

VOICE

∞ VOLUME 29
∞ SPRING 2022
∞ DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH & THEATRE
∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY



ACADIA ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

After two years of pandemic restrictions, the Acadia English Association hosted an End-of-Year Social on campus for students and faculty, featuring literary trivia and bad poetry readings. Pictured left to right are Hannah Chapman, Mandy Armstrong-Singer, Max Rowell, Kate Storey, AEA Faculty Advisor Jon Saklofske, Parker Shaw, and Oliver Cail. For more on AEA events this year see page four and five.



ACADIA ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

THEATRE REVIEW
Drowning Ophelia

HEADSHIP CHANGES HANDS

ENGLISH ASSOCIATION EVENTS

HONOURS THESIS EXPERIENCE
Emma Cole (Creative)
Kira Cummings (Academic)

AUTHORS @ ACADIA
Deborah Hemming
Francesca Ekwuyasi
Afua Cooper
David Huebert

ESTUARY 2022

WELCOME NANDINI THIYAGARAJAN

FAREWELL KERRY VINCENT

IN MEMORIAM
Graham Adams
Christine Kendrick

STAFF
Kate Robart
Emma Cole

Lance La Rocque (Faculty Advisor)
Wanda Campbell (Layout)

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THEATRE REVIEW

DROWNING OPHELIA

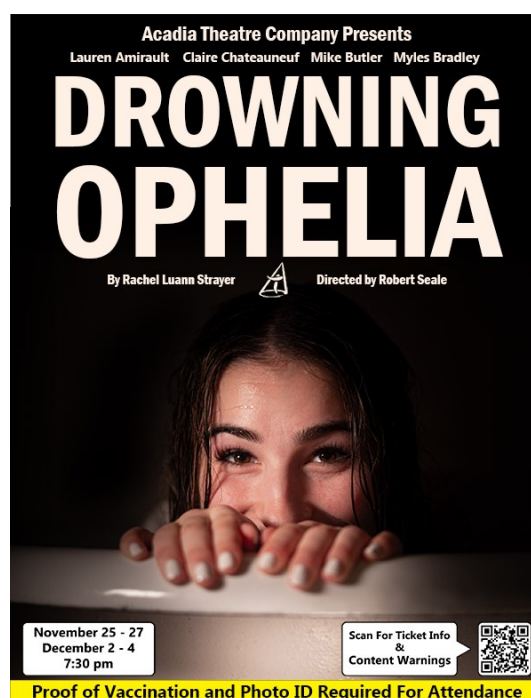
By Kate Robart

On November 25, 2021, I had the immense pleasure of seeing the Acadia Theatre Company's dark comedy, *Drowning Ophelia*, which places a compelling twist on a classic Shakespearean play – *Hamlet*. The crew explained the term dark comedy to begin, describing it as a work that combats dark matters through humour. I'll be honest, I'm often a little bit cynical when movies or novels call themselves comedies, but I genuinely thought that this play was funny. I was also hooked right away on the storyline, as the play began with an extremely minimalistic setting and an abrupt introduction. I was immediately confused, dying to know more due to this bizarre beginning. I also think it's important to note that in the initial synopsis of the play the crew ended with a warning that there would be allusions to sexual abuse.

They also provided someone who could offer support if anyone needed it, which I greatly appreciated. Although the scenes were at times disturbing and even uncomfortable, I thought the cast did a phenomenal job of depicting these horrifying events in as realistic of a way as they could.

Overall, I was thoroughly impressed with all four

of the actors, often forgetting that this was simply a story. At one point, Mike Butler – who played Adam, the main character's brother – was wrestling an imaginary crocodile on stage. The scene was so realistic and well done, despite the fact that the audience was not actually seeing a real crocodile. The actors really made the audience feel connected to their characters and experience strong emotions as viewers. As I mentioned, the play was described as comedy, and I laughed the



most through Myles Bradley's character, Edmund. Edmund dressed up as a king, according to Jane's wishes, but fumbled around in his attempt to act like royalty, incapable of finding his fork in front of him and running into walls. I actually found myself laughing out loud, which is rare for me, so I thought that everyone did a great job of finding ways to include humour.

