

VOICE

∞ VOLUME 30
∞ SPRING 2023
∞ DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH & THEATRE
∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY



AAUEC 2023 AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Representing Acadia at this year's Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference in Sackville, NB from March 24 to 26 pictured left to right in the front row were Angel Percentie, Gwen Williams, Claire Kim and, in the back row, Dr. Jon Saklofske (Faculty Advisor to the Acadia English Association) and Lukas Saklofske.

For student reflections on the experience see **Page 4**.



AAUEC

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In the Next Room

24 HOUR PLAY FESTIVAL

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ESTUARY 2023

ENGLISH ASSOCIATION EVENTS

STAFF
Emma Cole
Lukas Saklofske

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

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with Voice 4, contact
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THEATRE REVIEW

IN THE NEXT ROOM

By Lukas Saklofske

On Thursday, March 30th, 2023, I attended Acadia's production of *In the Next Room*. This play was written in 2009 by American playwright Sarah Ruhl and directed by Ken Schwartz. The play is set in the 1880s, at the dawn of the electric era, in a seemingly flawless, prosperous Victorian household; courteous gentleman and scientist Dr. Givings inadvertently devised an astounding new instrument for curing "hysteria" in women (and sometimes men): the vibrator.

The set consisted of two sections: an office space and a living room. The common room was the dominant area, taking up nearly three quarters of the stage with an impressive layout that utilised the space brilliantly. Dr. Givings' office was quaint, but that's where most the "action" took place, creating a neat dichotomy between the

environments and how characters interacted with one another within those distinct rooms. Between the phenomenal cast with Dr. Givings played by Mike Nixon, Catherine Givings by Gwen Trombley, Sabrina Daldry by Karyssa Levere, Mr. Daldry by Alec Bloch, Annie by Emily Horton, Elizabeth by



Ariel Evans and Leo Irving by Max Miller, fantastic lighting, and incredible sound coordination, this show was an absolute hit—Acadia should be proud of the exceptionally talented theatre students. This semester's show was an absolute success, and we are looking forward to many more spectacular productions in the following years!

ACADIA THEATRE COMPANY
24 Hour Play Festival
By Emma Cole

On October 21, for the first time in Acadia's history, students and alumni gathered in groups in the BAC to each write a short play; these plays were then showcased the next evening, with only twenty-four hours of writing, planning, rehearsing, and producing. While the festival was organized by the Acadia Theatre Company, students from all disciplines and programs

collaborated to make these shows a reality. On October 22, these four short plays were performed for the first (and probably last) time on the stage of Lower Denton to a sold-out audience. Audiences saw medieval spoofs, MacBeth gone wrong, moralistic sock puppets, and meta-fictional insanity, all dreamt up and made possible by the creative, hard-working, and talented participants of this student-run festival.

MINIFEST 2022

The Acadia Theatre Company's tradition of the student-run Minifest continued this semester with three plays by American Playwright David Ives. Three absurdist plays, *Captive Audience*, *Time Flies*, and *Soap Opera* were shown each night of the festival's run, from Dec. 1 to 3. Ives's plays, as interpreted by student directors Kori Davison, Ariel Evans, and Trey Poworoznyk, were wacky, wild, and wickedly entertaining for audiences.



MINIFEST 2022
an Acadia Theatre Production

Three Plays by David Ives

Captive Audience
Directed by Kori Davison

Time Flies
Directed by Ariel Evans

Soap Opera
Directed by Trey Poworoznyk

November 30th
December 1st, 2nd, and 3rd,
8 pm

Lower Denton Theatre,
Acadia University

\$10 Tickets at:
The Acadia Box Office: (902)-542-5500
Or at the door

 @acadia_theatre

AAUEC Reflections

Claire:

During the weekend of March 24th to 26th, 2023, I and three other talented students had the privilege of representing Acadia at the 42nd Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference in Mount Allison. From the moment we arrived, we were surrounded by an overwhelming amount of talent and intelligence. On the first night, we were treated to a classic Bad Poetry night, in which people read out their to-do lists, horrible love sonnets, and their inescapable desire for brownies. The next day, we began the conference proper. Luckily for me, my panel began early Saturday morning, so I was able to spend the rest of the weekend relatively stress-free. Despite my nerves during the presentation, I was excited to trade questions and answers with my peers as we absorbed each other's presentations. My fellow presenters throughout the weekend did an amazing job sharing their own ideas, passion, and enthusiasm with their fellow peers and professors. I was floored by their confidence and talent! As much as I learned during the panels, it was the moments in-between that I will treasure the most. In each of the conference rooms, the air was absolutely buzzing with enthusiasm and conversation. I was invigorated by the camaraderie and enthusiasm everyone had for each other! By the time Sunday rolled around, it felt like

the end had come too soon. We packed our bags and headed back for Wolfville richer in ideas, friends, and experiences than when we first arrived.

