



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2014

**PRESIDENT:** Stephen Slemon

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Nat Hurley

**COORDINATOR:** Laura Schechter

**GRADUATE ASSISTANTS:** Joseph Ren and Tia Lalani

### Table of Contents

- President's Message
- Vice-President's Message
- Sessional Rep's Message
- *ESC*: Update from the Editor
- Today's Chuckle
- News of Members
- News from Associate Organizations
- The Executive

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Stephen Slemon**

### Representing the New Faculty Majority

We *still* don't have competent statistics about contract academic faculty numbers within the Canadian postsecondary industry, a fact that speaks volumes in support of the hypothesis that ignorance is motivated. We do know that the numbers are growing. One report, on staffing at the University of Ottawa in 2011, located 850-900 contract faculty against 1200 tenured or tenure-track faculty. Another found that about one-half of all undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo are taught by contract faculty. The situation is better known in the United States. In a President's column, MLA President Michael Bérubé reported that "adjunct, contingent faculty members now make up over 1 million of the 1.5 million people teaching in American colleges and universities." By all appearances, the landscape of postsecondary teaching in Canada is being

terraformed into something alien to the spirit of equitable participation and just labour: a place where the majority of "higher education" teaching is carried out by people with shamefully lower salaries than their tenure-track colleagues, a place where job insecurity is the emerging new normal, a place where the principle of academic freedom is everywhere giving way to a fear of speaking out. English Departments are at the centre of this transformation. In her 2012-13 Report to ACCUTE, published in our Summer 2013 Newsletter, Canadian Association of Chairs of English (CACE) President Margaret Steffler reported -- and this from a voluntary survey -- that at least 45% of teaching in Canadian English Departments is carried out by CLTAs or Sessional Instructors. Had the CACE survey included all English Departments in Canada, including those in all the colleges, the numbers would have been much higher.

We don't know the numbers, but many ACCUTE members do know a great deal about the experience of part- and full-time sessional labour in Canadian Departments of English. You inhabit a deeply uncertain space within the Department, let alone the Faculty and the University. A member of a majority, you are nevertheless, for the most part, invisible. Your full-time salary is perhaps a quarter of what your average tenure-track colleague makes. You may lack benefits. You have no institutional pension plan. You teach about double the number of classes and students than do the tenured members of your Department. Your greater exposure to actual student experience

doesn't give you much of a voice, however, in determining things like curriculum requirements, course texts, assignment norms, and the like. Indeed, your access to decision-making within the Department is, most probably, muted, and possibly non-existent. If you've been in the system for long enough, you have probably had your course assignment changed just days before the teaching semester began -- this with significant economic consequences. If you are just coming into the system, you may have found yourself locked out of the photocopy room when you showed up for your evening class, and with no sense of who to call in order to get your syllabus photocopied. You may well have found yourself without library privileges during the break between academic terms. You probably feel that if you speak out too loudly about your situation, There Will Be Consequences, and ones that will matter deeply to your present, and future, professional well-being.

