

# VOICE 4

∞ VOLUME 21 ∞ SPRING 2014 ∞ DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & THEATRE ∞ ACADIA ∞



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*POETRY ON TAP  
FROM ACADIA ENGLISH SOCIETY  
TO A GALAXY NEAR YOU*

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*Scorched*

7 Stories

Minifest 2014

Playwright Emil Sher

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## THEATRE REVIEWS

### **SCORCHED**

(Directed by Michael Devine)

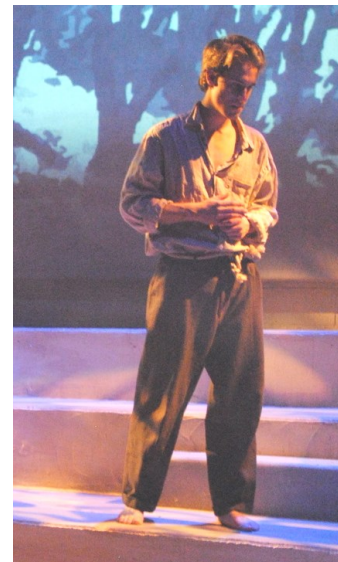
by Jenn Galambos  
and Meaghan Smith

I have seen many of the Acadia Theatre's Company's productions throughout my time at Acadia, and I was excited to see Wajdi Mouawad's *Scorched* on stage as I've read both the original French play and seen the movie *Incendies*.

Although I'm not the hugest fan of the story itself I found that the Theatre department did an amazing job dealing with both the subject matter and the (at times) confusing storylines. Flipping the room around gave a disorienting start to the play, which aided the further confusion felt by the twins in the play. The use of practical effects like the buckets of "water" was a really interesting touch to help pull the audience into the story.

Though all of the performances were stellar in the play, Theodore Saunders' performance as the conflicting Nihad /Abou Tareq was mesmerizing. I felt uncomfortable laughing or smiling at his jokes and he played the line between horrifying and charming very well. He was captivating as he drew the audience in with his

monologue, and as he lazily aimed the gun at the audience in a slow, sweeping movement, I tensed in my chair as I felt a very real threat and sense of danger as he subtly chiselled away at the fourth wall that stood between us.



Theodore Saunders (photo Leah Erdos)

Both Tesia Brown and Malia Rogers were heartbreakingly stunning in their portrayal of two women faced with incredible loss, and the strength that was required of them to continue. The moment when Malia Rogers sang was particularly beautiful and devastating in the same moment. Audrey Eastwood, Tesia Brown, and Charissa Sanche were amazing at portraying the different transitions of Nawal's

life, and her evolution as a character was carefully and clearly depicted through the three embodiments of her. Overall, *Scorched* was a moving performance done by the entire cast. Acadia Theatre tackled a difficult and punch-you-in-the-gut story, and their bravery paid off with their incredible performance.



Malia Rogers and Tesia Brown (photo by Leah Erdos)



**7 STORIES**  
 (Directed by Robert Seale)  
 by Ceileigh Mangalam

Isn't it absurd to be alive? That, at least, seems to be the initial conclusion of *7 Stories*, the Acadia Theatre Company's last show of the year directed by Robert Seale. The ninety-minute play, written by Morris Panych in the 1980s, is a comedy, as opposed to the heavier plays that the ATC has traditionally performed. Indeed, after the sadness, despair, and emotional turbulence of *Marat/Sade*, *Scorched*, *Antigone*, *Six Characters Looking for an Author*, and even the dark humour of *Jacques and his Master*, it was sometimes hard for the audience to laugh with complete abandon at the capers of the ridiculous characters on stage.

The play begins darkly enough, with Ben Thomas, ATC's resident Everyman, as the very image of a suicidal man taking one last look to the heavens before plunging to certain death. The gravity is broken, however, and continues to be broken again and again by the residents of the seven rooms between the windows by which Everyman perches.

First to smash this ominous mood are Charlotte (Haley Doherty) and Rodney (Nick Cox), a randy couple whose attraction to each other is based solely on mutual hate and a need to feel alive by coming close to death. Their joyfully murderous relationship breaks the Everyman out of his suicidal deliberation, and thus begins his conversation with the residents of the seventh floor. A fascinating aspect of ATC's performance is the doubling-up of casting, so that each actor plays two characters, with the exception of Ben Thomas, who is the only constant face. This creates another level of hilarity and nuance in the play, as disparate characters become linked by their common performers, making their various quirks clash with each other.



Graham Bolton, Isla Healey, Nick Cox & Ben Thomas (photo by Susann Hudson)

One by one, Thomas' Man On A Ledge converses with Leonard (Theodore Saunders), a paranoid psychiatrist in need of sleep and new trousers; Marshall (Graham Bolton), an actor turned con-man whose mustache is as false as his assumed persona; Jennifer (Kaitlin Ead), an enthusiastic and very Russian party-hopper; Michael (Cox) and Joan (Isla Healey), one the super-sensitive and sunglassed fashionista redecorating Joan's apartment, the other his adoring (and enduring) devotee in all things High Fashion; Percy (Bolton), a dedicated trend hunter who possesses the emphatic inflection and cruelly stretched vowels of the ultimate valley-boy; Al (Saunders), the host of numerous parties complicated by the fact that he hates company; and Rachel (Ead), whose deep South, lilting twang is exceeded only by her faith in the Lord.

Finally, the would-be Suicidal Man speaks with Nurse Wilson (Healy)—who professes herself a humanitarian and yet has a morbidly gleeful fascination with sudden death—and Lillian (Doherty), the hundred-year-old lady who convinces the play's Everyman to make the jump at last, but with an umbrella for safety's sake.

Only in the Everyman's conversation with Lillian does the audience discover the reason for his attempted suicide. Thomas' character cannot remember what day it is, and the distress this lack of knowledge causes him points to how much he relies upon having concrete definitions of every aspect of his life. To him, the only escape from all these confinements is straight down, to the relatively unknown and undefined territory of After Death.

