

ACCUTE

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jason Haslam

It's April 28th. There's a blizzard outside, and no, I don't mean that figuratively. Well, I don't mean it solely figuratively. There is actual snow falling from the sky (note: Maritimers only call it snow now if it's "shovelable," which this seems to be). But my office definitely has its standard end-of-term-figurative-tornado look, along with several added layers of ACCUTE conference material strewn about—but the [conference program is posted](#), the parties are planned, and the intellectual and social energy of our collective work will surely melt through even Halifax ice! We're all terribly excited, and we hope you are too.

But there is another figurative blizzard blowing through postsecondary education in Canada right now (insert obligatory *Game of Thrones* joke

about winter and its immanence [here](#)). There's the recent and [ongoing scandal at Western University](#) regarding the symptom of its President's double-pay year, stemming according to some from the disease of poor governance; then we have to the introduction in Nova Scotia of Bill 100, [what is to this reader](#) the *dubiously* named "Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act." Between these and so many other newsworthy items,



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we seem to be witnessing the corporate university in full bloom.

But much like Nova Scotia's weather, or the bloom of the *Amorphophallus titanum* (left; literally the "giant misshapen penis," more commonly known as the "Corpse Flower" due to its rotting-flesh odour), this may not

have been the Spring renewal we were all looking for.

But still, every action brings its opposite reaction, and from labour, student, and faculty unions working together in Nova Scotia against Bill 100 (including [our friends](#) at [CAUT](#)), to votes of non-confidence at Western and their “alternative listening tour” and the always popular TABbies of our friends at the [Take Academia Back group](#), we are seeing some collective efforts to transform this cruelest of Apriils into future Springs that might engender a return of virtue to our Universities. But, as some of the columns in this newsletter show, it's not as easy as just waiting for the seasons to turn.

Certainly the many professional issues panels at this year's conference point to a desire for action. Collective and pointed action—in our own schools and Senates, in our Provincial legislatures, and elsewhere—is needed. Are your communities doing something that you think could be a model? Let us know: we'll include it on our blog, our newsletter, or both.



(SPRING IN HALIFAX: CARS BLOOM FROM SNOW)

ACCUTE Ontologies, continued

Moving onto other practical matters, you'll recall that in my previous column I spelled out ACCUTE's attempts to incorporate and to revise our constitution. The work is ongoing, but we will be making an important presentation at the ACCUTE AGM. In recent weeks, we have learned that due to ESC's success in generating royalties, we are now legally obliged to file an annual tax return with the Canada Revenue Agency, but being an incorporated not-for-profit means we won't pay taxes on that revenue, of course, since it all goes to the maintenance of ACCUTE and ESC. We have also been able to sign US tax forms that will ensure no taxes are withheld from our US aggregator revenue. All of this means the efforts of Mike O'Driscoll, Mark Simpson, Laura Schechter, and the whole ESC staff to maintain the vibrancy of the journal, **and to support the travel fund to conference for this year**, have been successful.

We have also learned that our constitutional reform will have to take the form of a new set of bylaws that conform to the legal standards for not-for-profits. These bylaws will include all of the missions and structures of our Association from our original constitution, but simply add to

that the legal boilerplate necessary to function formally as a not-for-profit. Finally, all of this activity means that we will be able to purchase the liability and errors and omissions insurance offered through the Federation, which will protect ACCUTE and ESC as we move into the future. Most of our sibling associations in the Federation have done this long ago.

This work is being completed as we speak so that we can present everything to our members at the AGM, so please make sure to come to that meeting. We'll also be having a brief presentation by a SSHRC representative on SSHRC programs, as well as our board reports that spell out some of our thoughts on the general professional matters addressed above, so please come. And after our AGM, we'll be hosting our annual Celebration of Research, at which we'll present the F. E. L. Priestley Prize! More on the conference below, but as always, [let me know](#) if you have any questions or thoughts you wish to share.