Another example of the emotions the cast was able to portray occurred at the end of the play; after we learned of Adam's sexual abuse of his sister, Ophelia (played by Lauren Amirault) glances so briefly at the crowd that it could easily have been missed. But this simple act made me feel such empathy and sadness for this girl who was abused by her brother, ultimately connecting me as an audience member to Ophelia's character, who was not even a real person. In this way, I was really impressed with the ability of Robert Seale – the director – to have the audience feel as though they were experiencing the disorientation of having someone in their head. Ophelia, a younger version of Jane who lived in Jane's head, was visible to the audience but not always apparent to the other characters, such as Edmund. This was such an interesting choice, as it allowed us to feel as though we were in Jane's head, experiencing the torture of her struggles as well.

Similarly, I thought Butler did a great job of making his character be simultaneously disgusting and pitied. While Adam was a child molester and horrible to his sister, we can't help but sympathize with him to an extent when we learn of his

death. However, by neglecting to reveal to the audience the true nature of Jane (Claire Chateaufneuf) and Adam's relationship until the end of the play, our emotions as audience members get twisted and confused as the play continually dismisses all of our ideas about what we thought we knew. In this way, I

I was so glad I had the opportunity to watch *Drowning Ophelia*. The entire crew were so talented, and the storyline captivated me in such a way that I got home and couldn't stop talking about it, even to friends who hadn't seen the play. To use a cliché, I wouldn't describe *Drowning Ophelia* as



Myles Bradley and Claire Chateaufneuf

also loved how the play created an air of suspense through the omission of so many answers. We slowly piece things together as the play goes on, still wondering what actually happened, even after the actors take their final bows. I love the mystery that this created, allowing the audience members to have a role in explaining the events of the play.

something you watch; the play is something you experience. While I'm not surprised that the Acadia Theatre Company created such an amazing play, I am amazed by how well they put everything together during a global pandemic that I'm sure, often uprooted their plans.



HEADSHIP CHANGES HANDS

July 1, 2021 marked the transition of the Department of English and Theatre Headship from Dr. Wanda Campbell to Dr. Anne Quéma. Since leaving the position, Wanda has been busy with full time teaching, as well as completing work on *Bronwen Wallace: Essays on Her Work* forthcoming from Guernica Press and a new collection of poetry exploring the ravages of Alzheimer's.

Though faced with many challenges including an ongoing pandemic and the adoption of Colleague, a new campus data system, Anne brings considerable administrative experience to her new position from her role as Women's and Gender Studies coordinator and enjoys working with students in her role as Faculty Advisor.

Anne is also an active interdisciplinary researcher in contemporary UK literature and the law, queer studies, and international practices of experimental poetry. Anne has presented and published widely including most recently, "Phonotopia of Migrations: Oana Avasilichiaei's *Limbi-nal*" which appeared in *Forms of Migration* edited by Jennifer Reimer and Stefan Maneval, (Falschrum, 2021) and "Engendering Biopoetics of Testimony: Louise Dupré, Chus Pato, and Erin Moure" in volume 32 (2021) of *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études juives canadiennes* entitled *Canadian Holocaust Writing*.



AEA EVENTS FALL 2021

By Emma Cole

The Acadia English Association hosted multiple events throughout the Fall of 2021 semester to encourage socializing, collaboration, and discussion among English majors and those with a passion for books and literature. Two literary-themed quiz nights were held, one at the beginning

of the semester and again at the end; the latter featured an expanded array of questions due to the high popularity of the first event, and prizes were distributed both times. The AEA also hosted two movie night events; the first was a viewing of the filmed Broadway musical *Come From Away*, which was attended and enjoyed by Theatre students as well as English students; the second movie night featured a showing of *The Woman in Black* for the Halloween season. The AEA's new Book Club met twice during the semester; the first meeting was to discuss *Faye Faraway* by Helen Fisher, and the second to discuss *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, as voted on by members of the AEA book club. Towards the end of the semester, the AEA hosted a





One Night Zine event where participants contributed their artwork, poetry, and prose; fifty copies of the zine were then printed and distributed throughout the BAC, with digital versions available for viewing and download.