I count myself very lucky to have been a part of such an amazingly talented group of students! Many thanks to Mount Allison for expertly hosting this year's



Claire, Lukas, Gwen and Angel at AAUEC

conference and thank you to the Acadia English Association for supporting and enabling us to experience this unforgettable weekend!

Angel: Attending the AAUEC English Conference is not an opportunity I thought I would get as a first year. That being said, I was completely blown away by the intense atmosphere. Everyone was

passionate and knowledgeable about their presentations. It was intimidating and encouraging. This experience was my debut in the professional English world. Presenting my creative short story in front of various professors and students felt exciting. I saw their faces change when I spoke, pondering the points I made. I felt heard. And the questions they asked were things that made me think like an English major: something I am becoming more aware of as I write. I also learned a lot from listening to my peers that spoke on academic papers. When I left the conference, I had a million ideas buffering in my head. It was a wonderful trip.

Lukas: AAUEC was a wonderful experience shared with magnificent people. Angel, Gwen, Claire, and I initiated our weekend with a hilarious literary analysis of "Wallace and Gromit: Curse of the Were Rabbit" that we watched on our way to Sackville. At the conference, I tried my best to be as social as possible,

which came easily, as everyone was eager to share their ideas and love for literature. Every presentation was incredibly unique, provoking interesting discussions during question periods, and encouraging the audience and presenters to work together with overarching literary themes and concepts. One of the most memorable events from the weekend

was the three poet laureates who presented their writings and responsibilities as well as giving insight/advice into the arduous process of publishing poetry. It was fascinating to learn about the expansive possibilities that can be explored through creative writing and to hear the valuable guidance they offered for young writers. It was a pleasure and honour to represent Acadia University alongside a strong group of writers. The networks and friendships established at this conference have encouraged me to continue developing as a student, writer, and person.

Gwen: There was something pleasantly surreal about attending the AAUEC and not just because I realized that I was there attending lectures for fun. I was stunned to meet so many people who loved films and obscure literary people as much as I did, so much that that was what we chatted about at the bar. I must admit, I was terrified for my presentation, and I was definitely sweating at the tail-end of it. But once I got into the groove, I really enjoyed getting to share my thoughts on *Sense and Sensibility*, especially since it's one of my favourite novels ever (my parents even came all the way out to support me, which was so cool). I got a few laughs too from my essay, which made it more enjoyable. Of course, I went to my fellow Acadia students' panels but on the last day, Claire and I bolted between three panels so we could see Lukas' poetry reading, a creative non-fiction piece from Sarah whom I met at the dinner (and had no one from home to see her), and a lecture on the horror film *NOPE* (which was incredible). I really didn't know entirely what to expect when I submitted my essay to the AAUEC. Now that I do, excluding the anxiety sickness, I think I would really want to go again.

I got to learn so much about things I was passionate about, got to add new things to my reading list, and I got to geek out about my friends and my parents learning more about writing arts too. Plus, it felt really good to go back to New Brunswick and see my cousin again...even if I still don't know how to properly sleep in a car.



WHAT WE'RE DOING

By Dahlia Erick

For several months something has been brewing deep in the library basement, in a room full of treasures that few know of, and even fewer have seen. A collaboration fueled by Professor Jon Saklofske's characteristic passion, sociology Professor Jesse Carlson and his assistant Felicia Tembo, and the archivists Catherine Fancy and Patricia Townsend have been tackling the long-neglected student newspaper. The goal is to digitise, and therefore preserve, *The Athenaeum* from its beginning in 1874 and to create an online platform where these archives can be accessed in a creative, engaging manner.