*7 Stories* contrasts the ridiculousness of life's rules and codes with the equal absurdities of trying to escape them, embodying the fine balance in the Man, who is literally poised between the two courses of action. The play suggests that he remain there, but rather than dither

plays continued to showcase the unique genre tastes of the Acadia Theatre Company's senior directing students, as well as the emerging acting talent in newcomers to the program. While Minifest has in the past been known to provide welcome comic relief from the

sure to rankle a certain conniving divorced husband.

After the whiplash wit of Saunders' *Good Tickets* comes the sobering topic of abusive relationships and smoking addiction in director Tyler Craig's *Leaving Nic*. Malia Rogers plays Sue, a conflicted young woman trying to reconcile her smoking habit with her fiancé's order to quit cold turkey. The extreme nature of Sue's smoking addiction is visible in her interactions with Connor Lafarga's sleazy Nic, the human embodiment of nicotine. Lafarga's lines include all the classics of abusers: "you need me," and "If you leave me, I'll die." Sue's desperation to quit and her desire to find equilibrium finally end with an argument from Nic she can't refuse: "I can keep you thin."

Following Craig's exploration of addiction is Hayleigh Beals' play about how we process loneliness and death, *Lobster Man*. Colin McGuire and Haley Doherty play Mark and Christa, the (presumably) last two living people on earth after an apocalyptic disaster. To distract Christa from her recurrent seizures of pain, Mark spins a tale about Lobster Man, a stylish spirit of the sea who heals the sick. Later, when Lobster Man (played successively by Kira Awrey and Alisha Mitchell) arrives to deliver Christa of her suffering, Mark is surprisingly reluctant to acknowledge his character's legitimacy, for fear that he will be left alone forever.

Sarah Thomas, director of *10,000 Cigarettes*, returns to the topic of smoking with unprecedented and unrestrained glamour. This most abstract set features four outsize prop cigarettes (one still smoldering red and one stubbed in an upright zigzag) placed with a convincing haphazardness around



Nick Cox and Haley Doherty (photo by Susann Hudson)

between the two options, instead simply inhabit the space between them, which seems as impossible in its enactment as it appears desirable as a solution. *7 Stories* presents living to the audience in all its odd traditions, and suggests that they stop doing it so quickly, and perhaps just float along for a while.

## MINIFEST 2014

by Ceileigh Mangalam

To the joy of many an art-loving student this year, Minifest took place in January, three months ahead of its traditional, early April running time. The annual performance of five one-act

hard-hitting full-length ATC shows, this year's exposition sacrificed quite a few laughs in favour of exploring challenging topics like nicotine addiction, abusive relationships, isolation, and death. Minifest kicked off with *Good Tickets*, directed by Theodore Saunders, in which the devastatingly elegant Isla Healy plays a recent divorcée attending the ballet, exasperated by the arrogant (but nice-smelling) Wall Street yuppie (Blake Ward) who occupies the seat next to her. After a few one-sided conversations punctuated by some choice expletives from Ms. Healy, however, the two characters' differences unexpectedly resolve in a most desirable understanding, the nature of which is



the stage. Sara Lobraico, Kaitlin Ead, Audrey Eastwood, and Charissa Sanche step daintily over these tobacco deadfalls as they exhale praise about the versatility, style, glitz, and sexiness of cigarettes. The speech of these four smoking divas becomes progressively hoarse as they slowly reveal their collective goal to achieve a whole two minute's worth of abstinence from smoking.

The last play, *Murder of a Minimalist*, delivers the most extensive cast of characters, each with their own one-liners and slapstick routine. Ben Thomas plays Larry, an average citizen who is convinced that his decision to report a crime will result in his own murder. What follows is his hilarious discovery of the true characters of the people he considers his closest friends. While George Flanagan, Morgan Wright, Nick Cox, Nicky Lewis, and Graham Bolton pull off stunning examples of greedy, pandering socialites, Kate Corrigan steals the show with her side-splitting impression of a forthright latina maid, Marta, whose energetic desire for a green card is exceeded only by her ambition to seduce Larry into one-night matrimony. Larry's written mandate for his death to be useful in some way is foiled by his false compatriots' money-grubbing intentions, who eventually settle Larry's legacy in a colonic irrigation clinic.

*Murder of a Minimalist's* final moment is a full-stop freeze, evocative of a half-hour sitcom accompanied by a laugh track. The lights fade on the smiling, triumphant faces of the cast (with the exception of the recently deceased Larry), leaving the audience to chuckle appreciatively at the gentle ending of a comparatively intense set of plays. Minifest and its participants continue to amaze, and it will be a long wait until ATC's next show.



### UNPACKING THE HOLOCAUST: PLAYWRIGHT EMIL SHER ON HIS STAGE ADAPTATION OF *HANA'S SUITCASE*

by Leah Erdos

The arrival of Emil Sher was met with some trepidation by the Acadia Students—the majority of us having been to Holocaust talks, we were prepared for a similar experience: equal in its educational value and heartbreaking guilt. Contrarily, we were met with a story of joy and hope.

Following the story of *Hana's Suitcase*, by Karen Lavine, Sher traces the discovery of Hana's story as Fumiko Ishioka (a young Japanese school teacher) and her students piece together just one of the 6 million stories lost in the Holocaust. Exploring human hatred and intolerance through the eyes of a little girl, Sher's play sought to draw connections between the past and present using the tangible anti-Semitism to examine much deeper, and still very current, human issues. During his talk, Sher stressed the importance of learning from history to shape our future and he throws the audience back and forth through time, consciously blurring the lines between past and present. Emil

Sher's talk, surrounding the creation and production of his play *Hana's Suitcase*, provided insight into his discoveries as a playwright during the creation of the play and the problems that he faced trying to make something as unspeakable as the holocaust accessible for discussion to people of all ages. With an unexpected sense of humor, Emil Sher shared his struggles and successes, drawing a road map over the rocky terrain for all us young aspiring writers to emulate.