AEA EVENTS
WINTER 2022

Because of the pandemic restrictions and the faculty strike, this semester the Acadia English Association scaled back its planned events. Nevertheless, they were able to hold a (somewhat) monthly book club, reading and discussing *Brokeback Mountain* by Annie Proulx, and *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Acadia English Department merch – hoodies, hats, and tote bags –

was made available for AEA members, English students, and faculty to purchase. To make up for planned events that had to be missed, the AEA hosted an End-of-Year Social on campus for all English Students and Faculty, featuring literary trivia and bad poetry readings. The new AEA exec team has volunteered and are ready to pick things right back up in the 2022 Fall semester!



HONOURS EXPERIENCE
Emma Cole
Creative Thesis:
“Kaleidoscope”

I’ve had my heart set on writing a creative writing Thesis at Acadia since I first applied here. My ideas and vision for the project have gone through many edits and iterations, and I could not be more proud of the final product. Though there were certainly some struggles, and I can safely say this is the most difficult task I’ve tackled in my years of writing, I’m so thankful for everything I was able to achieve.

HONOURS EXPERIENCE

Kira Cummings

Academic Thesis:

“Heroism, Fortune, and Flying: A Comparative Study of Select Classical, Norse, Arthurian Medieval Texts, and J. R. R. Tolkien,”

Completing my degree as an Honours English student at Acadia was a very fulfilling experience. I became an Honours student in my second year. The options for English Honours students are writing a thesis of their choice and taking two seminar courses or writing no thesis and taking four seminar courses. Writing a thesis tends to be the preferable option because you have more choice in which seminars you decide to take. In my third year, I took the seminar on Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur*, and in my fourth year, I took my second and final required seminar on Shakespeare’s romantic comedies. I wrote my thesis on the epic genre with Dr Whetter.

My tactic for excelling in school has been to write things at least two weeks ahead of

their due dates in my planner, promptly forget the actual due dates, and treat what is in the planner as the final deadline. This method has allowed me to get a firm grasp on course content and usually earns me excellent grades because it means I have plenty of time to do things well. Moreover, in a chaotic year with pandemic restrictions and a strike for the entire month of February, my method has allowed me to finish the semester's work far in advance. Of course, it certainly has helped to have one of the most wonderful thesis supervisors of all time and several outstanding professors! Without the kindness and assistance of the professors of the English department, I would not be on the path that I am now.

In terms of plans for the future, I am taking a gap year while I search for master's programs in folklore, medieval studies, and occult studies. I will continue self-publishing poetry books and maybe eventually make the time to pursue publishing through a publishing house. I will also continue expanding my occult and artistic business ventures.



*But in Gaspereau,
you're close
enough to the
ocean you can
smell the tide
changing...*