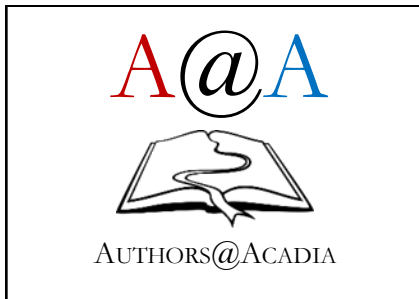
At first, I didn't understand the point of this collaboration if I'm being honest. I didn't grow up with newspapers and only vaguely knew of *The Ath* in its modern form. Once I started spending hours upon hours meticulously scanning the issues spanning from 1985-1990, however, I realised the importance of our student paper. *The Ath* previously functioned as a platform for student voices and opinions, a bridge between the school and the town of Wolfville, and a source of pertinent local and global news. The newspaper as a format allows information to be filtered, which social media lacks, but also provides a variety of opinions



published and engaged with. The articles I scanned revealed disturbing patterns in global issues: the threat of cold war and the current war between Russia and Ukraine, the fight for women's rights (of which progress was recently lost in the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*), the cries for environmental conservation that still have not been heeded. At the same time, it's a student paper and the same twenty-year-old tomfoolery is evident in every issue. Global events are given the same amount of attention as the latest Axemen game. Pictures depict students mudsliding thirty-five years before I ever stepped on campus. Next to this is an ad for the poster sale that still comes once a semester to give today's student something to cover the same cinderblock walls. A student opinion poll poses the question "what do you think of the administrators going into the faculty strike" and the response? A picture of half a dozen students mooning the camera.

Thanks to this project, I understand the beauty of the newspaper and its ability to bring attention to events and opinions that are relevant to students. *The Athenaeum* brought Acadia together, and now we're working to bring this rich history out of our library basement and back to the surface.





HARRY THURSTON

By Emma Cole

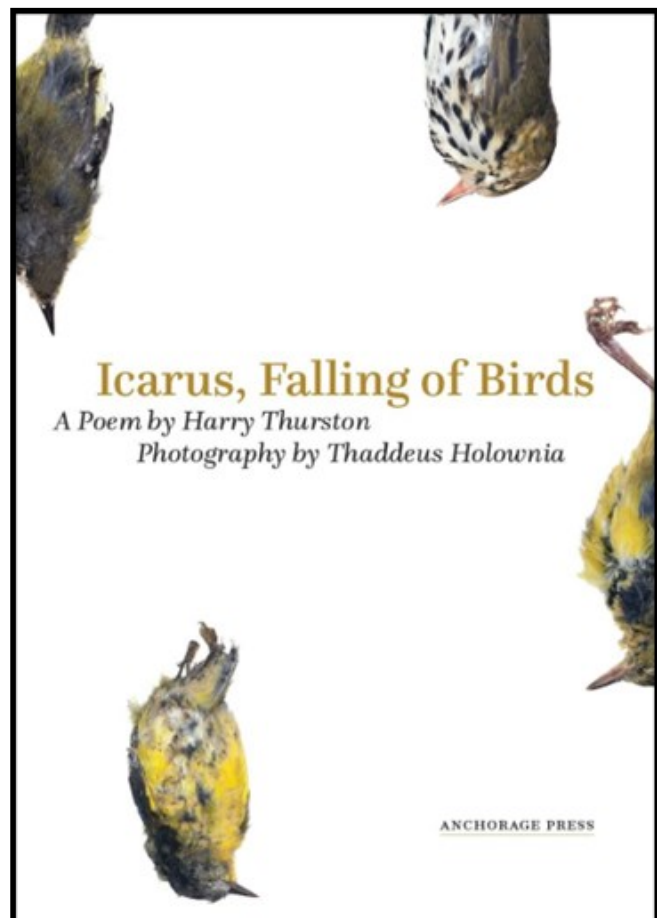


*The terrible feet built to clutch
contorted into damning language,
pared to the bone, claws curled
upon themselves like the scrolls
of an unstrung violin, at the ends of burnt sticks,
the downy breast exploded into a whorl
of burnt sienna, burnt ochre, charcoal—
organs splattered like melted plastic,
the inside and the outside one wreckage.*

