

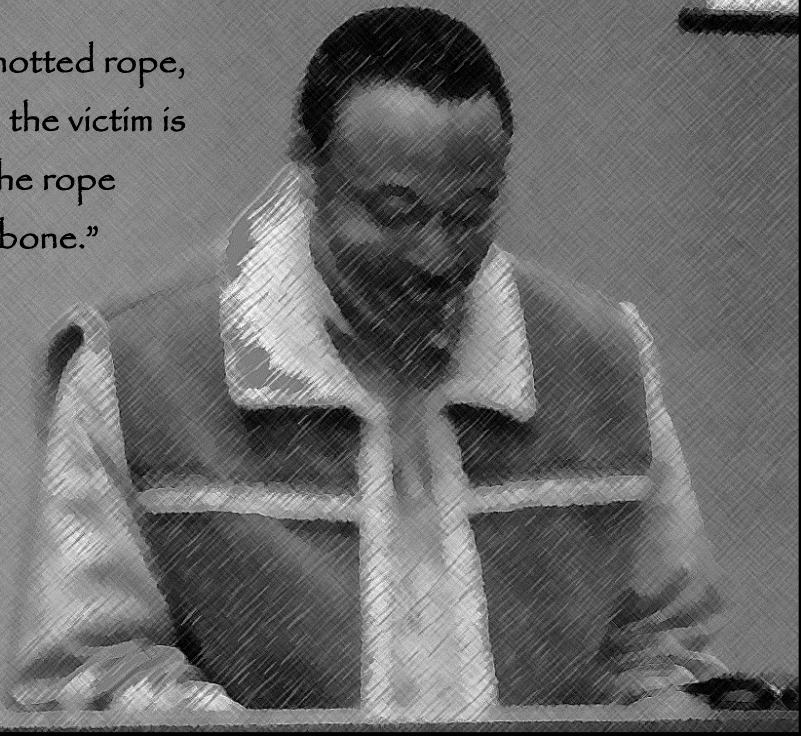


# VOICE 4

∞ VOLUME 12.2 ∞ SPRING 2005 ∞ DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH ∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY ∞

"But, sometimes, the knotted rope,  
because stiff, slips, and the victim is  
garroted. Or worse. The rope  
could carve to the neckbone."

~ *George and Rue*



**GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE @ ACADIA:**  
A READING WITH THE 2001  
GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARD WINNER

AUTHORS @ ACADIA  
George Elliott Clarke  
Darryl Whetter  
Cameron Royce Jess  
Ron Lightburn

THEATRE  
Minifest  
*The Sea*  
Dramaturgy

ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE  
ENGLISH CONFERENCE

LUNCH & LETTERS  
Michael Devine  
Antonio Franceschet  
Bruce Matthews

EVENTS  
Acadia Writing Centre Grand Opening  
*estuary* Launch  
Farah Mendlesohn Speaks at Acadia

STAFF  
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## AUTHORS @ ACA- DIA

### GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

By Tessa Sheppard

On the evening of April 11, an enthusiastic crowd of students, professors, and community members gathered to hear celebrated Canadian writer George Elliott Clarke read from his first novel, *George and Rue*, at the KC Irving Centre. As Richard Davies noted in his introduction, award-winning Clarke has written numerous works (though is perhaps best known for his poetry) and is a leading proponent of African Canadian culture and history.

Before Clarke began reading from his novel, he explained that while *George and Rue* is fictional, it is based on the true story of two of his relatives, George and Rufus Hamilton. The novel centres on the two young men in 1949 as they commit a robbery and end up beating a taxi driver to death with a hammer. A few days after the murder, the men are caught and found guilty, and are eventually hanged in Fredericton for their crimes. Clarke read from different sections of the novel, balancing the novel's dark and haunting qualities with its more humorous and light-hearted moments. He highlighted the murder itself and the hanging of the young men, and also read of the relationship between George and Rue's parents, Asa and Cynthy, and of the childhoods of the boys in the Maritimes.

After his gripping and entertaining reading, Clarke answered questions from the audience. In his answers, Clarke discussed how and why he began writing (partly to be-

come more popular in school), and how his background in songwriting helped him become a better poet. He also discussed the importance of vocabulary in creating people's identities, explaining how "the words you use are who you are." Furthermore, Clarke noted the significance of historical context in his work, and the role that decolonization plays in all Canadian literature, whether it wants it or not. He stressed the importance for Canadian writers to use their own language (not Britain's or the United States') and explained how his goal in writing is ultimately to write African Canadian history in its own terms, and from its Canadian perspective.

In addition to reading from *George and Rue* and answering questions, Clarke entertained the audience with some of his other work, including a hilarious poem about Jean Chrétien, and tracks from his jazz-opera *Québécoisité*. He also offered scathing (and funny) insight throughout the evening on subjects like global politics and the Royal Family ("What has the Royal Family done for us lately?" he joked, and added, "No, really.")