—Jason

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lyn Bennett

Among other things, your ACCUTE office has been busy putting the finishing touches on [our program for Congress 2015](#). We have a truly exciting line-up of panels put together by us, proposed by our members, and organized by our allied associations. Only at ACCUTE can you hear scholarly papers on topics ranging from "Environment and Oil" to "Digital Identities" to "Victorian Horrors," and many other topics in between.

This year, we're also excited about the series of panels we've scheduled into the "A" timeslot for many of our sessions. Focusing on professional issues, precarities, and the alt-ac job market, these panels address concerns that are of increasing importance to us all. Included among these panels is one titled "Fast Evil," an event organized by our friends at ESC. The panel may be neither truly evil nor heart stopping, but it does promise to

be memorable—be sure to attend if you're interested in a format that's new and fast-paced.

As well as plenary speakers Mary Chapman and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, you'll also be able to take in a roundtable co-sponsored with the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) and the Bibliographical Society of Canada (BSC). Titled "*The Future Now*," the roundtable will respond to and take up a number of issues addressed in the 2014 Expert Panel Report—also led by our U Alberta colleague, Patricia Demers—considering [the state and the future of "Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory."](#)

Congress 2015 also offers an intriguing line-up in the "Big Thinking Speaker" series, which are this year scheduled at convenient lunch-hour times during the four days of the

ACCUTE conference, as well as three "Career Corner" workshops addressing topics ranging from "How to Write a Lot" to "Publishing and Marketing Your Scholarly Book."

When you're done with your busy days, you'll want to be sure to check out our evening events: the Annual ESC Celebration on Saturday and the ACCUTE Celebration of Research followed by the renowned ACCUTE Dance Party on Monday. We've managed to secure great locations for each of these events, so you won't want to miss them—and be sure to bring your dancing shoes.

Congress 2015 is now only a few weeks away. We're very excited, and hope you are, too—and not only because the late spring means Ottawa's [600,000 tulips](#) might *all* be blooming. See you there!

—Lyn



COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Lynne Evans

ACCUTE's 2015 conference promises an exciting line-up of scholarly and social events! Our final program will be available online at www.accute.ca, where you will also find a complete list of speaker bios and paper abstracts. Printed versions of the program will be available at the ACCUTE registration desk (see below).

Make sure your conference social calendar includes ESC's annual bash on Saturday evening starting at 5:30 pm at the Must Kitchen & Wine Bar. On Sunday, everyone is invited to the Federation's President's Reception which begins at 5:00 pm at the Reception Tent on campus. On Monday, our annual Celebration of Research, where we announce the winner of the Priestly Prize for best ESC article, will be start at 5:00 pm in room 509 of the Arts Building. Later on Monday evening is our much-anticipated Dance Party at the Mercury Lounge beginning at 8:00 pm. (A link to U of Ottawa's campus map is [here](#); addresses for off-campus social events are listed in our [program](#).)

Conference Registration

ACCUTE's registration table will be set up in U of Ottawa's English Department, which is located on the 3rd floor of the Arts Building (70 Laurier East).

Please note that the ACCUTE registration table is NOT the same as the Congress registration area in the Montpetit Hall. When you first arrive at Congress, go to the Congress headquarters in the Montpetit Hall to pick up your Congress folder, badge, etc. The ACCUTE registration table (3rd Floor Arts Building) will have our conference program in booklet form.

All ACCUTE conference presenters must register both for Congress and for ACCUTE. If you haven't yet registered for Congress, you may do so [here](#). In

order to streamline the registration process at Congress, please make sure that your ACCUTE membership is up-to-date. You may renew your ACCUTE membership by following the links on our website under the "Join ACCUTE" tab (www.accute.ca) or by clicking [here](#). (Please note, if you are presenting a paper on a general pool panel or on a member-organized panel, you must be an active member of ACCUTE. If you are presenting on a Joint session panel, you must be an active member of ONE of the associations.)

Travel

Thanks to ESC's support of ACCUTE's operations, we are very pleased to announce that we will be reimbursing conference presenters up to 50% of their travel costs to Congress! Travel reimbursement forms will be emailed directly to conference presenters.

