PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:
LEAPFROGGING THIS MOMENT

GREGORY BETTS, ACCUTE PRESIDENT

Looking him up and down, she said: Oh Simon, you’re so important-looking, I’m afraid you’re going to be assassinated. He picked up his lanyard and studied it critically. It’s this, he said. It makes me feel like I deserve to be.

—Sally Rooney, Beautiful World, Where Are You (2021)

I read this passage shortly after the ACCUTE team had discussed details about lanyards for our upcoming conference in Montreal this May. It was evening and so I slipped away into Rooney’s brisk depictions of the Dublin I know. It wasn’t a total escape, though. I felt a little wistful knowing that I would not be getting back to Ireland any time soon, even though I have a new book of poems to be published there in March. This passage from Rooney, though, leapfrogged that certain-to-be-lost moment and brought me back and further forward to Montreal.

The Angle is a member-driven quarterly newsletter published by ACCUTE. To contribute, please contact info.accute@gmail.com.
Literature is often reduced to grand themes and marvellous exploits, but it can also expand the smallest most fragile details of our immediate moment. The present alters the meaning of the past, as Erich Auerbach says in *Mimesis*, by renarrativizing it to suit what is new now. In a similar way, the future writes (or will re-write) the meaning of the present. We sometimes seem to get a glimpse of the future unfolding in books when they resonate in the world around us. In any case, we are getting lanyards in Montreal. We all deserve to be.

The extended deadlines for panel and paper proposals have all passed and vetting reports are now pouring in. It is already clear that there will be a rich, variegated, and necessary conference this late Spring with over 225 presentations. The next issue of *The Angle* will have all the highlights and details, but the addition of the Creative Writing Collective has delivered a significant and welcome rise in creative panels this year. Early Modern, Gothic, Romantic, Indigenous, Canadian, American, Digital Humanities, and more are well represented. We have confirmed two keynote presentations by Gail Scott, a Montreal-based experimental novelist, essayist, translator, and acclaimed contributor to Québécoise feminist language theory, and by Kaie Kellough, a Montreal-based novelist, poet, and sound performer, who recently received the 2020 Griffin Poetry Prize, the 2020 QWF Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction, and whose most recent work was longlisted for the Giller Prize.

More details of their talks, and other plans, will be available soon, including hybrid options, but we are once again starting to let ourselves start to get excited. The hybrid options we are developing remind me that we are staring past the current pandemic abyss that we are stuck within, hoping the possible future is not consumed by the rise of Omicron. Beautiful world, where are you? Perhaps in response to my expanding worry lines, Neta Gordon told me not to write *anything* about COVID. I'll thus be brief on the topic: We don't know how long this wave will last, nor how things will be four months from now. It won't be 2019 all over again. It also won't be 2020. We can go fully online if necessary and, either way, we will make our final decision by the first of March. Be safe, take care of yourselves in the meantime, and reach out for help if you need it. For now, there is nothing to be done but to forego the dire present, hunker down and reach out to possible futures. So, we get down to the details, room layouts, catering, and, indeed, even name tags in anticipation of the days that deserve to be.
DISCIPLINARY VALUES:
THE ENGLISH MAJOR,
THE PRIESTLEY PRIZE

SARAH BANTING

MEMBER-AT-LARGE:
PRIESTLEY PRIZE

ACCUTE welcomes Sarah Banting as ACCUTE’s newest Member-at-Large, overseeing the Priestley Prize. Sarah Banting is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Languages, and Cultures at Mount Royal University in Calgary, where she teaches first-year academic writing, Writing about Literature, editing, and senior English courses. She researches and publishes on disciplinary rhetoric, tracking the styles, structures, and purposes or motives that characterize scholarly writing in English literary studies and inquiring into how we recognize and report each other’s research when we cite it. She has recently become more interested in what is taught (besides texts), when English is taught: what methods, habits, and rhetorical strategies are the legacies of our undergraduate teaching, and what that says about our curriculum.

This winter, I am thinking a lot about the values that shape our work. I’d like to use this column to highlight a major conversation about pedagogical and curricular values happening this spring. I’m hoping you’ll be part of it. I would also like to point out, here, the curious way that disciplinary values operate in some of ACCUTE’s routine annual business.