~D. Hemming

A@A



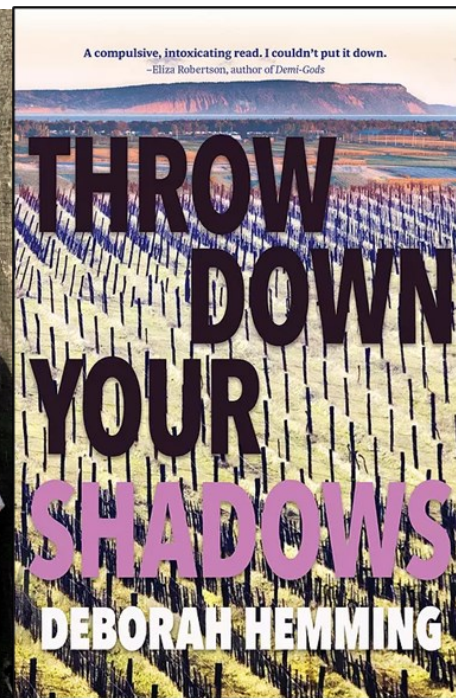
AUTHORS@ACADIA

DEBORAH HEMMING

By Kate Robart

Deborah Hemming came to Acadia to present on her locally-set, coming-of-age novel, *Throw Down Your Shadows*, on September 28th as part of our A@A Speaker Series. Hemming is very involved in the local community, including her contributions as a board member at the Al Whittle Theatre in Wolfville. I had the privilege of sitting in on the book talk and was greatly impressed by how Hemming presented her novel as both personal and greatly fictional.

The snippets that she read of her novel, which outlines a teenage girl's experiences growing up in the Annapolis Valley, allowed me to truly feel like I was inside the mind of her main character, as she created her to be relatable through her life experiences. She told those of us in the audience that it was – understandably – very difficult to have her debut during a global pandemic. She also explained that she chose to focus on an unemotional and irresponsible teenage girl since these personalities are typically unseen in literature. I loved this idea, as she chose to go against the typical coming-of-age character and respond to stereotypes about young girls. Ultimately, she constructed a somewhat controversial character, which I always appreciate, because it makes her all the more complex.



Her novel was full of foreshadowing, imagery, and captivating descriptions that let those of us who were listening feel as though we were experiencing the events of the novel, too. She answered all of our burning questions and then introduced her latest novel, which is set to come out in the winter of 2023. It features an author who is struggling with her new-found fame and embarks on a wellness retreat in an attempt to help her imposter syndrome. I'm really anticipating this new book release since *Throw Down Your Shadows* was so well done.

FRANCESCA EKWUYASI

By Kate Robart

Francesca Ekwuyasi is the author of *Butter Honey Pig Bread* – a story about a mother and her twin daughters who live through family trauma – which she presented and discussed at Acadia on November 9, 2021. I had the privilege of sitting in on the discussion, and I was captivated the second Ekwuyasi started speaking. Professor Michelle Damour introduced the novel by saying that reading it “does not feel like reading”. In fact, I quickly noticed that the excerpts that Ekwuyasi read from her novel almost felt like poetry, with their beautiful, flowing language. The presentation was, unfortunately, virtual due to COVID-19, but Ekwuyasi had such a simultaneously captivating and gentle energy that it was easy to listen to her the entire time.

Not only did the unusual title of the novel, *Butter Honey Pig Bread*, grab my attention, but the combination of all of the novel's main themes – faith, family, loneliness, trauma, and queerness – immediately made me want to know more. The novel is told from three different women's perspectives, which is a narrative style that I personally love

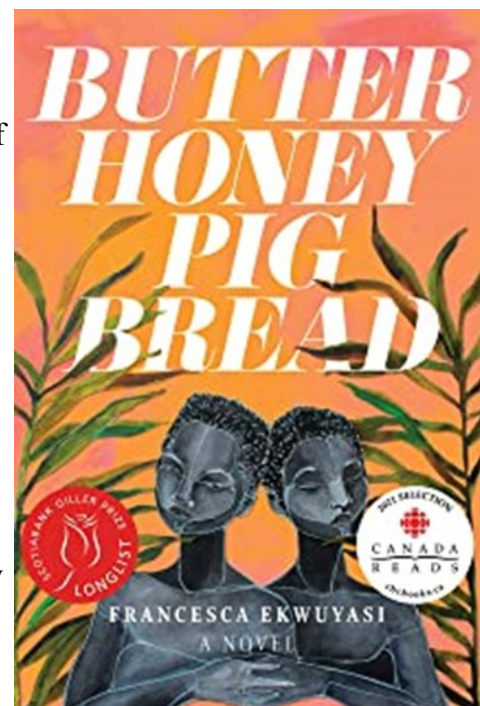


to read. Ekwuyasi included a lot of elements from her Nigerian upbringing, too, such as certain Nigerian words, the tradition of storytelling, and the idea that human life is cyclical. These ideas really captured my attention, and her mixture of multiple cultural beliefs felt refreshing and new.