Clarke finished the evening by mentioning some of his future endeavours, including a "controversial book" consisting of verse and photographs, a comic book-type poem, a follow-up to his critically-acclaimed 2001 poetry collection *Blue*, and eventually ("maybe in four or five years") an epic poem. Currently, Clarke is a professor at the University of Toronto, and continues to write a column for the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*.



## DARRYL WHETTER

By Matthew John MacDonald

On a very cold Friday afternoon on January 21, Darryl Whetter visited Acadia University to read 'Profanity Issues, S.' and 'Non-Violent, Not OK,' short stories from his book *A Sharp Tooth in the Fur*. We were also fortunate to listen as he read some excerpts from his unfinished novel.

Dr. Darryl Whetter received his undergraduate degree at Queen's University and continued on to earn both an MA and PhD in creative writing from the University of New Brunswick. Whetter is a professor of creative writing at the University of Windsor and reviews regularly for *The Globe and Mail*. He published his first book entitled *A Sharp Tooth in the Fur* which is a collection of thirteen short stories written over a span of seven years. He has earned many prestigious awards for his stories such as the National Magazine Award for Fiction in 2003 and the Journey Prize Anthology for "Non-Violent, Not OK", 2003 and the David H. Walker \$1000 prize in Fiction for "A Peg and One Fin" in 2000.

The jovial audience was in a pleasant mood as Whetter read stories of protest whose serious themes were presented with a light sense of humour that made his writing both provocative and entertaining. He expressed that, when writing, he structures his narratives first to moral enterprises and secondly to entertainment. "Profanity Issues, S." followed a father who fought in the defence of free speech and against the prohibition of coarse language arguing that "life is sometimes filthy... and

sometimes is its language." "Non-Violent, Not OK" was a story that followed a character who travels to Quebec to be integrated into a mob of protestors.

The audience was especially lucky because Whetter read excerpts from his upcoming novel. His wit extends beyond his short narratives and finds itself firmly imprinted in his first extended narrative. The novel is constructed around the experiences of a cross country biker who must endure the hostility of both nature and the people around him. The main character faces dilemmas that seem



Photo Credit: Tory James

almost trivial to most people but are really complex given the character's immediate situations. Whetter's writing and style should be applauded.

Dr. Whetter delivered every part of it with a sense of zeal that makes his work both a moral education and splendidly entertaining. His sense of irony and sarcasm are well timed and well adapted for his purposes. His work is a must read for anyone who has some spare time and is looking for something that is light but at the same time engaging to read.



## CAMERON ROYCE JESS

By Julie Veinot

For the nine people spread out in BAC 141 like little sail ships on the ocean, Cameron Royce Jess read from his latest novel *Soul Voyage* on February 9. As he had when he previously visited Acadia to read from his first novel *Bearer of the Chosen Seed*, he brought with him some props, including a large panel of a sail ship nosing into a har-

bour lit brilliantly with sunset.

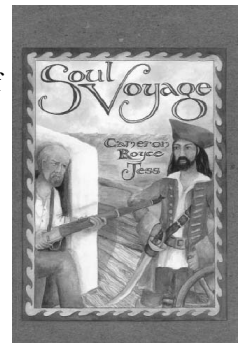
Jess hails from Hall's Harbour (not far from Wolfville, on the Bay of Fundy) and has been a sailor himself. While in the Caribbean, he happened upon an autobiography about Joshua Slocum and was struck when he read the first sentence saying Slocum had been born on the North Mountain of Nova Scotia. It struck him because even though Slocum was famous amongst Americans – and his autobiography of a trip around the world was a bestseller – Jess had never heard of this man. No one ever talked about him. Local tourist bureaus did not promote him.

To satiate his own curiosity, Jess researched Slocum's life and began lecturing with his knowledge, only to discover that perhaps Slocum did not record everything in his autobiography – and if he did, publishers erased these facts away.

Most intriguing is the man Slocum hallucinated into existence (and far more exciting than the "ball" in Tom Hanks' *Cast Away*). The Pilot of the *Pinta* (one of Columbus's 1492 ships) was mentioned once or twice in Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World*, but Jess suggests that publishers removed further mentions of the *Pinta* pilot so that Slocum would be shown to the book-buying public as more credible.

Jess says that this fabricated character is as important as Slocum is – indeed, in Chapter 5, which Jess read aloud at Acadia – the hallucination is as alive as Slocum himself is, and the two often carry on a historical banter about the Spanish Inquisition or modern steamships, which the Pilot of the *Pinta* has not seen.

Jess also suggests that Slocum was somewhat suicidal during this voyage – he did not expect to return from his



voyage and given that he had many hard times in his life (he went from dining with the Victorian Vanderbilts to poverty; lost his wife; went out of business) it seems plausible.

A member of the audience argued that he did not think Slocum had wanted to kill himself, but Jess told him, “Most aficionados don’t want to think of him as suicidal.”