Extraordinarily Sher turned what could have easily been an ode to the 'perils of hatred' into a story of discovery and hope, exploring the past as a means of understanding the present. Emil Sher showed us the power of the playwright, unraveling the close bond between tragedy and humor to reveal the foundations of the human spirit.





## THE ANNUAL ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

This year the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference unfolded from Friday March 14<sup>th</sup> to Sunday March 16<sup>th</sup> at Dalhousie University. The Acadia presenters and attendees offer accounts of the experience:

### What will you take away from the conference?

**BLAKE:** Even though I did not present a paper at the conference, I am extremely glad I was able to attend. The experience was immensely positive, and has inspired me to be a larger part of the process in coming years. The AAUEC is an excellent way to find out what other English students are exploring, which helped me to place my own work in a greater perspective. At a school like Acadia, with a relatively small group of students, I believe it is important to pay attention to what is going on elsewhere. It was unsurprising to find out that

Acadia students stood out, both by producing quality papers and by conducting themselves in a professional way. I was proud to be a part of Acadia's group, and look forward to submitting my own paper next year.

### What is the idea behind such a gathering?

**LOGAN:** The AAUEC is an excellent opportunity for English students to experience what it is like to participate in an academic conference. It allows students the opportunity to take their work beyond the classroom and share it with an unfamiliar audience of other English literature enthusiasts, usually at a different university. This offers many opportunities: it's an excellent chance to refine presentation skills, a key venue for observing what other students happen to be working on, and a safe entry point into the broader academic world. Through

observing, assessing, and posing questions about each other's work, students help both each other and themselves: others, by giving them the opportunity to explain and justify their works, while benefiting from possible ways to improve; themselves, by gaining a deeper understanding of their peers' styles and methods. Because the conference draws students and faculty members from across Atlantic Canada, it's a great place to meet and interact with a wide range of like-minded people from all different schools. There also comes a sense of pride in representing your own particular university at such a large gathering. The AAUEC is a fun and enriching experience that any English undergrad student should seriously consider.

### What is the best part about connecting with students from other universities?

**JENN:** AAUEC offers a wonderful experience to connect with students and faculty from other universities. It's exciting to be a part of such a refreshing environment as there is the opportunity to see what ideas other students have been pursuing. It provides the opportunity to meet people who are equally excited about English, and to see a great caliber of work that sparks not only interest but further inspiration to continue exploring the field in an academic setting. The conference generates not only compelling discussion on engaging topics, but also builds bridges of community between different universities. AAUEC is a wonderful opportunity to make connections with other students and professors that would otherwise be inaccessible.

**What was the experience of delivering your paper and what was the audience response ?**

**SHILO:** What was it like? Well to be honest, I was nervous about presenting my paper in a conference setting, something that I had never experienced before. I was grateful that we had a practice round at Acadia before the conference, and that I had a mini support group among my fellow Acadia students. Watching other Acadia students present their papers was both helpful and intimidating. What if I stumbled over words? Or what if my voice was shaking the whole time?

What if I couldn't answer questions? Essentially, what if I didn't measure up? But with conviction I took a solid breath before I began reading my paper, and it was great.

I enjoyed reading my paper and sharing my ideas with a group of fellow academics. The best part was looking up and seeing people smiling at me, and even nod in agreement while I read. And then the question period came. My panel sat as a group and took questions simultaneously, which I believe really opened up the discussion, as there was much more back and forth between the presenters. It also helped establish a connection between the three papers that were read, and the general concepts that were being shared. I feel that my questioners asked some difficult questions, but I stuck to my original ideas and argued my points, answering

as much as I could. Generally the audience response was attentive, inquisitive, and generally responsive to my essay. I hope that I am lucky enough to experience the AAUEC again next year.

**What do you feel that Acadia brought to the conference?**

**MEAGHAN:** After attending for three years running the thing I've noticed about Acadia is that we always brings a level of professionalism and polish that is not universally true for other schools. Although many students from other schools were amazing

**Was there any unique event/ happening that stands out?**

**ALLIE:** A particularly unique happening that stands out to me from this year's AAUEC was the dance that followed the banquet. Not only was there a professional balloon artist who made exceptionally crafted balloon swords and dragons, but the music was played by a live band and many people were up and dancing. The fact that the band played a wide variety of songs only added to the fun of it all, for some were better for singing along and others simply for dancing. The majority

of our Acadia group was on the dance floor and it was so lovely to see everyone have such a good time and really relax after a long day of presentation-related stress.



*Shilo Meaghan Logan Jenn Allie*

presenters, Acadia continues to arrive at events and present ourselves as a team. All of our presenters reached the same level of excellence and we even wore our matching cardigans for the welcome event the first night. Our small campus atmosphere helps our students feel comfortable going away and the trip becomes an outing among friends. I love that I've been able to attend this event three years in a row and I know that I will have fun and I will be comfortable because I have a team of supporters built in with my fellow Acadia presenters. I am proud of how amazing Acadia has done at the AAUEC and that I've gotten to be part of it.

It was also a particular treat to see the professors from other universities showing off their best moves and interacting with their students in such a care-free fashion. Perhaps the best moment of the dance was when the band played The Beatles' "Hey, Jude," and we all sang along at the top of our lungs. A few of us (alright, it was me) even went so far as to attempt an imitation of Paul McCartney's vocal riffing near the end of the song. Needless to say, many laughs were shared and it truly was a fantastic experience to finish off an already wonderful day.







## And There Was Much Rejoicing: The Sixth Annual Conference of the Atlantic Mediaeval Association

*by Alexandra Fournier  
and Marc Muschler*

Acadia University's department of English and Theatre had the pleasure of hosting the Annual Conference of the Atlantic Mediaeval Association over the weekend of September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Following the overwhelming success of the conference in 2012, Acadia was chosen once again to host the largest Mediaeval Conference on the Canadian East Coast.