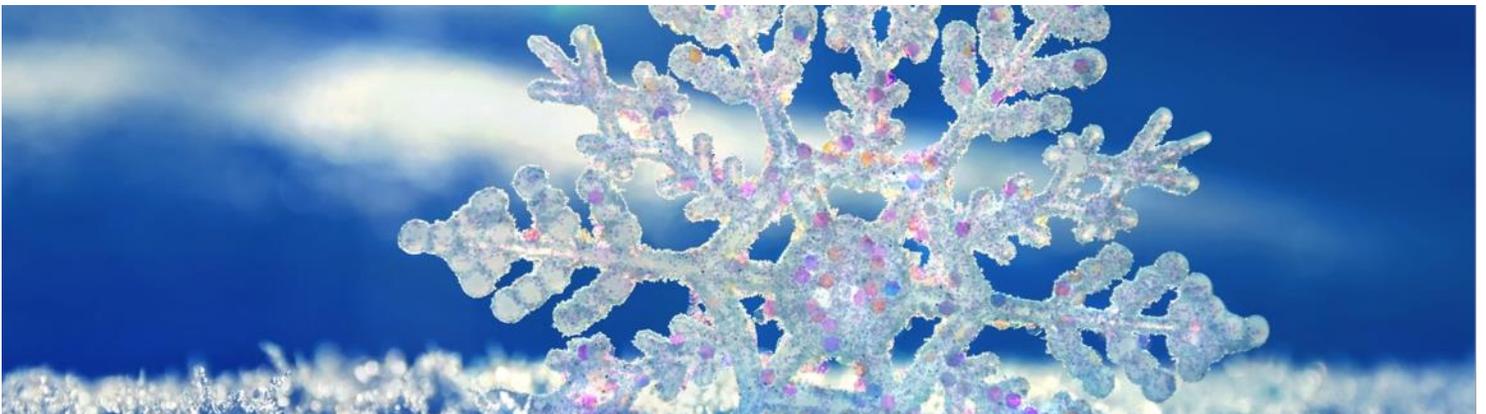
We must do more within ACCUTE to represent the growing professional concerns of what Indhu Rajagopal, in her 2002 book *Hidden Academics: Contract Faculty in Canadian Universities*, calls the "intellectual proletariat." We need to be more vocal as public advocates for equity in postsecondary labour, and more systematic as investigators of employment exploitation. We need to collaborate better on this issue -- with our sibling scholarly associations, with faculty associations and unions, and with the CAUT. We need to voice our concerns within the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, an institution that has yet to consider the untenable situation of contract faculty labour in Canada, let alone take a stand on the issue. We need especially to examine ourselves and our own

association, and to ask: is ACCUTE capable now of representing the majority of those who work as Canadian College and University Teachers of English?

One initiative ACCUTE is now pursuing is to develop a short, one-page Checklist of Best Practices on contract academic faculty in English Departments in Canada. Our checklist will probably *not* address the many arrangements for contracts, salaries and benefits that pertain to contract academic faculty: these differ widely across the country, and the advice we have received from the CAUT is that these important issues are best addressed through unions and faculty associations. What the checklist *will* do, we hope, is further recognition of and respect for contract academic faculty at the Departmental level. We plan to send this checklist out soon to our campus representatives and to members of CACE, in the hope that most English Departments will find time in their Department Council meetings to consider these best practices, and to find innovative ways to implement them.

It goes without saying that this initiative, in itself, is in no way sufficient to the challenge that lies before us. But perhaps it is a start. Our team for the development of this best practices checklist is an ad-hoc committee of ACCUTE administrators and contract academic faculty. We will report further on this initiative in this Newsletter, and at our Annual General Meeting in St. Catharines in May. If you have thoughts on what this checklist might usefully include, do please email them to us, or post them on the ACCUTE website.

Stephen Slemon  
University of Alberta



## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Nat Hurley**

### Winter Roundup from the ACCUTE Office

The University of Alberta ACCUTE team has officially entered the final winter of its mandate. Luckily, the season has been kind to us with a long stretch of mild weather. As the weather and the term heat up, in addition to preparing for Congress, we are therefore also preparing for the organization's transition to Dalhousie, which will take place after Congress 2014 has been put to bed. In preparation, we have turned our attention to putting in place all the elements for a seamless transition for Dalhousie team, soon-to-be President, Jason Haslam, and Vice-President, Lyn Bennett. We hope 2014 is off to an equally good start for you all, too. Here's what we've been up to:

- Working with contract-academic staff to develop strategies for advocacy in our rapidly changing work environments.
- Experimenting with new forms for the newsletter that allow us to link stories directly to our website.
- Preparing budget documents that forecast new financial realities for the organization based on diminishing support from universities.
- Discussing ways *ESC* and ACCUTE can enter into partnerships for the future sharing of resources and sustaining our professional activities in the organization.
- Updating the ACCUTE Manual of Practices to facilitate the transition to Dalhousie.
- Developing descriptions of tasks that various executive members take on from year to year (e.g. administration of the Priestley Prize, organization of the Committee for Professional Concerns, etc.).
- Assembling the program for Congress 2014 in St. Catharines.
- Arranging for funding for our keynote speakers, Stephen Guy-Bray (UBC) and Faye Hammill (Strathclyde).
- Corresponding with our Local Event Coordinator, Neta Gordon (Brock) about on-the-ground events in St. Catharines. (We think she could just as easily go by the

name Neta Goddess for all she's done for us thus far!)

- Tweeting up all the good news that comes our way and preparing for a celebration at Brock. If you have news of publications, awards, fancy appointments, or job postings, please be sure to send them our way.

One of the peculiar features of doing this job is that the minute you get the hang of it, you pass the job on to someone else to do. Although the preparations for this hand-off are keeping us busy, they also make us cognizant of just how fast time has flown. We look forward to celebrating the vibrancy of this organization with you all in St. Catharines and to dancing up a storm at L3. Maybe we can even persuade our incoming President to reprise his dance routine from Victoria?

Nat Hurley  
University of Alberta



### Dance, Dance, Dance!

The stage is now set for the annual ACCUTE Dance Party. ACCUTE members can boogie at St. Catharines night club, L3. As usual, the ACCUTE Dance party will be held on the Monday of our conference: 26 May 2014. Start polishing those dancing shoes!



## **SESSIONAL REP'S MESSAGE**

**Dorothy Hadfield**

The good news is, as Lee Skallerup Bessette (@collegereadywriting) declared in a recent blog posting, that “2013 was, over-all a good year for adjunct rights, particularly through unionization” (<http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/college-ready-writing/celebrating-successes-and-moving-forward>). She outlines several successful and optimistic unionization campaigns for adjunct and contingent faculty in the US: practical inroads towards organization, visibility and equitable representation with university employers. Bessette also provides links to several US organizations committed to advocating for the rights of adjunct and contingent faculty, including the aptly-named “New Faculty Majority.” The less optimistic implication is that these large-scale, corporate-level initiatives are apparently the only way to effectively address what has become an increasingly adversarial relationship between universities and the group that is becoming increasingly central to its teaching mission.

The scope of the problem in Canada, too, can hardly be underestimated. While statistics are sparser here, those we do have indicate that our universities are on par with our American neighbours in our dependency on the underpaid and unsecured labour of sessionals or “contract academic staff.” Maintaining systemic inequities in the academic labour force seems to have become almost a prerequisite for fulfilling a university’s teaching mission. Tuition and class sizes go up while the numbers of tenured faculty go down, enabling universities to deliver more teaching hours with less capital investment in a properly supported and professionalized labour force. It’s an exploitative, unethical, and inevitably adversarial state of affairs.

It’s a huge, ugly problem, and one that is going to require major, long-term, ongoing, co-ordinated efforts to address. Just looking at the challenge

invokes, Medusa-like, a sense of despair and helplessness that can be paralyzing. One of the things that I have found most encouraging in my term as ACCUTE's sessional rep is the executive's recognition of the importance of this issue. At our January executive meeting, ACCUTE's current and incoming presidents both reiterated the conviction that ‘sessional concerns are central to our organization’s concerns.’ This isn’t just an abstract or idealistic statement, but one that provides impetus to move from theorizing and discussing the problem to devising some practical ways to begin addressing it, to start somewhere.