In the end, *Soul Voyage* is not just about Slocum’s voyage around the world – it is a voyage about a man trying to overcome his life, especially his relationship with his wife, who died when young. Hence the name of the novel, suggesting a journey of the soul.

It is the second published novel for Jess, and it won the 1995 H.R. “Bill” Percy Award in the Atlantic Writing Contest. However, it is not his second-written; he has authored others, and his first novel was also published by Inscape Publications. When asked by an audience member about his work, he said that he does not do research for his historical books.

“Things come to me that I couldn’t possibly research,” he says. Only after the first draft is done does he verify facts.

Though *Soul Voyage* is a historical novel, Jess says that it could have been set in any time, even today.

“The human condition never really changes that much.”



## RON LIGHTBURN

By Jennifer Jones

On March 8<sup>th</sup> literary illustrator Ron Lightburn came to Acadia to provide some insight on his interesting profession. Lightburn, who was born in Ontario and reared in British Columbia, moved with his partner Sandra from Victoria, B.C. to Nova Scotia in 1997 and now lives fifteen minutes from campus in Coldbrook. As a student at the Alberta College of Art,

Lightburn realized that he was not with like-minded people and left school. This was his only formal training. Years later Lightburn is now an accomplished illustrator working in multiple fields. He has done numerous covers for novels yet it is for his work as an illustrator of children’s literature that Lightburn has found national recognition. With his first book, *Waiting for the Whales*, Lightburn was awarded

the prestigious Governor General’s Literary Award. Since then he has illustrated numerous books including a collaboration with Sandra titled *Driftwood Cove*.

Much of Lightburn’s lecture focused on the huge amount of work that goes into illustrating a children’s book.

It may take as much as six months to complete a book. The process includes intense research, live models (often Sandra), a detailed pencil sketch, and input from the publisher. Once informed of the startling amount of work put into this often overlooked field, the illustrations become more than just cute pictures. Yet with all the effort and imagination that Lightburn puts into the illustration of a book there is more than artistry involved in the process.

Much like a commissioned painter or portrait artist, there are expectations to be met. The illustrations must tell the story of the text. The style of the illustrations may also be influenced by the publisher. What’s more, there is the added pressure of strict deadlines that may restrict the creative process. Lightburn also mentioned that often children’s illustrators are not perceived by those in the artistic community as serious artists.

Regardless of peer perception, an illustrator still encounters many of the same problems as other types of artists. An illustrator earns a percentage of book sales. So if a book doesn’t sell there is little reward for months of work. Lightburn has also had a problem with being typecast. The style of the book that was his initial success is the style that is now expected of him.

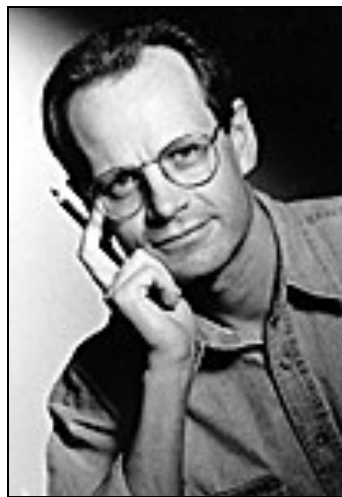


Photo Credit: Jan Hodely

One of the most interesting parts of the evening was Lightburn’s discussion of his extremely varied influences. Comic books and the *Rupert Bear* annuals were among his first influences. Lightburn still counts these childhood favorites among his major influences. Others include Edgar Rice Burroughs, NC Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, the Group of Seven, and filmmaker Stanley Kubrick. Lightburn also mentioned an interest

in folk art. However this interest is more a hobby than a direct influence on his work which is mostly realist.

After the lecture and following question period were over, attendees had an opportunity to look at a variety of Lightburn’s work which he brought along. The evening enlightened many students and community members to the intricacies of illustration.



# THEATRE

## MINIFEST

### ☆☆☆ NIGHT ONE ☆☆☆

Reviewed by Lisa Melanson

Self described as “metatheatre, drama, comedy”, night one of Acadia Theatre Company’s Minifest 2005 certainly did not disappoint. Each play had its own unique traits, but each of the three acts of the night entertained the audience with excellent acting, wonderful atmosphere, and amusing stories.

The night opened with “Director’s Cut” written by Beth Lyons and Matthew Carswell, and directed by Shawnee Gregory. This excellent work of metatheatre both delighted and confused the audience as the “director” of the play, played by Jeffery Hale, cried criticism from his seat in the audience and eventually made his way on stage to further coach “his” actors, Jenna Rathbun and Rob Patton. The real director busted in from backstage to reprimand Mr. Hale and the play ended with a slightly absurd, yet, in the writer’s opinion, genius finale involving Elvis. Both playwrights and director succeeded in creating an entertaining play that challenged the conventions of typical theatre experiences.