Over the course of two days, mediaeval scholars representing institutions throughout the Maritimes attended the conference and presented on topics varying from manuscript studies to the works of Malory and Chaucer. Not only are these conferences vital in order to establish a strong mediaeval community on the East Coast, but also to perpetuate an interest in the field of Mediaeval Studies.

Attended by professors, students, and post-graduates alike, the conference was initiated by plenary speaker Fiona Tolhurst on Friday evening with her presentation entitled "The Trouble with Margery:

Underestimating and Overreading Margery Kempe." Dr. Tolhurst is the Harrison McCain Visiting Fellow for the 2013-14 academic year and her presentation shed light on the interesting and somewhat controversial historical figure of Margery Kempe, who was renowned for her piety as well as her somewhat eccentric worshipping of Christ. Many of her exploits were written down during her time, making her one of the most well documented female figures in the later mediaeval period. In her presentation, Tolhurst suggests that Margery's eccentricities are typically over exaggerated by the predominately male academic community of the twentieth century, resulting in an inaccurate and unflattering representation of the iconic figure.

Saturday was filled with mostly conference presentations, including several presentations by Acadia University staff and students. Dr. Kevin Whetter, the department of English and Theatre's mediaeval specialist, presented a paper entitled "Paul Newman and the Holy Grail," which provided new insights into the representation

of the Grail within the iconic classic film, *The Silver Chalice*. Graduate students Rebecca Cuevas, Ian Brunton, and Marc Muschler gave articulate presentations on their own Mediaeval research as well, including topics such as Saint Augustine and the rhetorical rules for composition, Galahad's role in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and the representations of contrasting heroic archetypes in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. The conference gave the graduate students in particular the opportunity to field and answer questions pertaining to their topics, as well as experience with conference-style presentations.

All in all, it was a lovely weekend that demonstrated the camaraderie and prestige of the mediaeval community on the Canadian East Coast. And there was indeed much rejoicing (enough to make even Malory proud).





## ∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

### WANDA CAMPBELL

by Jenn Galambos

Wanda Campbell debuted her first novel, *Hat Girl*, in the KCIC auditorium on Sept. 30 to a full crowd of friends, fiction lovers, and supporters. The reading demonstrated her beautiful, poetic prose as Wanda is a serene and engaging reader. She introduced her novel by sporting a wonderful hat to connect herself with her heroine, Pertice. The readings from *Hat Girl* revealed the work to be a fantastic novel which inspires inner beauty through the character's adventure as she learns to recognize and discover her own individual sense of self through the wearing of hats. Although she begins as a person who adamantly "does not wear hats," Pertice grows to appreciate the sense of flair and transformative aspects that wearing hats can inspire.

Through the exterior beauty, her confidence expands to develop a beauty that is both bold and unapologetic. Pertice learns to embody an extraordinary bravery as she allows herself to be shaped by her surface level appearance in order to appreciate the constant and dormant beauty that dwells within her. Wanda's novel inspires the reader to be bold and to take chances as Pertice's bravery to abandon her safe and unsatisfying life leads to a spontaneous adventure the reader can take part in.



Pertice's leap into the unknown follows a mystery that leads to personal fulfilment and daily excitement as she explores the mystery of her secret cottage bequeathing and hat gifting benefactor.

*Hat Girl* is written as an appreciation of the fluid reflection and connection between exterior and inner beauty, and the confidence it requires to let the self be seen. It encourages people to fill a space unflinchingly and to avoid being small and safe. It demonstrates the importance and courage it takes to unflinchingly follow your desires and dreams, especially when there is no way to know where they might lead.

### LYNN DAVIES & CARMELITA MCGRATH

by Sean Ryan

On a beautiful fall day at the Vaughan Library's quiet reading room, Acadia was host to two critically acclaimed poets who were promoting their newly published books of poetry: Lynn Davies and Carmelita McGrath. Both readers drew heavily on real world experiences.

Hailing from New Brunswick and the daughter of book

store owners, Lynn was reading from her newly published *How the Gods Pour Tea*. This is her third book of poetry following *The Bridge That Carries the Road* in 1999 and *Where Sound Pools* in 2005. All three have received great critical acclaim. Featuring poems drawing on the natural beauty of the world to poems about wondrous realms of fantasy, Lynn's first publication in over eight years was a great pleasure to listen to.

Carmelita McGrath, already a very well established poet and author, delighted with readings from her new publication titled *Escape Velocity*. A winner of The Atlantic Poetry Prize, Carmelita has published many works including two previous collections of poetry, a collection of short stories, and a Children's book. *Escape Velocity* features stories of ordinary events that become profound lessons and ruminations on life.

Both poets read several selections, alternating every few poems, which made the event seem more interesting as the change in voice was always welcome. The highlight of Lynn's reading was, to me, the poem "Footing" which was about the journey of getting lost in a dictionary. Starting at one word



and just following the path through the dictionary until you are well and truly lost: anyone who has experienced this would have a good laugh at some of the weird words you can come upon.