~Harry Thurston
Icarus, Falling of Birds

The successful Authors @ Acadia series continues this year, with Harry Thurston as our first visiting speaker, speaking to a packed audience in the KC Irving Centre auditorium. Biologist and poet, Thurston's work has been featured in *Audubon*, *Canadian Geographic*, *International Wildlife*, and *National Geographic*. For his talk, Thurston read from his book *Icarus, Falling of Birds* along with works from his back catalogue, and upcoming works-in-progress. *Icarus* is actually a collaboration between Thurston and photographer Thaddeus Holownia. Holownia's disturbing photos capture songbirds killed

in 2013 when they flew into the Canaport Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Saint John, New Brunswick (the plant was later fined 750,000 dollars). Up to ten thousand songbirds were killed. The Reading was followed by a Q&A with the audience, in which the themes of environmentalism, mythology, and the artistic process and purpose were discussed at length. One audience member asked Thurston what he thought was the relationship between language and nature. Thurston pondered the questions awhile and then answered that he strove for a kind of mathematical correspondence between the word and the world. Thanks to all who attended!

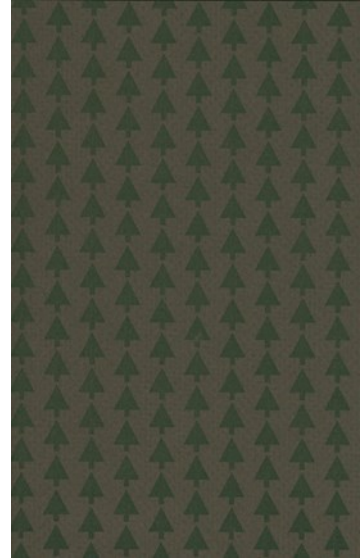


SUE GOYETTE
By Lukas Saklofske

On January 18th, Authors @ Acadia was thrilled to welcome the accomplished Canadian poet and novelist Sue Goyette, reading from two collections of poetry: *Monoculture* and *Solstice*. *Solstice*, published in 2020, is a captivating archive recounting relatable struggles of isolation and desperation during an ongoing global pandemic. Goyette's first 21 days of December are described through an emergence of uncertainty and a redemption of dignity that is all beautifully captivated through a collection of free verse. The contents of Goyette's poetry exhibit a shift towards a universal hypervigilance that has changed our perceptions of mundane problems that existed in a pre-pandemic world. The symbolism explored in *Solstice* is intricate, as the imagery often unites the advancement of modernity with autonomy. These poems frequently celebrate our interconnectedness despite being told from a solitary perspective.

In *Monoculture*, (Gaspereau Press, 2022) Goyette invites her readers to imagine that a sliver of forest in Nova Scotia had been maintained purely for amusing the public. During the reading, the audience was encouraged to stand and grab a printed card that included a plethora of subjective observations which resulted in a chorus of ceaseless social media comments.

As each individual read their card aloud, they were instructed to sit down upon completion. This exercise enabled the audience to function as a forest slowly being felled while we were distracted by each other's consumptive attitudes. This unique collection seamlessly exhibits how synthetic our relationship with the natural world has become.



Sue Goyette's impactful reading was the first of three highly anticipated Authors @ Acadia events during the 2023 Winter semester. The other readings include Amber McMillan on February 7th and Triny Finlay on March 7th.



How exactly does this work? Is the forest a gathering space or is this like a mall? Can there be more signs?

The trees couldn't make one compelling argument for themselves.

The trees seem like an afterthought. Or one of those dialogue bubbles you see in comics. WHAM CRACK GULP, you know?

The treetop art is old school country. Bouffant like Dolly.

Is it refundable? I mean, I know it's free but it took hours!

~Sue Goyette *Monoculture*

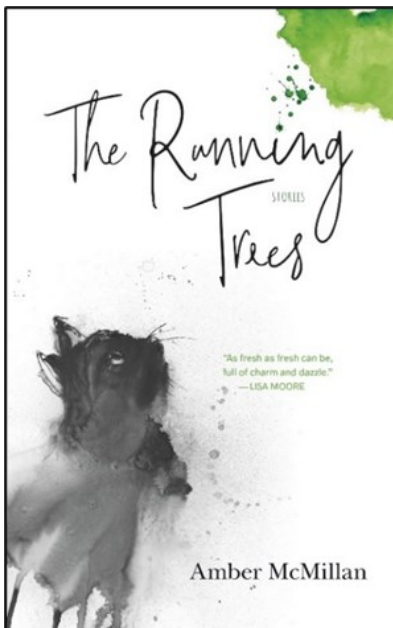
∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

AMBER McMILLAN

By Lukas Saklofske

On February 7th, 2023, Authors @ Acadia hosted writer/poet Amber McMillan who presented her published work *The Running Trees* (2021) and *This is a Stick Up* (2022). She was included in the shortlist for the Montreal International Poetry Prize and received a fiction prize from Penguin Random House. Her writing has appeared in a variety of North American publications, including *Maisonneuve*, *Arc*, *Global Poetry Anthology*, *Room*, *The Walrus*, and others.