Next up was J.J. Steinfeld’s ominous play, “A Murderous Art”, directed by Caroline Plant. Creating a suspenseful and frightening mood is often a challenge for anyone, especially those in theatre, but the effect was achieved wonderfully. The play, a story of a young couple and a murdered art teacher, created a fantastically spooky atmosphere that kept the audience on the edge of their seats. Couple the atmosphere with the amazing talent and chemistry of actors Donny Kitson and Mary Fay Coady and the audience was left with quite the thriller.

The night ended on a comedic note with Adam Reid’s “Call Centre”, directed by Maggie Graham. Through the excellent use of stage props, voice-overs, nose-picking, and the Jeopardy theme song, “Call Centre” poked fun at the mundane, yet hilarious, inner-workings of a – you guessed it – call centre. Mostly narrated by actors Shawn Maggio and Katherine Sirman, the play takes a look at the daily life of the call centre workers: the annoying callers, the frustration of an idiot being promoted ahead of you, and the strange coworkers that surround you day after day. Packed with talented actors and hilarious dialogue, “Call Centre” was a great end to a very successful night of theatre.

### ☆☆☆ NIGHT TWO ☆☆☆

Reviewed by Matthew John MacDonald

Night two of Minifest opened with an abstract play entitled “Approximation,” which was somewhat hard to understand, but was also very emotionally provocative. Daniel Simeone claims that he was inspired by beat poets such as Allen Ginsburg and Amiri Baraka. If you are familiar with beat poetry you would have to agree that “Approximation” does it more than justice. It was a play that made poetry three dimensional, giving it more sides than could ever be visible on paper.

We then moved into play two which was called “Seasoned with Spite.” This two person play

endeavoured to be an entertaining moral conversation. The main

character is a crazed middle-aged socialite who for the entire play plans to take revenge on her friends for taking advantage of her. These plans are thwarted by her kind-hearted assistant who in the end teaches her what the meaning of true friendship is. This play was full of light humour, drawing chuckles



Photo Credit: S. Gregory

from its audience.

The night, and minifest, ended with the play entitled “Damn You, Dr. Phil” which was about three characters, one who is set against television icons, one who supports them, and one who follows what they say almost religiously. This social commentary, though with very serious underlying themes, was full of satirical humour. It was set in a psychiatrist’s office where two psychiatrists debate the beneficial and detrimental impacts of shows like Dr. Phil on their profession. At intervals the secretary interjects with bits of wisdom quoted from Oprah that often have little to no relevance to the situation. This play was an entertaining education on the fallacies of idolizing television and was an appropriate way to end Minifest.

This week was full of entertainment whose double feature conclusion on the weekend was quickly sold out. If you failed to see either night then you denied yourself much theatric pleasure. Audiences look forward to 2006’s Minifest with much anticipation and the hopes that next year’s students’ plays will be as enjoyable as this year’s.

## THE SEA

Review by Julia MacIntosh  
and Ali Welik

*The Sea*, written by Edward Bond and directed by Michael Devine, is a true delight. Walking through the painted hallway into lower Denton we were not sure what to expect from this dry comedy. Wondering if these Acadia theatre students could really pull off such a deep, witty, comical play we took our seats and marveled at the beautifully painted thrust stage. Instantly the audience was thrown into a profusion of sound and visuals: waves hitting the rocks, characters on stage seemingly distraught, and the constant movement of waves in the background on a screen. The audience was quite apparently swept away immediately by the intensity of the characters as well as the visual and audio stimuli.

Through every set change and varying of lighting, we were continuously impressed at the fluidity of each actor's movement as they eased minimal set pieces on and off the stage.

The set was always interesting to look at: having tapestry fall from the ceiling and props pulled out from hidden places against the stage piqued the audience's interest each time. This play was perfectly crafted by Devine to fit the intimacy of lower Denton theatre. Challenged by a thrust stage and rake, the blocking of each character was carefully and cleverly constructed so as to appease audiences on all sides. Costumes were effective yet at times distracting, the saving grace being the simple set. Cues and scene changes were executed flawlessly by the work of Mary Fay Coady, the stage manager. However the sound, at times, was overpowering the actor's lines making it hard to grasp some words here and there.

There was a delicious mixture of

characters, each having their own beautifully defined nature. It was extremely evident to the audience that the actors had a strong understanding of the depth of their characters. Actor Shawn Maggio clearly defines this understanding by conveying his character's sensitivity with a hint of innocence and vulnerability. Also of note, Nuwanka Kottegoda playing the Vicar was a pleasure to watch on stage. His grace and likeability shone through his delivery of the lines. Of course holding everything together, the glue of the play if you will, was Andrea Sutherland. Her dry wit and charm was complimented by Meghan Johnston's portrayal of the passive follower, Jessica. The two had astonishing chemistry that captivated the audience entirely.

The play came to a close with a few strewn ashes and a compellingly constructed tableau scene taking the audience's breath away yet again. Overall this play is a must see. It is a highly entertaining show and most impressively, Michael Devine's first theatrical piece di-

rected here at Acadia University.