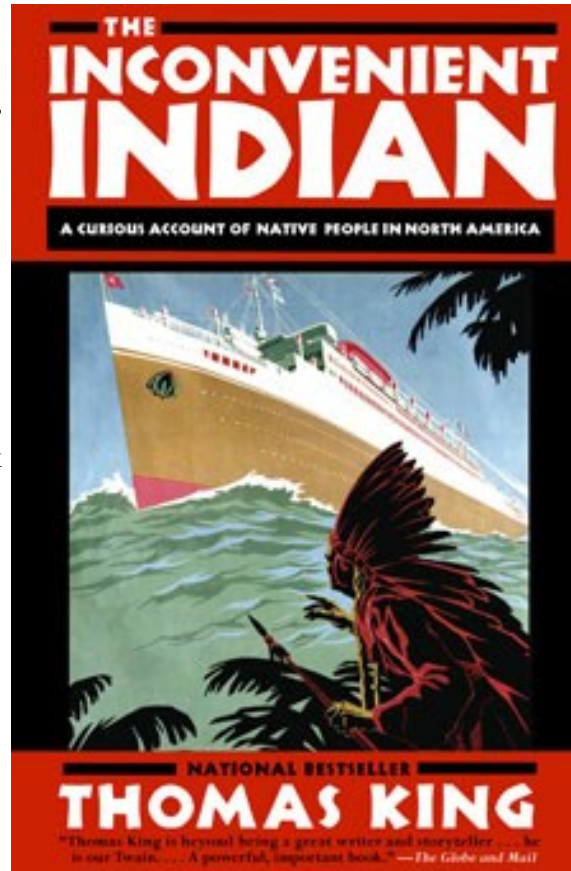
It was difficult to pick a favourite poem by Carmelita as so many of her poems resonate within the sphere of real life (though who can say that poetry is not real life?). Two memorable readings were “My Father’s Ghost” and “Matthew’s Dream,” one an almost elegiac work about lost opportunities to seek wisdom from one’s father, and the other based upon a drawing of a dream of Newfoundland and Labrador drawn by an artist thousands of miles away. Both works are hauntingly beautiful.

Following the readings, listeners were encouraged to ask questions, most of which came from professors, I am somewhat embarrassed to say. Lynn was given a chance to elaborate on her poem “Untethered” which was in the form of a Glosa: a Spanish form of poetry using four lines from another poet to begin the poem. Lynn professed that it is a difficult form to use and this attempt followed many less successful attempts. Both poets also offered advice on writing, from how to break writer’s block to what form of literature a poem might take. Lynn and Carmelita also attempted to answer some very difficult questions, such as “How do you know when a poem is done?” Both authors answered admirably but neither answer really solved the question—this is to be expected of such a difficult and personal question. Overall, the reading was a very pleasant and interesting way to spend a beautiful fall afternoon.

## THOMAS KING

by Ceileigh Mangalam

On October 10, Thomas King gave a reading of his new work, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native Peoples in North America*, to the most well-attended Authors@Acadia event of 2013.



Reading under the vaulted ceiling of the Festival Theatre Building, King shared stories from his book *A Short History of Indians in Canada*, as well as a few tales about his development into an activist for First Nations people. King’s humour and wit charmed the audience from the start, which made his eloquent points about the oppression of indigenous people all the more poignant.

Thomas King was introduced by Andrea Schwenke-Wyile and

Herb Wyile of the Acadia English Department, as well as representatives from Acadia’s Indigenous Students Society. King’s talk was preceded by a smudging ceremony, performed to cleanse the participants and send prayers to the Creator for the success of the event. After the smudging, Carolyn Landry led those onstage in a performance of the Honour Song, essentially concluding Thomas King’s welcome to traditional Mi’qmaq grounds.

King’s talk followed Acadia’s First Aboriginal Art and Literature Mawio’mi (Gathering) which drew Native artists from throughout the province to celebrate Acadia University’s Memorandum of Understanding with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq (CMM). The agreement provides a basis on which Acadia and CMM will work together to further aboriginal youth education.

Despite turning 70 in April of 2013, King’s voice was strong and reached far into the corners of the Festival Theatre. As an accomplished tale-spinner, he had no trouble filling his speaking time with anecdotes. King related several tales about his development from a frustrated Cherokee university student to a First Nations activist who learned that humour was a much better way to make effective points than sheer anger and volume.

One particular excerpt from King’s works demonstrated the essence of King’s style, which pairs wrenching truths about the extermination of indigenous culture with ingeniously comic situations. *A Short History of Indians in Canada* compared the slaughter of passenger pigeons in North America to the slower, but still rapid oppression and



death of aboriginal culture in the present day. For those who were unfamiliar with the tenor of King's writing, this one piece effectively displayed his skill in making points with elegance and dead-on accuracy.

Throughout King's presentation, his care for the status of First Nations rights and legislation was palpable. He spoke briefly about his opinion that "it wouldn't be the end of the world if the Canadian government started to honour treaties" by giving land ownership deeds back to indigenous tribes. King also related several stories about his and others' lives that showcased incidents of prejudice and downright racism. There were many questions from the audience as to his specific style of writing, for instance, how to do it and how to approach delicate issues.

At the end of King's talk, a Thank You song was performed by Cathy Martin as King was presented with some pieces from the aboriginal arts fair that preceded the reading. His presence and speech at Acadia was a privilege to experience, and an excellent reminder of the empathetic power of words.

## SHEREE FITCH

by Meaghan Smith

If you're like me, you grew up with Sheree Fitch's wonderfully rambunctious poetry and nonsensical stories. *Toes in my Nose*, *There Were Monkeys in My Kitchen*, and *Mable Murple* were probably household phrases that only grew more dear over the years. On November 13th, 2013, the energy and sheer ecstatic joy of words in those children's poetry books was easy to hear in Sheree Fitch's own

speech. Listening to Fitch speak, it was difficult to remember that she wasn't reading one of her poems.

Fitch's talk, "Utterature for All Ages: Telling Stories & Playing with Language," began with her declaration that she was at Acadia to talk about joy. She explained how she had fallen in love with words early in her childhood, and that joy had buoyed her through tough times as well as easier ones. Fitch emphasized her tendency to turn everyday situations into rhymes, often by repeating words until they became unrecognizable, and only the sounds of the letters were left over.

During the talk, Fitch also read from her newest children's book, *Night Sky Wheel Ride*

tribute to Fitch's closeness with her brother and his memory.