McMillan's first reading was from *The Running Trees* and stated that this collection sought to expand the possibility of what a short story can communicate:



“What’s true and what’s not, and how we as people navigate the truth of our situations... What it means when we can’t and can determine the truth.”



One of my favourite stories was “Conversation 115” which explores a charmingly comic relationship between the narrator and a cat named “Oreo”. The narrator has a complicated relationship with giving and receiving advice (especially the unsolicited kind) and attempts to attribute humanistic expectations to Oreo’s behaviour. McMillan has a fascinating way of developing characters as she inhabits them with conviction and subjective interiorities which is developed through simple, yet stylistic, language.

The Running Trees functions as a conduit of memories and is typically

expressed through delicate and uncluttered thoughts of a lone narrator. The author was asked, “Did your motivations for writing an observational collection of encounters stem from a sense of isolation? If so, considering this was published in 2021, is the seclusion of the narrator’s input influenced by Covid-19?”

McMillan answered as follows: “It stems from a personal struggle of the gap between what people say and what people mean. English as a conduit and how that influences that —English is highly metaphorical, and we have expectations that everyone understands us. We approximate our reasons instead of directly implying what we mean. Endlessly thought provoking (conversations with others). Overhearing and oversharing has always captivated my imagination. Besides, English being metaphorical is that it is context specific—relationships are dominant with how interactions are understood... So much depends on how much you know the person you are interacting with. The endless fascination with the signified and signifier allows one to dig up the existential dread within that thought and identify the loneliness attached to that.”

After reading from *The Running Trees*, McMillan introduced her poetry collection *This is a Stick Up*. McMillan untangled many of the world’s great sufferings, establishing an environment for the reader to mourn alongside her. Intimate and powerful, these poems are unforgettable.



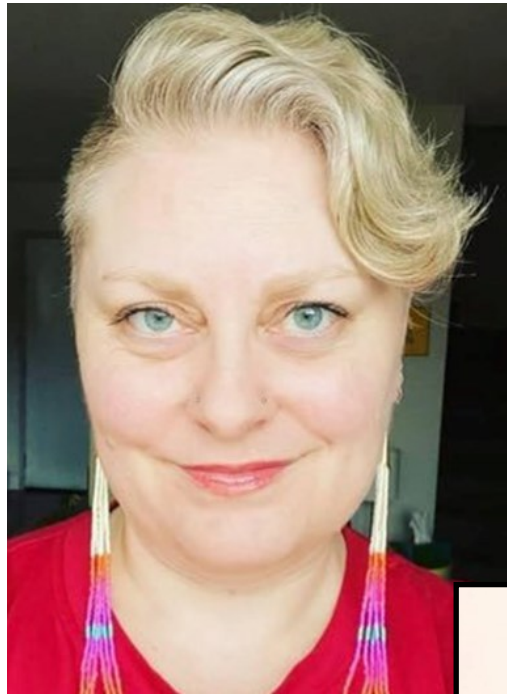
TRINY FINLAY

By Lukas Saklofske

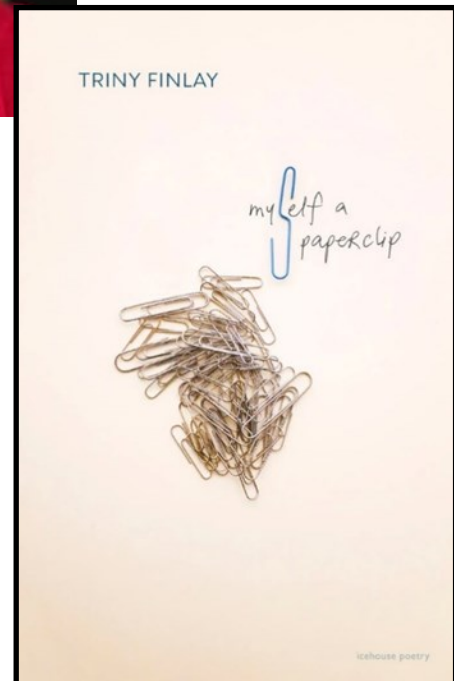
On March 7th, 2023, Authors @ Acadia had the pleasure of hosting a poetry reading from Triny Finlay's poetry collection *Myself A Paperclip* (2021). Finlay is a professor at the University of New Brunswick and her studies/research heavily emphasises the importance of social justice concerns and tackles education from a feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial viewpoint.