This play is worth going to see simply for the lobby display created by Beth Lyons with assistance from Maggie Rodger. *The Sea* is a performance whereby every aspect is done with the utmost professionalism and perfection.

Congratulations to the cast and crew for another enchanting theatrical production.



## THE ACADEMIC ART OF DRAMATURGY

By Beth Lyons

Dramaturgy is an often overlooked sector of theatrical practice that blurs the line between art and academia. A term that is unfamiliar to most, dramaturgy is a theatrical practice that begs to be further explored and understood.



Photo Credit: Alex Jayner

Theatrical dramaturgy developed in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century with the German theatre critic and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. While working with the National Theatre in Hamburg Lessing began to publish a journal which explored the literary and performance qualities of productions at the theatre, evaluating the suitability of plays for production by the company and commenting on those being mounted. This *Hamburg Dramaturgie* laid the groundwork for the practice of dramaturgy, but the field has grown and flourished into three essential brands of dramaturgy in the modern theatre: literary dramaturgy, production dramaturgy, and new play dramaturgy.

Literary dramaturgy is a logistical function within a theatre company; it includes reading plays and evaluating their suitability for performance for a given company, and often functioning as an in-house critic of sorts, as well as exercising artistic supervision on supporting material for the production, such as lobby displays, press releases and the program. A production dramaturg, on the other hand, works with the director of a particular play as part of the rehearsal process. Production dramaturgy, defined broadly, is the practice of serving as an advocate of the text of the play, and ensuring the overall cohesion in the artistic aesthetic in all aspects of a given production. Tangible aspects of this duty include: attending rehearsal to explain the meaning of text, providing relevant background research, discussing conceptual continuity with the director and designers, and even taking part in casting decisions. A third category of dramaturgical work which falls in-between these first two is *new play dramaturgy*. Dramaturgs work with playwrights as they develop a new play: work-



*Photo Credit: Alex Jayner*

shopping them, organizing staged readings and generally liaising with playwrights on various aspects of their work.

All forms of dramaturgy, however, boil down to a few steadfast characteristics. A strong sense of curiosity and a penchant for thoroughness are of utmost importance. Essentially a dramaturg's job is to ask questions which open up the creative process to further exploration. A dramaturg will know some of the answers, and know where to look in guiding others to answers she does not know.

While dramaturgy, in all its forms, has become integral to many theatres, particularly overseas, it has yet, to be fully incorporated into Canadian dramatic practice. The profession is, however, growing. In fact, Acadia University is home to a professional Canadian dramaturg: Theatre Studies professor, Michael Devine. Devine has, among many things, worked as a dramaturg both domestically and internationally, and is currently endeavouring to incorporate the

practice into the Acadia Theatre Studies curriculum and production process. This inclusion of dramaturgy in theatrical training grounds such as universities, and the surging interest shown in the practice among students and professors, promises to help the practice move into mainstream theatre in the future.





# ATLANTIC UNDERGRADU- ATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

By Matthew John MacDonald

This year's AAUEC was held at the newly named Cape Breton University on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. For those of you who do not know what the AAUEC is I'll take a brief moment to explain it. The AAUEC is an annual English conference held by a chosen University from the Maritime Provinces. It is very much like the Thomas H. Raddall Symposiums occasionally held here at Acadia except that the AAUEC is held solely for the students. This year four Acadia University students trekked up to Cape Breton for a weekend of academic and scholarly presentations combined with social integration with other universities.

A personal highlight for me was meeting Sheldon Currie who was a guest speaker at this year's conference. Currie is a recognized Atlantic Canadian writer who has written *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum* which was later adapted to the film *Margaret's Museum*. Having written an academic paper on *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum*, it was a joy to listen to Dr. Currie speak and to attend one of his creative writing sessions.

I have come away from this weekend with many new experiences and memories that I believe I'll cherish forever.



By Jesse Brillinger

With great pomp and fanfare the Acadia English Society headed out to Cape Breton in the wee hours of

the morning for the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Atlantic University Undergraduate English Conference. Despite being a small group at the conference the Acadia contingent managed to represent the school well displaying the hard work and thoroughness that characterizes the Acadia English Department. The paper topics the Acadians presented on ranged from Milton to creative writing but all were well presented and it seemed thoroughly well received. From impromptu poetry to rapid fire debates on 'the death of the author' it was clear that by being together the next generation of scholars truly thrived. Despite threats from several fellows at a local bar, who it seems did not appreciate Ginsberg, the entire group made it through the weekend relatively unscathed but with a lifetime's worth of good memories. By the end of the weekend great bonds and friendships were made with students from the other Atlantic universities and a fantastic time was had by all. With the newly revived English Society leading the charge there can be no doubt that next year's conference will be even better.