General Housekeeping

As Jason outlines in his report, our office has been busy with ACCUTE's incorporation. This change has required changes to our accounting systems as well as the completion and submission of legal documentation.

We've also been working on updates to our website. In addition to the most up-to-date version of our conference program, as well as speaker abstracts and bios, you will now find a listing of past ACCUTE Presidents and Vice Presidents on our site, which you can access [here](#). Right now, the list goes back to 1978, and we'd very much appreciate hearing from members who might be able to add to this valuable archive.

See you in Ottawa! —Lynne

COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS MESSAGE

Lily Cho

As we are on the brink of what promises to be another completely terrific meeting of ACCUTE at Congress, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the ways professional concerns have become central for our members. Such concerns are exhibited not only by the tremendous work of the [ACCUTE Contract Academic Faculty in Departments of English Best Practices Checklist](#), and not only by the packed rooms at all of the panels organized by the CPC, but also by the number of other professional concerns panels slated for the upcoming 2015 ACCUTE conference. In addition to the two panels organized by the CPC, "Drawing the Line: Literary Studies on Strike," and "'It's Not Me, It's You': Leaving the Tenure Track," I count at least six others. These include:

- "English Studies at a Crossroads" organized by Lee Easton and Jennifer Andrews
- "Critical Perspectives on the Crisis in the Humanities" organized by Paul Keen
- "Canadian Precarities: Local Uncertainties and Global Imaginaries" organized by Candida Rifkind
- "Canadian Precarities: Neoliberalism's Culture and the Precariat" organized by Jody Mason
- "The Business of Publishing" organized by Brenna Clarke Gray

Clearly, professional concerns panels extend far beyond the purview of the CPC. Such a wealth of discussion on urgent issues facing our profession, ranging as you can see from the rise of the precariat amongst our ranks, to approaches to the discipline, to publishing, to the sense of a continual crisis under which we seem to constantly operate, signals the importance of ACCUTE as a venue for engaging with the part of our work that does not

fit neatly into the usual breakdown of teaching, research, and administration. Indeed, it is hard to be in this profession and *not* be concerned.

The idea of professional concerns becomes especially pressing when larger narratives of uncertainty and crisis shape every aspect of one's work. Thinking about undergraduate teaching means thinking about the precipitous decline in enrolment numbers in our field of study. In my department's course offering meetings, I am only partially joking when I propose to re-name all of our medieval literature courses *Game of Thrones (sort of)*. Thinking about graduate teaching means thinking about the complete lack of correspondence between graduate enrolment numbers and tenure-track positions that are posted in any given year. Thinking about research means thinking about the article or book that one might write and the tremendous pressure faced by academic presses which are still the primary venue for the dissemination of that work. Thinking about one's administrative duties means thinking about being constantly asked to choose between the lesser of two evils (commit to more teaching or alternative stream appointments and risk losing future traditional tenure-track jobs, or lose the position altogether? Accept the proposals for graduate student recruitment numbers knowing full well that the job market will simply never catch up, or just let go of the budgetary support that those numbers might mean?).

But, if you are concerned, if you feel the pressure of all this uncertainty and crisis, how brightly this year's ACCUTE program shines! In addition to being the most important general conference for literary studies in Canada, it has become a real place for us to get together and talk, and organize, and mobilize. How incredible that we have this time and this space for putting our heads together and knowing that we can and will help each other find our way out of the zone of concern and into one of genuine critical engagement.

CONTRACT ACADEMIC FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE MESSAGE

Erin Wunker

April's Austerity Measures Bring...?

Since my last report as Contract Academic Faculty (CAF) representative, we have seen precarity in academia take a brief spotlight in the mainstream media. February 25th marked the first National Adjunct Walkout Day ([#NAWD](#)). While this was a movement that originated in the United States, and while American media outstripped Canadian media in attention paid to the issue, we did see the issue taken up here in Canada. Not long after the day of action contract workers at York University and Teaching Assistants at the University of Toronto went on strike. These instances of job action in conjunction with the call for adjuncts to walk out caught the attention of the *Globe & Mail*, which ran a series of surprisingly sympathetic pieces on the reasons for the strikes, as well as a Saturday focus section on the experiences of contract faculty and precarious workers in the Canadian context. The special section ran in print in the Toronto area and [online](#) for the rest of Canada.