Importantly, organizations like the New Faculty Majority (in the US: <http://www.newfacultymajority.info/equity/>) or the Contract Faculty group (in Canada: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/161956237317349/>) demand visibility, community, and a sense of agency as they agitate for a group for whom invisibility, marginalization, and disempowerment tend to be part of the regular job conditions. These are conditions that are codified at the larger institutional level, but that are perpetuated at the departmental level, oftentimes inadvertently. The departments I’ve worked in generally aren’t actively trying to disempower their contract faculty, but more often feel guilty or themselves disempowered about a situation that they didn’t create or can’t really control from within their departments. What we’ve been discussing within the ACCUTE executive is what kinds of improvements can possibly be made at the local level, improvements that might “trickle up” in terms of collegiality and empowerment, or at the very least, slow down the erosion of confidence, efficacy, and professional self-esteem that comes with the job for most contract faculty. It’s that local space where I’m hoping ACCUTE members are willing to intervene,

and encourage their colleagues and departments to do so as well. Over the next several weeks, I'll be part of an ad hoc group working to develop a list of suggestions for improving local working conditions for sessionals that should be readily achievable by virtually any department (i.e. that don't cost a lot or address areas governed by contractual limitations). Some of these suggestions will probably seem, at first glance, the kinds of things that can be dismissed as "merely symbolic." Then again, few literary scholars would easily dismiss the importance of the symbol.

Symbols have a way of making things --ideas, issues, ideologies, even individuals --visible, while simultaneously seeing them from a different perspective. Creating working environments where contract faculty are explicitly and respectfully offered visibility can not only change the way that others see us, but the position in and from which we see ourselves. And even that is a pretty good start for any year in adjunct rights.

Dorothy Hadfield  
University of Waterloo



**ESC: UPDATE FROM THE EDITOR**  
**Mike O'Driscoll and Mark Simpson**

*ESC: English Studies in Canada* is rocketing its way towards timeliness. We've stepped up our production schedule in the hope of bringing the journal's production schedule back on track, and are hoping to produce the March 2014 issue right around, get this, March 2014!

Watch for that one: 40.1 is a gem. Derritt Mason (Alberta) and Ela Przybylo (York) are our Guest Editors for the special issue *Hysteria Manifest: Cultural Lives of a Great Disorder*. With creative and critical talent from around the globe, the issue promises to generate some real excitement.

Meantime, we're very pleased to announce that former long time Associate Editor Mark Simpson (Alberta) has taken on the role of Co-Editor, alongside Mike O'Driscoll. The pair will be tag-teaming on the journal's business in order to keep things humming along.

As always, we're looking for the best scholarship there is to be had. Consider sending us your finest work: we're eager to get your ideas out to our world-wide readership in a timely and, as always, an impressive manner.

Mike O'Driscoll  
Mark Simpson  
University of Alberta



## TODAY'S CHUCKLE

**"The word 'forward' announces retirement, citing exhaustion"**

**Herb Wylie**

At a hastily called press conference at the headquarters of the *Oxford English Dictionary* yesterday, the word "forward" announced that, effective immediately, it was withdrawing from active service to the English language. After centuries of usage, it had reached the conclusion that it wasn't capable of going any further. It was sorry to disappoint the many people who had come to depend on it, said the haggard-looking adverb, but it could no longer keep up with the heavy demands on its time.

The versatile term, which also does duty as a noun and adjective, has seen a huge spike in activity over the last decade, and that reliance has taken its toll. It confided to the assembled media that initially it had thrived on its increasing popularity. "To be honest, at first I thought it couldn't last, that it was all so vague and -- let me be honest here -- weaselly." Instead, demand increased exponentially, until "forward" could go no more. "The last few years have been especially crazy," it said to reporters. "Day after day, I've been looking, paying, but mostly just moving and going, moving and going. Finally, I decided that I just couldn't take it any more, that it was time to pack it in. Life used to be so much easier when I was sharing the burden with 'progress,' 'future,' 'ahead' and others; 'from now on' won't even look me in the face any more. The hardest thing, though, was that more and more I felt I just wasn't contributing all that much, that most of those appearances were just for show. Again and again I found myself thinking, 'Why me?'"