Fitch also spoke about *Pluto's Ghost*, one of her more rare young adult publications, which was included in Andrea Schwenke-Wyile's reading list for her Canadian Children's Literature course. Far removed from the joyful rhythms of most of Fitch's children's books, *Pluto's Ghost* tells the tale of Jake Upshore, a high school student who goes on a search for his girlfriend, Skye, when he learns she is pregnant and may be planning to abort their child. The novel is expertly written in the voice of a young man with learning disabilities as he tries to figure out his academic and social life. The story has in-



(2012), her talent for turning words into songs evident in the title. The story follows the adventures of a young brother and sister who travel through the rides and delights of a fairground, which quickly evolves into a fantastical journey through the night sky and stars. Fitch stated that the book was dedicated to her brother who had passed away. The storybook's call-and-answer refrain, "Are we brave enough, Brother?/ Sister, are you ready to fly?" was a touching

credible depth and discusses many of the unseen issues faced by young people in Canada. Fitch also stopped by the Canadian Children's Lit class to discuss the novel in a classroom setting and try out a couple of assignments, like writing Skye the unheard girlfriend's point of view.

Fitch's utter sincerity and enthusiasm for her work and her readers throughout her talk was nearly tangible. Fitch's speech ranged from life philosophies to

fond (and not-so-fond) memories of Acadia, to anecdotes about Margaret Atwood and teaching English in the Northern Territories. Her presence in the KCIC auditorium was electric and magnetic and bursting with joy, and it was a privilege to see such a paragon of childhood memories up close and so freely personal.



**CATHERINE BUSH**  
by Ceileigh Mangalam

On November 20th of 2013, Catherine Bush visited Acadia in the reading room of the Vaughan Memorial Library to introduce her new book, *Accusation*. This is Bush's fourth book, her career having begun with the publication of *Minus Time* in 1994. The story begins with Toronto journalist Sarah Wheeler, who meets Raymond Renaud, the director of an Ethiopian circus company. Renaud has been accused by his underage circus performers of abusing them, and they have since sought asylum in Australia. Wheeler decides to investigate Renaud's story, not out of philanthropy or even journalistic ambition, but a desire to retroactively

explore her own experience of accusation, in which a complete stranger blamed her for the theft of his wallet.

In the excerpt that Bush read from her novel, Wheeler drives Renaud from Toronto to Montreal. Bush's voice was measured and expressive, lending credence to her characters and weight to the questions they asked. Bush especially describes the gaps between the said and unsaid from Wheeler's point of view, strengthening the sense of uncertainty that pervades the entire story.

In her novel, Bush focuses on the effect that accusations can have on their subjects. Renaud's actual culpability is left vague and unresolved, leaving the reader to contemplate the power of the accusation itself in creating doubt where none existed before. Even if recanted, an accusation attains an independence from its origin, following its subject for the rest of his or her life. Woven into this thread of thought is the power of speech alone, and the lack of care with which people level accusations and judgments without thinking of future consequences.

**FIONA TOLHURST**  
by Sean Ryan

Taking place on a freezing January 23<sup>rd</sup> night, Dr. Tolhurst's talk—"Shakespeare as a (Not So Great) Playwright"—on the authorial credibility, co-authorship, and literary merit of Shakespeare was definitely worth the walk. Dr. Tolhurst, who students may remember as a guest lecturer from last semester or through her presence in some of Dr. Kevin Whetter's classes, spoke critically of the supposed superiority of Shakespeare over any other playwright of the period. The best way to

capture the spirit of her lecture is through a term that Dr. Tolhurst introduced herself: *Bardolatry*. Tolhurst describes *bardolatry* as "hero worship of Shakespeare," referring to the tendency to dismiss other playwrights simply because they are not Shakespeare! Dr. Tolhurst's contention was that William Shakespeare cannot be solely credited with many of the plays attributed to him, and other playwrights, namely George Peele and John Lyly, can have literary merit as well and are not dismissible solely because they are not Shakespeare. Tolhurst showed in detail how critics arbitrarily elevated a work if they thought—often incorrectly—Shakespeare's name was attached to it. The reverse was also true. Works by Shakespeare that were not known to be by him were dismissed.

Dr. Tolhurst conveyed her point through a lecture style presentation that also included several video clips of movie adaptations of Shakespearean plays—though one of the video clips started out accidentally as a noisy





sports broadcast, which was remedied only after Kevin Whetter had run out of jokes. Dr. Tolhurst also used select members for the audience including members of the English Society—Alexandra Fournier, Marc Muschler, Meaghan Smith, and Rebecca Caissie, and her daughter all did a fantastic and humorous job!—to act out scenes from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Lyly's *Galatea* in order to highlight the similarities between the two plays. The scenes also served to illustrate the quality of each piece, which tied in with one of Dr. Tolhurst's themes: that there are many great Renaissance plays other than Shakespeare's; critics and audiences just have to think outside the narrow Shakespearean box.

Overall, the lecture made for a very interesting evening as we learned about the co-authorship in Shakespearean plays, the merits of non-Shakespearean plays, and especially about the Toronto Maple Leafs.



**SUE GOYETTE**

*by Jenn Galambos*

Sue Goyette is a rock star of a poet. She effortlessly embodies grace and humour as she creates a comfortable and engaging environment for her audience. She believes in the importance of creating this interactive community as it is vital to connect the poet with the listeners. Existing

within that collective is where the poetry can be found, and it is through the unity created by the poem that those bonds are forged in cohesive discovery.

Through her reading, Sue demonstrated the patience of writing, and how a poet acts as a maker as she must bear witness unflinchingly in order to create. She constantly constructed a wonderful sense of community as her explanatory moments between poems refreshed the reading with sincere hilarity and authentic connections.