Through a bit of happenstance, I found myself rather active in these public discussions during February and March. I was interviewed by the *Globe & Mail*, and I wrote a suite of posts for [rabble.ca](#) on [seeing contract workers](#), [the crisis in Canadian academia](#), and [some starting places for productive change](#). Of course, I also wrote a series of posts for *Hook & Eye*.

I'll let you in on something that makes me feel a bit sheepish: I felt pretty proud of all the writing and public discussion I was doing. There I was, an underemployed—indeed, unpaid—PhD-holding former Assistant Professor (limited term for five years) with seven years' experience in

undergraduate and graduate classrooms— university teacher talking about how CAF issues are sustainability issues... *and I was doing it in a public forum!* Sure, it feels lovely to have friends like my articulate-and-righteously-angry Facebook posts about CAF issues. Yes, it's nice to look at the reader statistics for *Hook & Eye* and see that a few people have read my posts, but really in the grand scheme of public pedagogy these social media forums fall under the umbrella of preaching to the choir. None of us should be surprised to hear that while you may change hearts and minds on Twitter (albeit for between thirty seconds to two weeks, which is the span of a hashtag going viral) *you do not change the material working conditions of a group of people by liking or retweeting*. As college and university teachers of English we'd do well to remember that we need both the contemporary modes of dissemination that social media offers *and* the sustained academic modes of communication and dissemination we've honed for decades. We need intergenerational collaboration at the level of people and process.

Let me say this again: I feel sheepish admitting I felt proud about my thirty-seconds in the *Globe & Mail*. Why? Because I thought, for one brief minute, that the whole issue might gain more traction.

Wrong.

In Nova Scotia, where I live, pay taxes, and, this year, draw Employment Insurance, the government just deregulated tuition. Elsewhere this could be perceived as a positive move that might free up some funds for hiring. This will not be the case in Nova Scotia, where we already have the third highest tuition in the country. Instead, this will likely result in a loss of out-of-province students and a heightening of austerity measures. As I write this, faculty, students, and allies in Halifax are gathering to protest Bill 100, the misleadingly named

Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act,

which radically restricts the ability to grieve and allows for the total effacement of extant collective agreements, should they contravene a given institution's "revitalization plan."

These are devastating moves, especially for precarious workers. Already, CAF workers are at risk of not having full union protection, if indeed they work in provinces that allow union organization at all. Once your 4- 9- 10- or 12-month contract finishes, you're no longer a union member. No union, no collective format for addressing systemic injustice on the personal or collective level. Unfortunately, this scenario of marginalization is replicated at the national level. For all the good work and support that CAUT can offer, there's not a lot happening to actively address CAF issues at the policy level much less on the level of material working conditions.

So where does this leave us? Enter the navel-gazing: for me, it has meant using the only tools I have—writing and communication—to continually talk about these issues in public. The result of my talk has already fundamentally negatively affected my attempts to secure stable work, by the way. I expect a public piece of writing like this one will be one more nail in the coffin of my academic career. So be it. In fact, let me be very clear, because I quite literally have nothing left to lose: unless tenured faculty members and precarious workers make CAF issues a central focus nothing will change. Why? Because precarious workers are not in positions of power to start or sustain policy-changing conversations. Because precarious workers are vulnerable. Because precarious workers know speaking out and speaking up pigeon-holes them as the squeaky wheel (do you know what my actual academic research focuses on? Not precarity.) Because precarious workers are either too over-worked to be involved in these discussions, or too invisible. Because precarious workers are being asked to fill in legitimate holes in departments

without being made stable members of that department. Because right now, in April, precarious workers are either gearing up to teach three spring courses to maintain their precedence and pay their rent, or they are applying for EI, or they are packing up to move to another city to follow the work and the dream that just doing all the things will make positive changes.

