the history of medicine, with a focus on women in both writing and in medicine.

Although she has published various notable works, this presentation highlighted a unique and ongoing project titled Early Modern Maritime Recipes. Essentially, the EMMR is a database, constructed from various early print and manuscript Maritime recipes of the 18th century, collected from regional archives, newspapers, libraries and personal documents. Through this extensive process, the researchers involved are able to uncover details about a range of domestic practices, extending throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The EMMR includes not only food and drink, but also incorporates instructions on the necessities required for life in the colonial Maritimes, e.g. how to stay warm, how to prepare homemade medicinal recipes, how to preserve fish, and much more. Collecting and analyzing these recipes in the early modern Atlantic helps reveal the relationship of

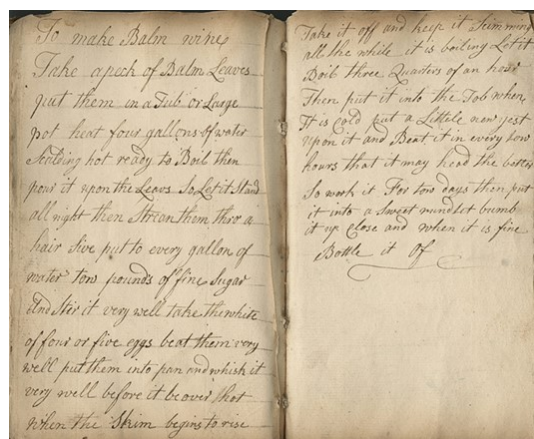
the settlers, the exchange of knowledge, and the differences between race, class, and gender in a developing culture.

The project sprung from a desire to discover something about our Atlantic past through recipes. Through research, it has been discovered that most archived recipes favour the wealthy class, and the elite. Referring to medicinal recipes, the guidelines appear to be specific to treating ailments of the elite, including gout and stomach problems. In terms of food, the recipes were formatted to feed large groups, and lacked exact instructions as if they were already memorized. Notably, Bennett spoke to the accessibility of this database, as it is a searchable, public domain. Unfortunately, there are few women, few Acadian contributors, and

no indigenous knowledge referenced.

The question period of the presentation proved especially beneficial. Bennett spoke of trying certain uncovered recipes, including mushroom ketchup and Indian pudding. Interestingly, many ingredients used in early recipes are still relevant and common today in both food and medicine. Conversely, I found it shocking that foods which one may deem local to the Maritimes, such as lobster or blueberries, seem to have been entirely excluded and unused throughout the 18th century. As Dr. Bennett reiterated throughout her presentation, there is still much work to be done as they are only in the beginning stages. The team may eventually discover more about the methods of cooking at this time, and materials used, by searching different databases and logs of the period. This notion enticed the audience, as everyone seemed eager to follow-up with this interesting and ongoing idea.

Early Modern Maritime Recipes: From Baking Cakes to Curing Cancer



BASMA KAVANAGH

By Olivia Devine



On Wednesday, January 22nd in the Vaughan Memorial Library Quiet Reading Room, Basma Kavanagh kicked off the winter season's Authors@Acadia event with her enchanting poetry reading. Kavanagh is a Nova Scotian poet and visual artist who mainly offered a diverse collection of readings from her book *Ruba'iyat for the Time of Apricots*. Students, faculty, and others who were interested gathered to hear Kavanagh's unique approach to thinking and writing poetry. By calling her poetic approach and discoveries 'juicy', Kavanagh provided nothing short of laughter and created a curious and fun atmosphere during the Wednesday evening reading.

Kavanagh began with a short description of *Ruba'iyat for the Time of Apricots*, emphasizing the importance of language and translation, the connection between humans and non-humans, and family. One memorable quote during her description was "we do not come from nothing" which was followed by a reading of her older works.