Photo Credit: Jesse Brillinger



By Ryan Dodington

As one of the 4 voices who represented Acadia at the conference, I had the opportunity to present some creative writing. The student presentations were held in comfortable rooms filled easily by a speaking voice. There were fifteen students and faculty in attendance when I read and afterwards they offered encouragement. Altogether it was less intimidating than I'd expected. Screenplay writer Tricia Fish and novelist Sheldon Currie were two compelling guest speakers who drew the conference's larger audiences. In one of her seminars, a wry Fish gave sound advice on how to avoid writing clichés. She said, "write the bad version first," in order to establish what shouldn't appear in a finished draft.

With the entire conference in attendance at the opening session, Currie read passages from his novel *Down the Coaltown Road*. His book deals with the internment of Italians in Cape Breton during World War Two.



The closing session late Saturday afternoon was a panel discussion on the relationship between Writers & Scholars. Although some schools chose not to attend, Acadia was there to hear Currie's sage advice. According to Currie, tomorrow's Writers and Scholars have the same role. His message was, "You're the ones who have to remind people of the kinds of things we're capable of, because when it happens, it's too late." In consideration of *Down the Coaltown Road*, I took this to mean that Currie expects educated and critical voices to speak out against injustice in times of international struggle.



By Ryan Davison

Overall, the trip to Cape Breton for the AAUEC was an excellent experience. We even had great weather for traveling, which made the majestic sights of Cape Breton even more breathtaking. Driving for six hours can be an uncomfortable experience but venturing beyond the valley which most Acadia students find themselves stuck in provided lots of interesting sights that made the time fly by. From the breathtaking Canso causeway to the "interesting" wood carvings in Antigonish there were many things to see on the way there. But even if the drive had been boring the conference would have made the trip worthwhile. My fellow Acadia students and I met lots of interesting people, heard lots of interesting papers, and had an all round good time. It was a very rewarding experience to be able to hear papers from and socialize with English majors from other schools. All schools represented themselves well, and I was impressed with all of the papers presented. From Alfred Lord Tennyson to Clint Eastwood the papers were of a varied

and compelling nature. In keeping with our solid academic tradition the students from Acadia represented themselves well, garnering interest and respect from other students and professors alike. The after hours activities were equally rewarding and enjoyable because it gave us a chance to get out and not only socialize with our academic peers, but we also got a chance to get a taste of the Sydney nightlife.

Cape Breton University did a wonderful job of hosting this event, and I feel that UPEI has a tough act to follow (but I know they're up for the challenge!) Regretfully this was my last year for being able to attend this conference, but I honestly can't think of a better send off.

## LUNCH AND LETTERS

**MICHAEL DEVINE**  
**"BOXWHATBOX IN FINLAND:  
 NEW DIRECTIONS IN CANADIAN  
 ACTING TRAINING"**

By Tessa Sheppard

To kick off the winter term's Lunch and Letters series, a small yet keen group gathered to hear Michael Devine's talk entitled "BOXWHATBOX in Finland: New Directions in Canadian Actor Training." Devine explained a new methodology in actor training (BOXWHATBOX) which he developed in Finland, and demonstrated the usefulness of employing the methodology in the field of Canadian acting.

Basically, Devine explained, BOXWHATBOX is based upon the notion that it is more beneficial and efficient for actors to be trained in a non-linear manner, as opposed to the more traditional manner that is typically employed in Canada, which is based on such things as

line memorization and the reliance on text. He explained that the result of more linear actor training is a "panic reaction" and not theatre, and he therefore developed a number of exercises for students to begin "thinking outside the box" and to learn how to approach acting in a way that is far more physical and playful.

Devine's non-linear exercises, which he has put into practice in a number of Eastern European countries, include the familiar "leap frog" as well as "wheelbarrow" and other games involving tossing around a ball. By using physical and playful techniques, and by creating a physical vocabulary (which is universal), Devine is able to work with actors using very little English. Ultimately, BOXWHATBOX meshes Canadian techniques with other cultural techniques, creating a bridge between his culture and the cultures of the places he visits. Devine noted that the methodology is equally beneficial in Canadian acting training, where language barriers might not exist, but where actors are still confined by traditional methods and "head acting," and often do not incorporate enough fun into the acting process.

Devine urged the importance of play as a component of BOXWHATBOX, something he feels is too often ignored in traditional Canadian actor training. He said that by engaging in simple exercises like tossing around a ball, or playing leap frog, actors are able to let their personalities come out, gain a better notion of continuity and rhythm, realize their vulnerabilities, and become better connected with their bodies, which are all crucial elements of the acting process.

Devine explained that BOXWHATBOX is also useful for teachers, professionals, and English as Second Language programs where difficulties in language often create barriers.

**ANTONIO FRANCESCHET:**

## THE POLITICS OF A GLOBAL 'RULE OF LAW'

By Janice Hudson

Since the American invasion of Iraq, the role ethics plays in global law and political decision-making continues to be a hot topic of discussion for university students and professors alike.