Business leaders, politicians and figures from the sports world reacted with dismay and concern. Almost at a loss for words, they publicly appealed for a reconsideration of the decision, but there was no going back, the gaunt but relieved adverb insisted. In Ottawa, the Canadian Council of Chief Executive Officers called for the Harper government to intervene and designate providing verbiage as an essential service to the economy; the Prime Minister's Office, still adjusting to the unexpected development, declined to comment.

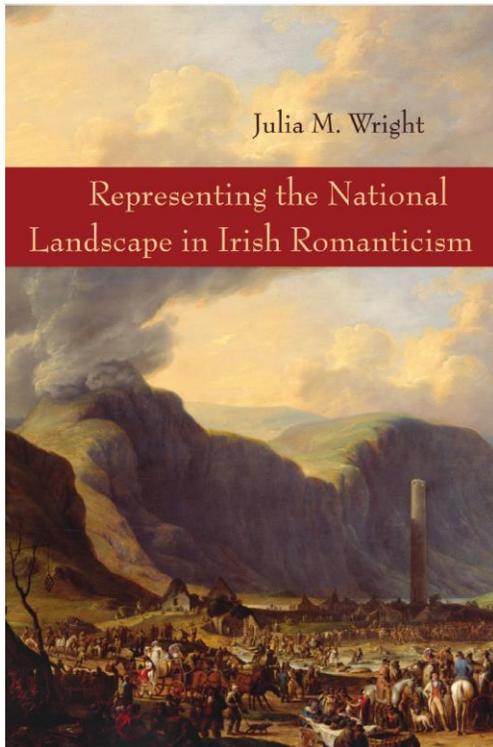


Asked if it had any regrets about dropping out of public use, the word confessed that it was particularly concerned about celebrities, business executives, public officials, and professional athletes implicated in financial, sexual and other kinds of scandals. "I recognize how comforting it has been to them to be able to move forward in trying times," it said ruefully, "but I'm confident that they'll find other phrases to turn to in their hour of need."

When reporters inquired about what it plans to do with all its free time, it sheepishly confessed that it was working on its memoirs. "I know, it somehow doesn't seem right for me to dwell on the past, but there it is. Right now, though, I'm still stuck on the title; I can't decide whether to call it *The Forward Story* or *The Story Forward*."

Herb Wylie  
Acadia University





**"The book combines incredible archival research with theoretical nous. It deals with many texts that have not been substantially written about before, and draws fascinating links between texts previously not fully noticed."**

—James Kelly, editor of *Ireland and Romanticism: Publics, Nations, and Scenes of Cultural Production*

**Contents:**

Introduction

1. The Maids of Killarney
2. "This Vale of Tears"
3. Transatlantic Movements
4. From Terror to Terrorism
5. Foreign Landscapes and the Domestication of the National Subject
6. Geopolitics from Drennan to Cavour

Conclusion

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Syracuse University Press

## Representing the National Landscape in Irish Romanticism

**Julia M. Wright**

**Cloth \$39.95s** 978-0-8156-3353-2

**ebook** 978-0-8156-5266-3

6 x 9, 360 pages, notes, bibliography

Series: Irish Studies

March 2014

**"A major contribution to Irish literary and intellectual history. Wright's astute and incisive analysis presents original perspectives on Irish literary history, reveals significant new tropes and connections within and beyond Irish literary tradition, traces the textual genealogies of iconic sites like Glendalough and Killarney, and explores neglected works by and interconnections among writers such as Charlotte Brooke, William Drennan, William Preston, Thomas Moore, Alicia Lefanu, John and Michael Banim, Lady Morgan, Denis Florence MacCarthy, and lesser known writers."**

— Mary Helen Thuente, author of *The Harp Re-Strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism*