Myself A Paperclip truthfully explores the hard truths in regards to the struggles associated with mental health. Triny Finlay won the 2022 Fiddlehead Poetry Prize (New Brunswick Book Awards) and was shortlisted for the 2022 JM Abraham Poetry Award (Atlantic Book Awards). With allusions to classical poetic influences such as Dickinson, Woolf, Plath, and T.S. Eliot, Finlay examines treatments, illnesses, and stigmas associated with mental health that have affected literary greats in the past.

While many creative writers would agree to remove subjective experiences and opinions from their writings, Finlay encourages the opposite by highlighting that authors must obtain



inspirations from their own lives in order to communicate with her readers that mental health struggles are unique to everyone.



*Rebent, refined, redefined as a notch
maker, page marker, object in place of a memory.*

*As nothing you'd ever find
bundled in bulk in Costco.*

*Striking the pen cap against the printed page
you have to look again—
this trinket, so ready to be unfastened.*

~Triny Finlay "Self Portrait as Paperclip"

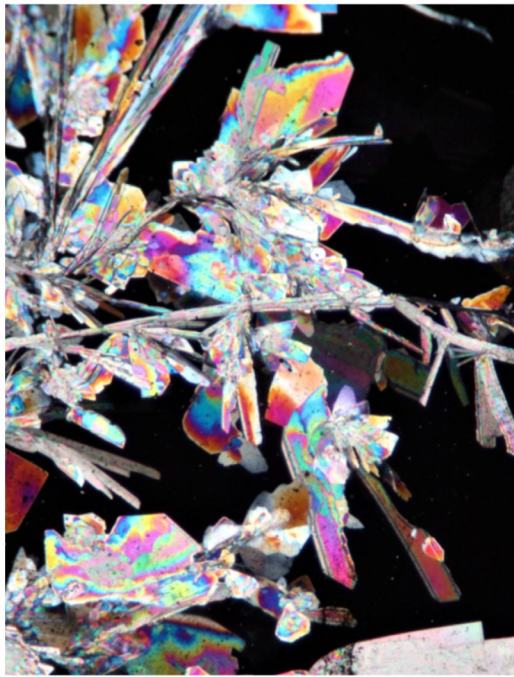
estuary

2023

This year's editor of Acadia's Creative Arts Magazine **estuary** was Lukas Saklofske. In the fall he edited a digital issue featuring the art work and creative writing of twenty-seven different student artists and writers from across Acadia campus. The Spring print issue includes new work along with some of the best writing and art from the fall digital issue for a total of twenty-nine student contributors.

Both the digital and print issue make use of the stunning photograph "Talc Under a Microscope" by

Geology student Amanda Smith as the cover image pictured here.



On Tuesday, April 4 a launch was held in BAC 325 with readings from many of the contributors including all ten members of the Advanced Poetry Class and Faculty Advisor to **estuary**, Dr. Wanda Campbell pictured below.

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



The Advanced Poetry Class at the estuary launch, (back row left to right) Jack Simpson, Alex Bazin, Erica Halliday, Max Rowell, Julia Sylvester, Gwen Williams, Gwen Trombley, Lily Street, (front row) Ty Wright, Lukas Saklofske, and Wanda Campbell.



Coming out of the isolating years of the pandemic, BAC Talks were imagined by Dr. Kait Pinder and Dr. Chelsea Gardner as a way to reconnect as a community by sharing research within Acadia's Faculty of Arts. Many thanks to the Faculty of Arts and the Office of Research and Graduate Studies who continue to facilitate these scintillating discussions.