In his presentation, "The Politics of a Global 'Rule of Law,'" Political Science professor Dr. Antonio Franceschet shared with students and faculty members some of his ideas on the challenges that currently face both the function and the practise of global law.

Franceschet noted that there is a large gap between how global law is actually practised and how most people think it ought to function. There is often a divide between legal and ethical reasoning when countries decide whether or not to go to war, Franceschet argued, particularly large countries like the United States, which act as though they have "arbitrary freedom from the restraints of the law."

In essence, the rule of law is a frequently abused concept. Franceschet outlined the problems that arise when the law makers and law enforcers are the same people. While a standard of global legality may exist, it is difficult for many countries to uphold, as laws depend on self-enforcement. Instead of a universally accepted code of fairness, equality and justice, the rule of individual states seems to prevail even in today's political environments.

Citing Vietnam and Iraq as examples, Franceschet noted that liberal states often resort to legal measures in an effort to exercise their will over other nations. Conforming to traditional views of law that have little global scope, powerful countries continue to function as the judge, jury, and police.

In this respect, the most power-

ful nations do not practise an external concept of global law. Instead, they practise their own forms of exceptionalism where orders for prohibitions, wars, or embargos may be issued against specific nations while flagrant human rights abuses in other countries may be ignored outright. The lack of what Franceschet terms a "common internal constraint" means that more countries may attempt to mimic the arbitrary practice of exceptionalism in their foreign policies, particularly in their disputes with other nations.



### THOMAS MERTON: "BEATNICK, PEACENICK, TRAPPIST MONK"

By Tessa Sheppard

On March 16, as the final installment of the 2004-2005 Lunch and Letter series, Dr. Bruce Matthews gave an interesting talk on Thomas Merton (1915-1968), accomplished writer and Trappist monk. Matthews gave a brief biography of Merton, and also provided the audience with a glimpse into some of his beautiful poetry and journal entries.

Matthews explained that it was difficult for Merton to gain acceptance into the Roman Catholic monastic order, and the Franciscans turned him down due to his questionable past as a "fratboy" and rumours of an illegitimate child. He

was eventually accepted by the Trappists, an order Merton was attracted to due to the "stark simplicity" of the life of the monks, and the Romantic ideologies they embodied.

During the twenty-seven years Merton lived at the Gethsemani Abbey, he wrote a great deal on the lives of the Trappist monks. The accounts, Matthews said, show both the difficulty of their minimalist lives and the rewarding nature of it. At the Abbey, Merton became equally involved in the "life happening outside," and became increasingly concerned with issues of poverty, civil rights, secularization, and the Vietnam War. It was during this time, Matthews noted, that Merton became known as a "rebel monk." Through his activism and the travels that came with it Merton began to make the crossover from Catholicism to Buddhism and Hinduism.

Matthews described Merton as being filled with "youthful uncertainty," which later developed into a more mature dedication to improving life. He was greatly concerned with the treatment of the socially marginalized and ethnic minorities, and believed that the way to change the world was to "change people's hearts." Merton, according to Matthews, was a fascinating and gifted man with a unique personality, and his thoughtful outlook on life touched the lives of many people both within and outside of the religious community.

In his fifty-two years of life, Merton wrote nearly seventy books, a number of essays, and hundreds of poems (most of which were published posthumously) on a wide range of topics. His most famous book is *The Seven Storey Mountain*, an autobiography written when he was merely twenty-seven years old.



## EVENTS

### ACADIA'S NEW WRITING CENTRE: AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN AHERN

By Erin Mullen

I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with Dr. Stephen Ahern to discuss his role as coordinator of Acadia's new Writing Centre and to learn about the benefits this Centre is now providing to students on campus. Currently located in the Students' Union Building, The Writing Centre was established to help develop the communication life skills that are so important to students when they are in school as well as later in life. Dr. Ahern has been teaching writing skills for ten years now and has, through his composition and upper-level English classes, helped students from most departments at Acadia to grasp the proper techniques for writing. Because of his background teaching communication skills as well as his experience as a professional editor, Dr. Ahern is well qualified to run the new Writing Centre.

The main service of the Centre is to show students how to improve their writing in a one-on-one, informal, non-threatening environment. Students from all departments can come to the Centre with their academic essays, professional writing tasks such as resumes, and even for help in writing their theses. While the peer tutors assist the undergraduate students with their work, Dr. Ahern personally attends to those needing help with their Master's theses. When a student decides to visit the Centre for help with a specific assignment, it is crucial that she comes with a basic sense of the assignment she wants help with. While the peer tutors will do their best to help a student, they are not



*Photo Credit: Sandra Symonds*

there to write her paper for her or teach the course material. Nor are they a proofreading service; they can help correct problems a student's had in the past but they cannot actively revise or correct a paper in detail. Their goal is to teach the essential skills that a student can apply in every writing situation she faces in future.