Ireland as a nation has come to be defined in part by an ideology which conflates national identity with the land. From the Irish Revival's idealization of Irish peasants close to the land to the long history of disputes over ownership and rule of the land, notions of the land have become particularly bound up with conceptions of what Ireland is and what it is to be Irish. In this book, Wright considers this fraught relationship between land and national identity in Irish literature. In doing so, she presents a new vision of the Irish national landscape as one that is vitally connected to larger geographical spheres. By exploring issues of globalization, international radicalism, trade routes, and the export of natural resources, Wright is at the cutting edge of modern global scholarly trends and concerns. In considering texts from the Romantic era such as Leslie's *Killarney*, Edgeworth's "Limerick Gloves," and Moore's *Irish Melodies*, Wright undercuts the nationalist myth of a "people of the soil" and explores instead nationalist ideas of an international Ireland. Reigniting the field of Irish Romanticism, Wright presents original readings which call into question politically motivated mythologies while energizing nationalist conceptions that reflect transnational networks and mobility.

**Julia M. Wright** is professor of English at Dalhousie University in Halifax. She is the author of *Ireland, India, and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature* and *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation*.

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AND THE CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
PRESENT THE

## CANADA MILTON SEMINAR IX



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**Stanley Fish**

(Florida International University)  
“Milton and Interpretation”

**Johann P. Sommerville**

(University of Wisconsin-Madison)  
“How Original Was John Milton’s Political Theory?”

**Ann Baynes Coiro**

(Rutgers University)  
“Sufficient and Free: The Poetry of *Paradise Lost*”

**Jason Rosenblatt**

(Georgetown University)  
“Synthesizing Imaginations:  
Milton and John Selden”

Other speakers include Gary Kuchar (University of Victoria),  
Travis DeCook (Carleton University),  
Noel Sugimura (Georgetown University),  
and Elizabeth Hodgson (University of British Columbia).

**Friday-Saturday 9-10 May 2014**

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**Registration:** \$55 CAD/USD (faculty) and \$25 CAD/USD (students) **Banquet:** \$65 CAD/USD  
Please register online at: [canadamilton.eventbrite.ca](http://canadamilton.eventbrite.ca)

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Professor Paul Stevens (English): [paul.stevens@utoronto.ca](mailto:paul.stevens@utoronto.ca)  
Dr. Natalie Oeltjen (CRRS): [crrs@vicu.utoronto.ca](mailto:crrs@vicu.utoronto.ca)



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
Tuesday 27 May \* 8pm

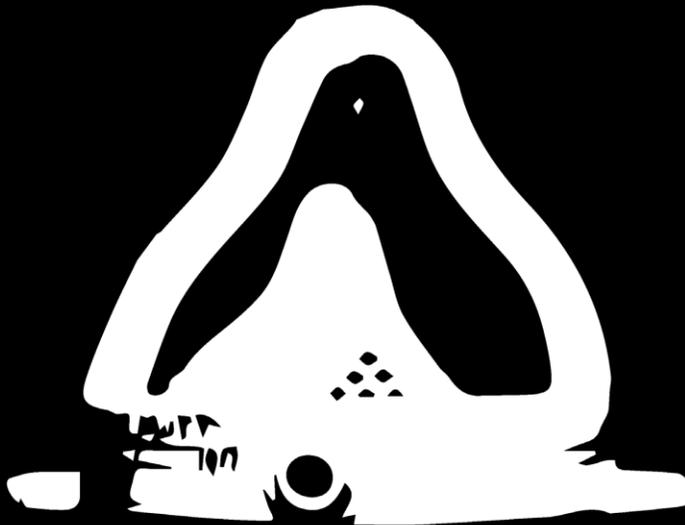


**featuring**

Alex Tigchelaar  
Jess Dobkin  
Tina Fushell  
Laura Kane  
TL Cowan  
Heather McLean  
Canon Cook  
Jazz Kamal  
Judy Virago  
The Ghost Taco

# Dirty Plötz

**The Reviled & The Revered | a Congress Cabaret**



**and the  
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Hoa Nguyen  
Maya Sues  
Operation Snatch  
And more....**

**Location to be  
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