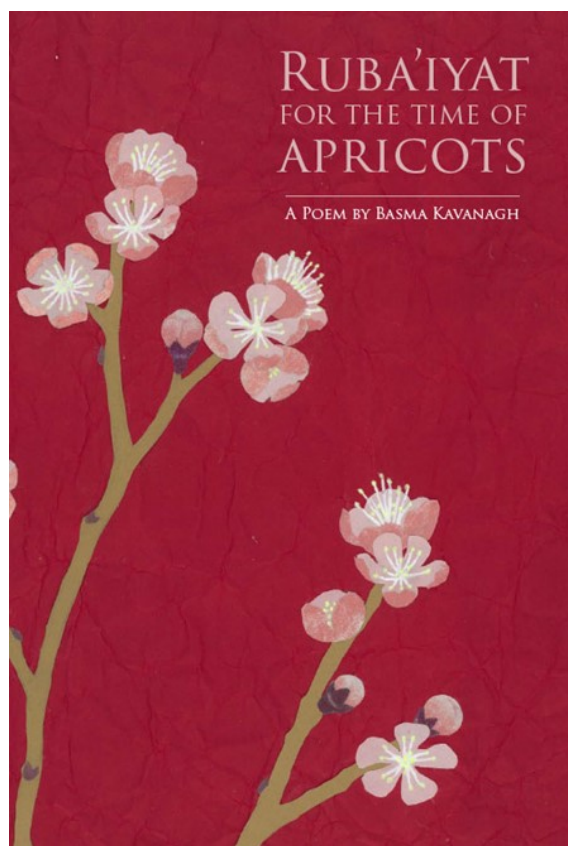
This gave the crowd a personal taste of her Lebanese heritage and of her family within her poetry. She continued to explain the significance of her family being the primary inspiration for *Ruba'iyat for the Time of Apricots* and humbly confessed that translating is still a difficult task for her but she enjoys combining the languages through poetry.

After reading her older work, Kavanagh focused on her newer poetry which opened the second half of the reading with her explanation of how she approached her research about new concepts she was interested in. Following this explanation, Kavanagh shared how she came across an author who wrote a book in one day which led to her curiosity of the role of time. With bewilderment and wonder on her face, Kavanagh confessed to being intrigued and eventually decided to try this experiment herself.

Kavanagh smiled while sharing her difficult experiences of attempting to write a book in one day and another attempt to write one in a night. After joking that she did fall asleep during her creative nocturnal investigation, a question from the crowd prompted her to confess that the two different experiments led to vastly different conclusions, but staying up all night was ultimately more juicy. She acknowledged that it changed her perception of time and led to a poem being written called *Stardust Rosemary* which investigates the relationship

between the Earth's elements and time itself.

By the end of the reading, the room was filled with a curious audience who asked various questions, ranging from requesting expansions on topics and approaches she briefly mentioned in her primary description to giving personal accounts of her relationship between visual art and poetry. With each question Kavanagh gave unique and important answers. She spoke about her lack of a definite answer when it comes to inspiration. She shared that inspiration, to her, is found everywhere and



acting on creative impulses, no matter how strange or random they may seem, are essential for making art. Kavanagh's account of her approach to poetry was equally as captivating and refreshing as her personality.



March 31, 2020

As I write this, our campus is eerily quiet since most of us have moved home to help flatten the curve of this pandemic. However, some of you continue to keep on-campus services running and provide support to our students who remain in residence. Those of us working and studying from home are deeply grateful for your service and dedication.

*Dr. Peter Ricketts
President and Vice-Chancellor*

Special thanks to the Acting Head of the Department of English and Theatre, Dr. Jessica Slights for her capable leadership during these challenging times, to Leanna McDonald for long-range office support, to all our professors for adapting to such unprecedented circumstances, and to our students for their determination to get through this apart but together.

In three words, I can sum up everything I've learned about life. It goes on. In all the confusions of today, with all our troubles . . . with politicians and people sling-ing the word fear around, all of us become discouraged . . . tempted to say this is the end, the finish. But life — it goes on. It always has. It always will. Don't forget that.

~ Robert Frost in 1954



VOICE

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