BAC Talk: Julianna Will

On November 18, Dr. Julianna Will spoke on her research in Classics and Victorian Studies as a continuation of the BAC Talk lecture series. Dr. Will's talk, entitled "**That Never-Ending Rustle of Poplar Trees: Pater, Hopkins, Monet**" was based on a paper co-authored with Dr. Lesley Higgins, "Quelled or Quenched in Leaves: The Poplar Experiments of Pater, Monet, and Hopkins." The three post-romantics, Pater, Monet, and Hopkins share a common use of poplars as a symbol for life's essence and fragility. Dr. Will compared the three men and their figurative and literal usage of poplar trees within their work, followed by a question and discussion period with the audience on the symbolism and functionality of these trees through Classics and Victorian lenses. *E.C.*



BAC Talk: Wanda Campbell

An intimate series focusing the spotlight on faculty research at Acadia was pleased to feature a talk from English and Creative Writing Professor Wanda Campbell. Dr. Campbell presented her talk entitled "**The Body as a Map in the Work of Bronwen Wallace**" to an audience of over a dozen students and faculty. The talk consisted of an overview of Wallace's poetry, short fiction, and essays, and the significance of body imagery which permeates her work. *E.C.*

BAC TALKS

BAC Talk: Jon Saklofske

On March 10th, 2023, "**This Too Shall Pass: Valuing the Impermanence of Digital Game Experiences**" featured Dr. Jon Saklofske discussing his research in digital humanities / narratives and the cultural purpose of digital storytelling. He stated that "It is easier to read a 200-year old book than it is to play a 30 year-old video game" identifying the time-limited experiences that video games offer to players and how the cultural practicality of video games is dependent on their ability to be accessible and available. The presentation articulated the difficulty of the preservation of



media, given the constant evolution of technology, and how access can be sustained for consumers. He discussed games such as "P.T." (a free demo released in 2014 for the PS4 that never materialised as a complete project due to ongoing legal disputes) and the short-term life span of game data that eventually fades from physical storage systems (such as cartridges and CDs). He argued that the permanence of video games is unrealistic. In that light, his research suggests (with the supportive framework of Dr. Raiford Guins) that video games should be remembered as cultural experiences/events and not artifacts.

Video games are unique as they encompass shared events with performative and limited opportunities. In a digital age that frequently questions the future of preservation and immersion perception of consumers, Dr. Saklofske concluded with an examination of the permanence of storytelling: "Is there an inherent assumption in this presentation that stories and storytelling are somehow more permanent? Should this paper's advocacy for embracing ephemerality extend to the inherent mutability of all forms of media, even those more event-based media experiences?" *L.S.*

ACADIA ENGLISH ASSOCIATION EVENTS



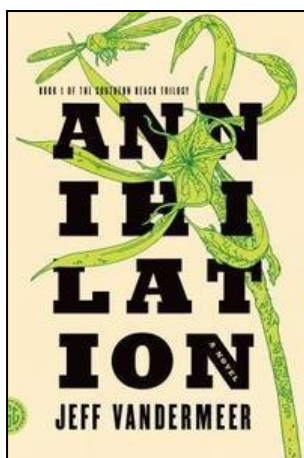
AEA Picnic

The Acadia English Association held its first social on October 1st with a picnic at the Wolfville waterfront; the event turnout was high, with many attendees from other disciplines expressing their interest in English and the AEA. There were snacks provided, pleasant conversation and discussions, and a short walk on the dykes to watch the sunset. A very encouraging and enjoyable first event of the semester!

The invitation: “Bring some bad poetry (silly poems, works in progress, embarrassing works from when you were 7, etc.) or anything else you’d like to share for the open mic!” Gwen Trombley enjoying the AEA and *Ath* Year End Social.

AEA Book Club

The AEA has continued their book club event series, this semester reading the novel *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer. The club met over two sessions to discuss the novel to a great turnout, and later hosted a screening of the movie in the BAC.



AEA Year End Social

This year the English Association teamed up with the *Athenaeum* staff for their release of the yearly print edition. Actually, these days the paper is pretty much run by English majors: Abby-Jean Gertridge is Editor-in-Chief, Alexa Wilcox Copy Editor, Alex Bazin Productions Manager, to list just a few of the many English majors keeping Acadia’s *Athenaeum* vital. The event was organized into three stages, a social hour, literary trivia, and an open mic. The event took place April 7 in the MacKeen Room. There was a great turnout (all the tables were full and lively during trivial pursuit) and lots of excellent snacks and juices. Although the social was meant to end at 9:30, people stayed around to chat long after that!



VOICE

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The Voice of the 4th Floor BAC Department of English and Theatre is printed at the Acadia Print Shop. The online version and more about Acadia’s Department of English and Theatre can be viewed at <http://english.acadiau.ca/>