Ekwuyasi also said that she deliberately made her narrators fairly unreliable, which let her play with the idea of gossip and oral traditions. I really enjoyed how she said that this, in turn, lets those of us reading the novel explore different

possibilities and create our own story. This was something that I don't think many other authors attempt, so I once again appreciated the novelty of her choices.

Ekwuyasi finished by telling us that she really wanted to give readers the choice of whether or not to believe her main characters' stories. Challenging us to decide what we think about the story's reliability forces us to look at our own beliefs, which is a really powerful element to include in a novel. The fact that Ekwuyasi incorporated some Nigerian words kept her novel true to reality and gave English-speaking readers the option to do their own research, inviting us to be a part of the novel in yet another way. Overall, I loved the novel's effortless feel, cultural elements, and encouragement for readers to get involved in the story.



∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

AFUA COOPER

By Kate Robart

On January 18, 2022, Afua Cooper – Professor at Dalhousie University, spoken word artist, author, and Halifax’s Poet Laureate until 2020 – presented her book of poetry, *Black Matters*, at Acadia University. Cooper set the tone for her book by introducing it as a story of history, ancestry, and family. One of the first topics that she explored during her presentation was the uniqueness of each human being in the world based on the plethora of ancestors that it took to make each one of us. I really enjoyed her introduction to the series of poems that she went on to read.

The grand majority of the selected poems that Cooper read, from her book *Black Matters*, referenced real

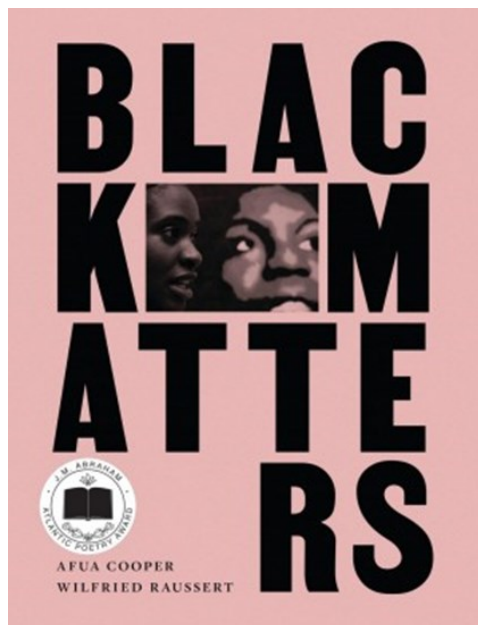
people and their experiences with slavery, racism, torture and abuse, and mixed emotions. I quickly noticed that her poems dealt with extremely serious issues, but she



managed to maintain a certain level of playfulness in the voices throughout the poems, contrasting the horrors of the situations with the bravery and resistance of her characters. This playful, often ironic tone came out most often in the lyricism of Cooper’s poems. Many of them, including “John Ware: Magician Cowboy” and “Jupiter Wise”, sounded like a song. While listening to Cooper read her poems, I thought to myself that I could listen to them all day long, their musicality and lyricism beautiful to hear.

I was also amazed at the multitude of emotions that Cooper was able to portray throughout the few poems that she read to us. Sorrow, fear, joy, pride, shame, regret. Her style of reading added immense emotion to the poems; I was so grateful for the privilege of hearing her read them aloud to us, rather than simply reading them to myself. With these strong emotions, Cooper was able to highlight a lot of important topics surrounding racism in Canada. I really appreciated her bringing attention to the misinterpretation, and therefore changing of African names by white Canadians, a seemingly small but extremely significant act that, unfortunately, happens all too often. Cooper has a way of alluding to something briefly but having it stick with you long after you’re done reading.