Her collection of poems, *Ocean*, was both melodic and moving as each poem ebbed and flowed, evoking the smell of salty waves combined with a deep longing to return to the sea. Her language served the landscape as she explored the essence of the sea and the deep emotions that are engrained within it. For Sue, the ocean has the ability to act as a metaphor to become universal for her readers. For those who have never witnessed the coastal shorelines, the ocean has the power to be transformed into a forest, space, prairies, or even something immaterial, such as death. The power of the ocean embodies a widespread vastness that we are constantly in the company of, regardless of our physical landscape. The ocean also has the wonderful power to act as a reset button as listening to the quiet, constant waves are both refreshing and cleansing. Through the power and seamless grace of the ocean, the poet is able to write and capture moments in genuine creation. Sue demonstrated the importance of moving away from grief while writing, to be guided by emotion, but not confined or solely crafted by it, which allowed the formation of her beautiful and authentic verse.

## **DIANE SCHOEMPERLEN**

*by Cara Rossiter*

On March 10, 2014 Diane Schoemperlen read from her story "Forms of Devotion" and from her novel *Our Lady of the Lost and Found*. Her short discussion of "Forms of Devotion" revealed how



Schoemperlen incorporated the idea of collage into "Forms of Devotion" by juxtaposing images from 18th and 19th century sources with contemporary stories. It was also interesting to learn how Schoemperlen's attitude toward the faithful underwent a transformation from cynical to envious, particularly because this is evident in her writing.

Schoemperlen discussed her experiences in writing *Our Lady of the Lost and Found* in even greater length. While writing this novel, Schoemperlen read around 200 of over 20 000 accounts of Mary sightings and began to notice this religious figure's presence in her own life. I found it interesting that Schoemperlen chose to present the story of *Our Lady of the Lost and Found* as non-fiction because she did not claim to be religious. Schoemperlen also discussed how she combined the image of a modern, human Mary with the powerful Latin representations of the Virgin. Although I found this to be an attractive

portrayal of Mary, I was surprised to learn that American Catholic schools embraced this novel and its human representation of this woman because Catholicism usually emphasizes the divine and religious mysticism in traditional communities. Schoemperlen shared many anecdotes about how *Our Lady of the Lost and Found* incited change for some of her readers, which made me want to read this novel too.

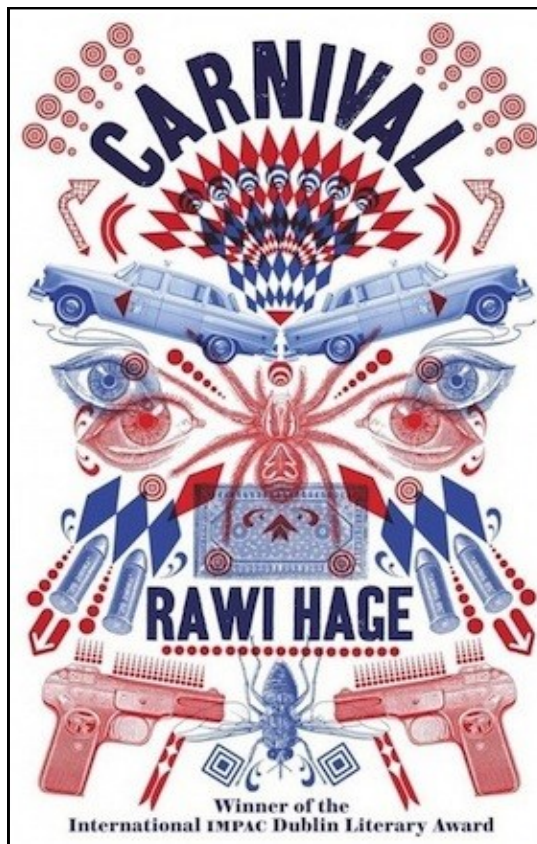
## RAWI HAGE

by Alma Philpotts

On Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup>, award winning author Rawi Hage made his way through the bitter cold streets of Wolfville to a warm reception at the KCIC Auditorium. Actually, Hage said the weather in his home town, Montreal, was much worse, so he wasn't complaining. Also, the good weather of the reception was mixed. As Hage reviewed his notes before the reading, one audience member complained loudly at the book table that she had "no time for this kind of thing! I stopped reading it after 30 pages." (It turned out, as she elaborated, that she had no time for the gritty life of the cab driver and the discussion of male sexuality).

Hage read for twenty minutes from his brilliant novel, *Carnival*, moving back and forth between philosophical passages—on religion, immigration, neoliberal politics—and depic-

tions of a barrage of bizarre encounters with gangsters, refugees, clowns, and prostitutes, to name but a very few of the novel's characters. During the Q & A at the end of the reading, Hage said that the book was not an autobiography, but a philosophical novel. He emphasized the metaphorical framework guiding the book (most prominently marked by spiders—cabbies that lay in wait



for passengers—and flies—cabbies ceaselessly on the move, more like nomads than the sedentary spiders). Hage said that if it had been simply autobiographical the book would have been much, much longer. After an interesting question period, Hage signed books and spoke with a number of fans before heading off to explore the town of Wolfville.

## ACADIA ENGLISH SOCIETY SOCIAL EVENTS

### BAD POETRY NIGHT

by Sean Ryan

On September 25, 2013 following a delayed start, the night opened on a strong note with a love poem written for Dr. Herb Wyile by the society president, Meaghan Smith. The love-for-Herb theme very much dominated the night (supposedly unplanned), though a few non-Herbian (patent pending) gems did peek through. Before I get into the highlights, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the valiant and lonesome efforts of the single employee manning the cafe. His efforts and level of service really made a difference in the night!

Following the opening love poem, many readers bravely stood up to deliver both original and found pieces receiving much laughter. Featuring some prose along with the poetry the performers, from the society president to first timers, picked and wrote some truly horrific examples of what can be done with the English language.