The Centre currently has on staff during the school year ten peer tutors to help with undergraduate students. These tutors come from many different departments including English, History, Psychology, Political Science, and Business, and they were all trained by Dr. Ahern himself. Dr. Ahern also personally assists the faculty members and graduate students who come to the Centre for help polishing their writing. In his work as coordinator of The Writing Centre, Dr. Ahern currently runs various workshops and gives presentations about writing skills and the importance of those skills. He is also intending to perform in-class visits concerning these skills, and a number of faculty members are already incorporating the Centre into their courses by sending students there for help. The future of The Writing Centre includes a new

home in the Learning Commons as well as a resource library containing writing guides and recommended online resources. A testament to the Centre's success so far is the fact that many of the students who have benefitted from the Centre's help are returning again and again. To take advantage of the help The Writing Centre can provide, call and book an appointment for help with your next assignment.

#### **TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT OR FOR INFORMATION:**

Telephone:  
585-2155

Email:  
[writingcentre@acadiau.ca](mailto:writingcentre@acadiau.ca)

Or drop by  
the Michener Lounge  
in the Student Union Building

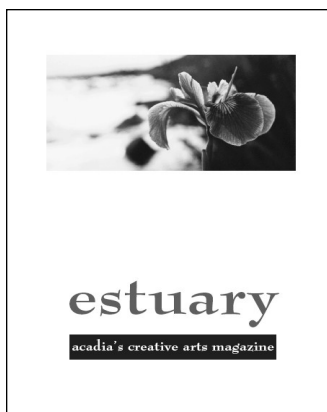
## ESTUARY LAUNCH

By Jennifer Knoch

On Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> *estuary* had a coffee haus style launch to celebrate the release of this year's print edition. The launch was also a tribute to *estuary*'s fifth anniversary, an important landmark in the struggle to keep a magazine alive. The coffee haus style was a throwback to the launches of the sixties when the magazine was known as *Amethyst*. The purpose of those launches was to expose the Acadia population to the talent of its artists and to encourage an artistic discourse on campus. Over forty years later, the *estuary* staff members were still trying to accomplish that feat.

The event was held in the Michener Lounge, and featured readings by published authors in the print edition. The night also featured three musical performances of mostly original work, in an attempt to add another

dimension to the evening and showcase some of Acadia's musical talent. Despite *estuary*'s low profile outside of the English department, the event garnered a respectable crowd of approximately fifty people. The crowd was diverse, including faculty and students from many disciplines. Each guest received a copy of the magazine free of charge. Copies of the magazine are now available from



the English Department and the Info desk in the Student Union Building.

As editor, I am extremely pleased with the outcome of the event. The launch was very much a trial run and it was encouraging to see so many people come out and provide so much positive feedback. I recently did some research on *estuary*'s history. More than anything, what my research revealed was the continual battle against student apathy for the arts and the struggle to sustain a successful literary magazine. In the face of such a historical precedent, the success of the event was reassuring. Despite often being relegated to the shadows, the creative arts are still alive and flourishing at Acadia, and hopefully will be for many years to come.

*Check out this semester's  
online edition:*

<http://axe.acadiau.ca/estuary>  
*Issues of the print edition are  
available from Chris Reed.*

### PROMINENT SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC FARAH MENDLESOHN VISITS ACADIA

By Andrea Leathley

On 8 March, Farah Mendlesohn, professor of American Studies at Middlesex University in London, England, gave a talk on children's science fiction at Acadia University. Mendlesohn is a prominent contributor to science fiction criticism. She is features editor of *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, as well as editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. Mendlesohn is currently working on *The Inter-Galactic Playground of Children's Science Fiction* to be published by McFarland Press later this year.

During her talk, Mendlesohn claimed that children's science

fiction "doesn't feel quite right" and she posits whether children's science fiction actually exist. Mendlesohn says that in the 1960s adult science fiction and children's science fiction separated in their content: adult science fiction began to posit those "what if?" questions (ie. what if there were a third sex? Or, what if there were no men?), whereas children's science fiction (with a few exceptions) has yet to tackle this thought experiment. For Mendlesohn, the "what if?" questions make science fiction exciting. She gave an outline of the elements of good science fiction plots: dissonance (sense that the world is not our own), rupture (the thing which changes the world we are in), resolution (how the rupture is sorted out), and consequence (the result or fallout from the rupture and resolution). Mendlesohn claims that children's science fiction lacks

consequence, which makes the plot unsatisfactory for the reader.

Mendlesohn outlined other reasons for the lack of satisfactory children's science fiction. One of these reasons has to do with the conception of the reading child versus the child reader. When considering reading material for a child reader, educational experts consider only two things: content and relevance. However, Mendlesohn claims that the reading child does not care about content or relevance; the reading child simply reads everything. She says, "If you only give a 3 year old what is relevant to a 3 year old, they will never be a 4 year old." She critiques the conception of the child reader and claims that it is this conception (along with the fact that adult science fiction writers do not often write for children) that prevents children's science fiction from reaching its full potential.