The last poem that Cooper read from her book – “Congo Songs: By the Rivers of Babylon, Part Two” – felt like an upbeat, hopeful song that you sing at the end of a long church service otherwise filled with sombre, heavy topics. This last sing-song poem had a strong connotation of bravery attached to it through its obvious references to the Congo, as Cooper explained is a common connection made by Jamaicans. It was by far my favourite, and I was glad she saved it until the end, as it leaves the rest of the book off with a sense of hope.



DAVID HUEBERT

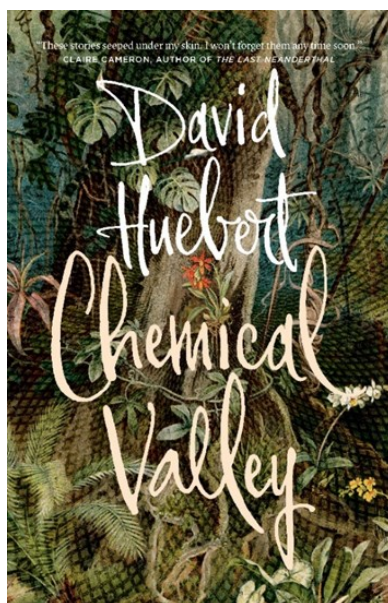
By Kate Robart

On March 9, students at Acadia University had the opportunity to listen to author David Huebert speak about his life and his works. He shared from his book of poetry to begin, and then discussed his most recent work, a book of short stories, for the majority of the session. He explained that he does a lot of research before completing any work, plunging himself into the topics about which he writes. His texts tend to focus on living things, including plants, animals, bacteria, insects, and humans. Huebert also mentioned that he is deeply interested in the relationship between poetry and fiction, as well as the significance of form, describing his poetry collection, *Humanimus*, as both focused on constraint and playfulness.

Huebert read four poems from *Humanimus*. One of my favourites was entitled “Mutants’ Sonnet”, which was a sort of love story, but focused on mutations and movement. I really enjoyed how Huebert was able to connect two or more seemingly unrelated ideas in one beautifully lyrical poem. Running throughout the poem was also a concern for the planet, further exposing Huebert’s interest in living things. Another poem that I loved listening to him read was “Wild in Me” which Huebert explained was a *pantoum*: a complicated poetic form that is comprised of rhyming quatrains. He warned us that it was difficult to read aloud, but he tried anyway, saying that

the difficulty of it is the whole point! It was full of alliterations that made it feel very sing-songy and fun to listen to, so I was glad that he attempted it (and he did a great job!). His poetry also included a few onomatopoeias, the sounds helping us place ourselves within the poems.

Next, Huebert introduced his short story collection



Chemical Valley, explaining that he has an interest in the uncanny, which was definitely identifiable within the short story that he read from the book. Before reading it, he also conveyed the mood of the story, “The Pit”, as portraying the authentic experience of a person who would generally be written off as disgusting and undesirable by most people. The story was of a man who was a dishwasher at a restaurant and was in a secret, bizarre relationship. Huebert said that he was a dishwasher himself when he was younger, and that he found it oddly satisfying to see things come in dirty and leave clean.



He expressed that he often wondered if there was a relationship between dishwashing and writing. I thought this was an interesting suggestion: that writing is similar to cleaning because both aim to organize and tidy.