Highlights of the evening really centred around a few truly spectacular and cringe-worthy examples of bad writing: one of the first readers was also one of the strongest acts of the night: an audio book version of "My Immortal," a vomit-inducing example of fan-fiction involving vampires and Harry Potter, recorded for the event. It would be impossible to do this piece justice without the sound effects and



feminine voices provided for our listening “pleasure.” Suffice it to say that there was a fully voiced sex scene which was rudely interrupted by Dumbledore, a surprisingly decent sounding poem made entirely out of lines from other poems drawn out of a hat (also directed at Dr. Wyile), a short love story using analogies from last year which reduced a number of listeners to both tears of laughter and of misery, a spoken word version of a Lady GaGa song, a stirring piece delivered by Dr. Wyile involving a somewhat unfortunate Belgian child, and to end the night a poetry battle between the two youngest execs over who loved Herb more.

By no means were these the only good (bad?) performances of the night. Everyone was on point with their horrid readings, but with upwards of fifteen separate performers all reading a myriad of pieces over two hours, it would be too difficult to fit every good thing about the night into one article, so if you missed it I would strongly urge catching it next time. People come and go but bad poetry is (unfortunately) forever and I can only imagine it will be just as awful next year as this. From first to last, from bad to worse, the night was a rousing success with many good laughs and a lot of bad poetry.

## HALLOWEEN PUB NIGHT

by Sean Ryan

Cleopatra, a mime, The Cheshire Cat, Cedric Diggory, Edgar Allen Poe, and Ebony Dark'ness Dementia Raven Way (of My Immortal fame). These

and more were guests of this year's Halloween pub night. Taking place in the upper dining room of Paddy's Pub and Rosie's Restaurant it was full of spooky readings, good food and great drinks. Several English Society members featured costumes based on English department professors: Herb Wyile, Kevin Whetter, Jon Saklofske, Lance La Rocque, Stephen Ahearn, Anne Quéma and Andrea Schwenke-Wyile were all represented; as well Herb Wyile showing up as the English Society's own Marc Muschler. There was also a special guest appearance by a pumpkin carved in the likeness of Edgar Allen Poe.

Throughout the night around thirty people were in attendance, which really pushed the dining room to its capacity during the peaks. Sight and sound were kept busy, as the night had over ten readings, beginning with a rendition of the witch scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* featuring Blake, Alexandra, and Meaghan as the witches and Logan as Hecate. The scene was very animated and a fantastic way to start the night. Several readings followed, including scenes from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Monk*, and *Frankenstein*.

These conventional readings were succeeded by Cedric Diggory and the Cheshire Cat who chose a selection from *Twilight* which was received with a great deal of laughter. This was followed by a poetry reading from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and an original piece by a Kevin Whetter impersonator and Cleopatra, entitled “Funeral of a Father” which showcased their acting talents. A spoken word piece

delivered by the Fresh Princess (of Bel-Air) had some very poignant questions for the professors (both present and absent), and Ebony chose to perform Evanesence's “My Immortal” in spoken word form. Anne Quéma's doppelganger read “Batty” by Shel Silverstein. Edgar Allen Poe, “the original goth,” finished off the readings with his own work: “Spirits of the Dead”.

The last scheduled event of the night was to choose and announce the winner of the costume contest. The judges adjourned to discuss the winner; they reached a decision in a remarkably short time, returning only minutes later. In a rare double whammy decision they first awarded Edgar Allen Poe with the “Looks most like the pumpkin” award and then Ebony with the best costume award and a big bucket of candy. When asked if she/he had any words for her victory Ebony replied with “I don't have anything to say to these \$&%#ing preps.”

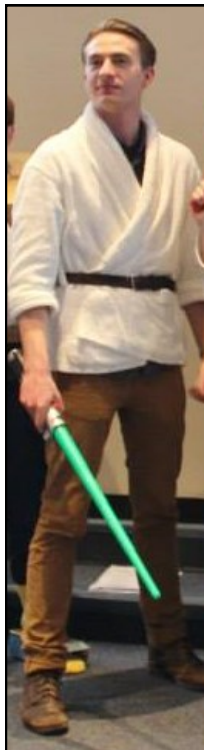
Once the planned festivities were over students hung around for a while finishing drinks and food or just socializing. Overall, it was a great night, one could even say “Fangtastic.”



## POETRY ON TAP

by Sean Ryan

As the last event of the year, I knew it was going to be awesome, and I wasn't disappointed. I showed up just before 6pm so I could get a good seat and the first thing I was treated to was several of the English Society execs dressed up in what could only be described as Star Wars "costumes," everything from bath towels, to silver mixing bowls, to a big gold box. It was an interesting start to say the least. Once everyone began to show up, the reason for the costumes was revealed: a rendition of Star Wars in Shakespearean style which led to more than a few laughs from the audience, not least because of Herbie Wan Kernerbie played by Herb Wyle and Bluke Skywalker (Blake LeBlanc).



*Bluke Skywalker*

There were some touching as well as humorous moments throughout the night and the mix arose from both some deeply personal poetry/short stories as well as the goodbyes that were said *to* and *for* the graduating members. Watching their faces, it was obvious they'd miss this, and who wouldn't? It was a little rough for everyone, I think, the joy of graduating and the next generation's ascension mixed with the sorrow of leaving.

We got over the bittersweet moments once the readings started though. The many works read (and sung and played) are too numerous and varied to present here so some highlights will have to do. Herb Wyle, as always, was a favourite for his reading of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as well as his original piece in the style of Keats, "Ode on an English Society". There were several musical performances which were all incredible, and

many of the poetry/prose readers featured some very personal works that were beautiful to listen to.

I'd just like to thank everyone who presented or showed up to this event. Everyone involved made it a memorable night: To the ones who read their own poetry or prose— I know how hard it is to do that and it was all phenomenal. To those who read the works of others, it takes great courage to get up in front of a crowd (even if they are some of the best people at Acadia). Last, but certainly not least, to those who played music: you were staggering. The musical talent shown was amazing, as was every other talent shown. You guys killed it.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Acadia Axe bar staff who provided the refreshments— thank you guys for making the event just that much more enjoyable, and for all your hard work.

*See the front cover for the full caste of the Shakespearean*

**STAR  
WARS**

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