I'm here to tell you, things *will* change, but not in generative and sustainable ways. Students, graduate students, and especially precarious workers are living the materiality of the changes that are afoot. These changes to working conditions affect our everyday lives. We are not complainers; we are the test subjects for austerity measures. We aren't leaving the profession; we are being forced out.

I genuinely believe that the membership of ACCUTE cares about precarity, sustainability, and the future of our profession as a whole. We have a collectivity that could, if we choose, make a difference. I just hope I am around to help with that struggle, if indeed it does happen.



NEWS FROM *ESC: ENGLISH STUDIES IN CANADA*

Mark Simpson, Mike O'Driscoll, Co-Editors

To join or renew
your ACCUTE
membership,
please visit our
website:

accute.ca

ESC: English Studies in Canada has a full slate of activities upcoming at the ACCUTE Conference in Ottawa, May 30 – June 2, 2015. Be sure to join us for our annual ESC Roundtable at 3:30, Saturday, May 30th: for this year's Roundtable, we made a snap decision and opted for the organizing theme of "Fast Evil," and to make that happen we're inviting a group of eight quick-witted academics to take part in a series of lightning talks. And, of course, right after that the annual ESC Bash will take place—as always an opening day favourite. Join us Saturday, May 30th at 5:30-7:30 for "Capital Bash II: The Opposition Party," to be held at "Must" Kitchen and Wine Bar, in the Market at 41 William Street. This is a great chance to gather with your friends and colleagues in Ottawa's liveliest district, enjoy some camaraderie, and then head out for dinner. Be sure to join us at the ACCUTE AGM on the Monday at 3:30, to be followed by the ACCUTE Celebration of Research where the ACCUTE/ESC Priestley Prize will be announced!

Looking forward to seeing you in Ottawa. Warm regards from the ESC team.

Mark Simpson

Mike O'Driscoll

Read articles from English Studies in Canada online, through the ESC Archives, including winners of the F.E.L. Priestley Prize for the year's best essay. The 2014 Priestly Prize will be awarded at ACCUTE's Celebration of Research.

FROM OUR BLOG

Academic Communities and the Role of Collective Bargaining

Ann Martin, ACCUTE Campus Representative, University of Saskatchewan

The March 2015 issue of *University Affairs* includes an excerpt from *University Leadership and Public Policy in the Twenty-First Century* written by Peter MacKinnon, former President of the University of Saskatchewan and current President of Athabasca University. "Collision Course"¹ is an important piece, whether in light of recent court decisions that have a direct effect on university governance and labour relations, or in terms of President MacKinnon's historical sense of academic community and the role of collective bargaining.

Particularly striking is MacKinnon's critique of "The importation from the industrial world of a model of employer-employee relations that would have been seen at one time as anathema to the idea of a community of scholars." While it's not clear which community of scholars is referred to here, it made me think of Virginia Woolf's allusion to *Pendennis* and "Arthur's Education Fund," which, she writes, made "the noble courts and quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge often appear to educated men's daughters like petticoats with holes in them."² Such communities of scholars have so often existed according to those whom they exclude, so that members may pursue their research, teaching, and

¹<http://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/collision-course-collective-bargaining-university-governance/>

² Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. 1938. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. Ed. Michèle Barrett. London: Penguin, 2000.115-365.

administration in privilege, be it at home or in the colonies.

Of course, *Three Guineas* was published in 1938. But history is not, it appears, on President MacKinnon's side. In early February, the University of Saskatchewan withdrew its appeal of a ruling by Queen's Bench Justice Laing, which upheld Arbitrator Sims's earlier decision that the Board of Governors was not obligated to follow the President's personal recommendations on the award of tenure. This is an apparent departure from MacKinnon's view that "rules and procedures for awarding tenure and promotion should remain squarely in the purview of the governing bodies," and it reaffirms collegial processes rather than further enactments of Presidential veto.