“The Pit” was a bizarre and captivating love story, full of innuendo and hidden symbolism. Huebert has a gift for implying but never overtly stating things that he wants his readers to understand, such as the sexual relationship depicted in “The Pit”. Rather than simply describing these interactions, Huebert filled his short story with verbs like “soak”, “plunge”, “pulse”, and “squirm” and adjectives like “flaccid”, “self-lubricating”, and “arousing”, all while describing seemingly unsexual things. I loved that there seemed to be so much going unsaid throughout Huebert’s story; it reminded me of what it would might feel like to be in a secret relationship such as the one depicted. I was fascinated the entire time that Huebert was reading the story, never losing interest or feeling disconnected from the characters. In fact, I thought Huebert did a great job of making readers feel both sympathetic and curious to know more, especially through a gruesome and abrupt ending.

estuary

This past year *estuary* was in the capable hands of editor Rylie Moscato. In her final year at Acadia, although busy with academic commitments including an Honours Thesis and other extracurricular activities Rylie volunteered to be *estuary* editor. In a challenging second year of the pandemic, Rylie managed to produce two issues of the journal with creative submissions from 31 student contributors in the online Fall issue and 21 in the printed Spring issue.

To celebrate the publication of the Spring Issue, a Covid-safe launch was organized on the afternoon of April 8, 2022 with readings by a number of the students whose work was featured. Wanda Campbell, faculty advisor to *estuary*, is seen here presenting tulips to Rylie as a token of gratitude for all her hard work as editor. Special thanks to Dr. Jon Saklofske for taking pictures of the launch.

Past issues can be viewed here: <https://english.acadiau.ca/get-involved/estuary-arts-magazine.html>



WELCOME
NANDINI THIYAGARAJAN



Please join me in welcoming the newest faculty member of the English Department at Acadia University, Dr. Nandini Thiyagarajan! I had the privilege of (virtually) sitting down with Assistant Professor Thiyagarajan on January 25, asking her about her experiences that led her to Acadia as well as those she's had in Wolfville so far. I really enjoyed our conversation, and while I won't have the opportunity to take one of Nandini's classes during my time here at Acadia, I have no doubt I would enjoy them.

I first asked Nandini to tell me a little bit about where she's from. Much like Wolfville, Grande Cache, Alberta, she told me, is a small town with a tight-knit community. She completed her undergrad with Honours in English and Psychology at the University of Alberta. She then did her Masters in Cultural Studies at McMaster, as well as her PhD, and she told me that, through these degrees, she quickly became fascinated with studying the ways that culture shapes literature and the role of psychology within it.

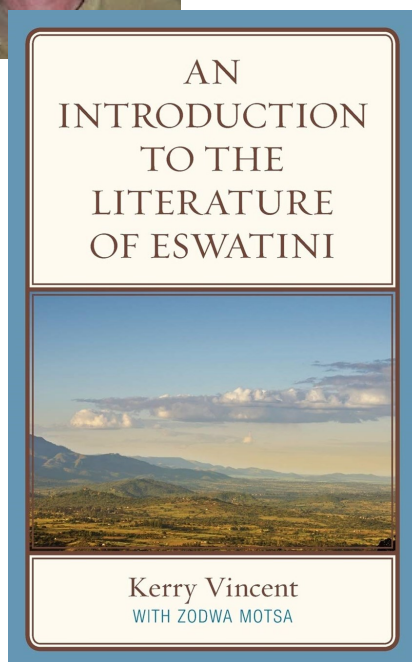
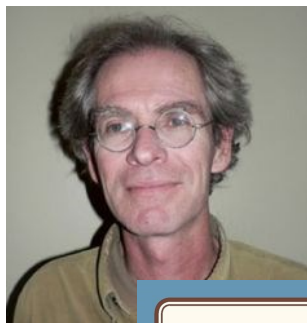
Nandini continued to tell me how she ended up at Acadia, being drawn by the small town and its way of bringing her back to what she knows. She said that she appreciated that Acadia puts such a heavy emphasis on teaching, and that it wasn't nearly as fast-paced as NYU, where she did some work previously. Other universities, she mentioned, tend to be more research-focused, so she has been grateful for the opportunity to demonstrate to her students that they matter to her. The courses that she currently teaches include Postcolonial Literature and Writing & Reading Critically, and she said that, while Postcolonial Lit feels like home, she really enjoys teaching the tangibles of English literature in Writing & Reading Critically. Her research interests include primarily postcolonialism and animal studies, and she's considering a new project on invasive species and the dismantling of certain language surrounding the topic.