A Supreme Court ruling from late January might also gloss President MacKinnon's stance on labour relations and academic work. In its decision on the unconstitutionality of Saskatchewan's Public Service Essential Services Act, the court has prevented the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan—two provincially designated "Public Employers"—to determine unilaterally which employees would be allowed to strike, should no agreement on the definition of "essential services" be reached through collective bargaining.

The right to strike and the right to peer review of career progress are forms of academic voice and agency, and I would argue that they have taken on added importance in the wake of the AUCC's 2011 Statement on Academic Freedom. While that statement reaffirms academic freedom in its relation to teaching and research, it omits any reference to the rights of faculty who participate in processes and discussions of university governance. I cannot help but wonder the extent to which this omission may have affected my University last Spring, when a tenured faculty

member was fired for insubordination relating to his administrative duties.

That said, in the weeks and months which followed Robert Buckingham's firing and rehiring, a more redemptive process of transformation ensued. Ironically, it was characterized by "the give and take, the push and pull, and the concessions sought and made" that President MacKinnon views as antithetical to "good governance."

But it is the function of the University—of tenured faculty, marginalized faculty, staff, students, community partners, administrators, and Board members—to engage collectively in such

push-and-pull discussions. These debates are not empty struggles for power. They are central to the University as it represents an historical process, and at the core of the on-going determination of who may participate in an academic community and with what means.

[The views expressed in this opinion piece are not intended to represent the perspectives of my colleagues in the Department of English.]

Would you like to comment on this piece? You can by [clicking here](#).

2015 AGM AGENDA

1. Approval of Agenda
2. SSHRC Presentation (Special Guest Sarah Nicholls)
3. Approval of Minutes (2014 AGM)
4. Matters Arising
5. President's Report (Jason Haslam)
6. Vice President's Report (Lyn Bennett)
7. Financial Report (Lynne Evans)
8. Report of Editor of *English Studies in Canada* (Michael O'Driscoll and Mark Simpson)
9. Report of Priestly Prize Committee (Lisa Surridge)
10. Report of the Committee for Professional Concerns (Lily Cho)
11. Report of the Contract Academic Staff Representative (Erin Wunker)
12. Report of the Graduate Student Caucus (Nico Dicecco)
13. Election of New Members to the Executive Committee (motions to follow)
14. Report of the President of CACE
15. AOB
16. Motion to Adjourn



We're really looking forward to Ottawa.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The ACCUTE Executive will see two members finish their terms at the 2015 AGM. We are accepting nominations (and self-nominations) for two Member-at-Large positions. Successful candidates will be asked to serve as either CPC Chair or Chair of the Priestley Prize committee. These positions are usually held for two years and are likely to involve monthly conference calls, preliminary vetting of general pool proposals, attendance at the ACCUTE Conference (including Executive meetings), advocacy, reports to the membership in newsletters and at the AGM, and other duties specific to the portfolios. Please send any nominations or self-nominations to Lynne Evans at info.accute@gmail.com by May 22, 2015.

Thank you to Lily Cho and Lisa Surridge for their valuable service!

The ACCUTE Executive and Office

Jason Haslam (President)
Lyn Bennett (Vice-President)
Lynne Evans (ACCUTE Coordinator)
Stephen Slemon (Past President)
Nico Dicecco (Grad Caucus President)
Erin Wunker (Sessional Caucus Representative)
Lily Cho (Member-at-large, Professional Concerns)
Lisa Surridge (Member-at-large, Priestley Prize)
Joel Faflak (Member-at-large)
Mike O'Driscoll (Co-editor, ESC)
Mark Simpson (Co-editor, ESC)
Bryce Traister (CACE President)

With thanks...

The ACCUTE office runs only with the help of the ACCUTE executive and past offices, as well as members, but also with the help of colleagues, friends, family, and random strangers we accost on the street. They all deserve our thanks, especially as we have been working through the incorporation, constitution, and accounting (oh my!). We also need to thank the following for financial, material, and moral support at Dalhousie:

Krista Kesselring and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Chair David McNeil and all of our colleagues in the Department of English

Ottawa tulips, wikimedia.com; Amorphophallus titanium, US Botanic Garden; all other photos by our clearly amateur photographer-president.