To conclude our chat, I asked Nandini what she liked about Wolfville. I wasn't surprised when she said that she loved the small size of the town and community. She expressed that people have been so welcoming and kind here, and that it's been healing to experience such a supportive community. She also touched on the beautiful nature in Wolfville, including the good produce that she can access and the bald eagles that often visit her outside her window!

FAREWELL KERRY VINCENT

Dr. Kerry Vincent is retiring in 2022. As a Post-colonial specialist, Kerry taught African and Caribbean Literature as well as the first year English course Writing and Reading Critically. He has been a thesis supervisor at both the Undergraduate and Graduate Level and has also served faithfully on a variety of Department committees as a generous and steady colleague.

With degrees from Acadia, University of Victoria and Dalhousie University, Kerry joined the Department full time in 2006. He has been an active researcher, publishing in journals such as *Research in African Literatures*, *Ariel*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *African Studies*. Though Covid19 played havoc with his plans to travel to eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) to do archival research on the journalism of Sara Mkhonza published in the local newspaper, he managed to continue his work by examining her novels and short fiction, along with other work from her experimental collaborative writing entitled *Khikhilembube* which explores the plight of Swazi women through commentary on the fictional male character named in the title, as do



some of her newspaper articles on women's rights and human rights. He has long been interested in the writings of Mkhonza who left Swaziland for the United States in fear for her life and continued to write and teach in exile, exploring the intriguing mix of genres in her work, including fiction, journalism, and orature. He has also done work on a collection of Anglophone Plays from eSwatini and is active on the Editorial Board of *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature*, a peer-reviewed journal out of the University of Botswana.

The jewel in the crown of his recent scholarly achievement is the long-awaited publication of *An Introduction to the Literature of eSwatini*, published in 2020 by Lexington Press. The first comprehensive introduction to

the literature of eSwatini, the book explores a literary trajectory that begins with early travel narratives and explores the emergence of a national literature marked by early oral influences, unique sociopolitical interests, lingering colonial discourse and local rituals. Kerry managed to secure a contribution from Zodwa Motsa, an English Professor at the University of South Africa who is also a translator, an interpreter, and a writer interested in "curriculum justice in the post-colonial era." Her contribution was important not only because

she is a significant scholar and writer with many demands on her time, but also because her knowledge of the Swazi language meant access to material that Kerry, as an English-speaking scholar, may not have been able to include otherwise. Through his research Dr. Vincent made enduring contributions to his field of Postcolonial Studies and enhanced the learning experience of his students at Acadia. He will be missed by the Department and we wish him well in retirement.

IN MEMORIAM

Graham Adams
1937-2021



Dr. Graham Adams who was with the Department of English and Theatre at Acadia for twenty years before his retirement in 1997 passed away on September 18, 2021. Originally from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, he completed his PhD at University of New Brunswick in 1974. He accepted a position at Acadia in 1977 and began a rewarding career teaching primarily courses in Shakespeare and American literature. In addition to his teaching, he served on numerous department and university committees including two terms as Head of the Department of English. He also published a book and many scholarly articles.

In retirement he continued to cheer on his beloved Green Bay Packers and exercise his passion for fishing in the many rivers and lakes around Wolfville.

Christine Kendrick
1952-2022



The Department was also saddened by the passing of Christine Kendrick on March 10, 2022. Christine retired in 2019, after working full time at Acadia for 35 years, the last eight as Administrative Assistant for the Department of English and Theatre. She worked with four Department Heads, Dr. Patricia Rigg, Dr. John Eustace, Dr. Jessica Slights and Dr. Wanda Campbell and provided cheerful assistance to countless students. Her generous and creative spirit was evident in the beautiful snowflake ornaments she crocheted annually for every member of the Department.



VOICE 4

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