At the 2014 meeting of the Canadian Association of Chairs of English, two sessions were dedicated to the questions, “Is your department shrinking? How can we ensure the proper resourcing, and the proper use of existing resources, for programs and departments in periods of population flux?” In 2021, despite not being a chair, I can attest that my department at Mount Royal University is shrinking, at least in one sense. Our enrollment remains roughly steady. But eight tenured faculty members have retired or moved elsewhere without replacement in the past ten years; several more are eligible
to retire soon. We hope to get a few tenure-stream hires, but we will be lucky to fill even a quarter of our vacant offices. And without ample hires, it looks unlikely that we will continue to teach all of the core courses promised to our incoming English Majors without relying yet more heavily on precariously-employed sessional faculty or teaching well outside our areas of specialization. Until recently, we required our Honours students to take two courses in Pre-1750 literature and two in Pre-1900; this year, we sacrificed the distinction, to allow ourselves flexibility in offering historical literature courses. This was a triage decision.

I assume it’s a common experience to triage program decisions for budget reasons. It’s gutting and faintly embarrassing. We want to make program changes for positive reasons: on the basis of our values (what we believe English majors ought to learn and experience, what is core to the discipline) or, perhaps, of our people (what are our specialties, what do we want to teach).

What strikes me, though, is that the question of what positive curricular and pedagogical values should shape the English major is not a settled one. How do we balance our responsibility to sustain a shared tradition against our responsibility to decolonize our programs? How do we integrate, or weight, the different branches and coverage areas of the discipline in meaningful programs of study? How do we develop strong student writers and researchers without imposing a racist, classist standard English? These questions—like the question of what to cut, if cut we must—sharpen further when we consider how programs at our respective institutions integrate and compare with each other: can our students transfer credits smoothly between schools? Will an undergraduate degree from here be adequate foundation for acceptance into graduate school there?

These are timely, pressing questions, which extend important conversations at recent ACCUTE conferences and webinars about the ends and futures of English (see, e.g., Cummings et al.). So I invite you to join me at Mount Royal University, virtually or in person, this April 28th and 29th, for a workshop on the English Major—“English and the Humanities, Here, Now.” Email me at sbanting@mtroyal.ca to express interest in presenting or participating. I would like to think that—despite the diversity of our institutions and programs, of our provincial contexts and department identities—we Canadian college and university teachers of English can come together, now, to think about the English Major and what matters to this degree, so that the next time a department is faced with making curricular decisions, they can do it with assurance.

Meanwhile, this winter, I have the pleasant privilege of chairing the Priestly Prize committee, on which I am grateful to be joined by an impressive group of scholars from across the country: Drs. Lorraine York, Andrea Beverley, Katja Thieme, and Anna Veprinska. We are tasked, says ACCUTE policy, with selecting the “best essay published in English Studies in Canada” (ESC) last year. The word “best,” and the policy’s silence about what “best” might entail, return me to the question of our disciplinary values.
As I've remarked before at ACCUTE conferences and in ESC, our values—like our motives and our methods (see Thieme)—are traditionally tacitly assumed rather than named outright in scholarly publications or teaching. But they are traceable: rhetorical analysts watching us write, teach, and grade student essays have detected our consistent attraction to values such as complexity, social justice, originality of argument, and the interconnection of literary texts in historical contexts (see Wilder; Linkon; Banting “If”). And these values are articulable: Rónán McDonald’s recent edited book, The Values of Literary Studies: Critical Institutions, Scholarly Agendas, acknowledges a longstanding disciplinary skepticism about values (5), but also collects essays articulating a diverse range of recognizable values, including “critical attention” to the reader’s openminded experience “in engaging with a literary work” (12).

I look forward to reading your brilliant work this winter, and to undertaking with the committee the impossible task of ranking it. I suspect, like all good discussions in the discipline, ours will jumble a variety of perspectives and criteria. But it will surface and strengthen shared values too. May good conversations ever do so.

Works Cited


“Reimagining forms of relation entails imagining new genres of experience,” write queer theorists Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman in Sex, or the Unbearable. This statement gives rise to a series of questions: How are “genres of experience” related to literary genres? If autobiography is the genre most closely tied to “experience,” how does this genre shift in relation to newly lived and conceptualized life stories? How can the autobiography therefore be used to reimagine forms of relation?

Autobiography has experienced countless transitions across time and space as well as literary form and genre. This panel will foster a discussion on the connections between gender and genre in the contemporary autobiography. As we see more queer and trans autobiographies gaining traction in publishing industries, we can trace how writers experiment with the genre to represent and play with identity in their work. This panel turns to the contemporary autobiography to examine the ways in which writers use their personal experiences to not only reimagine forms of relation but also to expand the limits of the autobiographical genre itself.

As the title "Trans- Autobiography" suggests, this panel's focus is meant to be expansive. The term trans- can act as a prefix, evoking concepts like transitions, transformation, translation, transdisciplinary, transliteracy, transcontinental, transgressive, etc. Thus, the autobiographies that we will discuss can range from Canadian and American works to global anglophone, diasporic, postcolonial, and comparative literatures. Although autobiographies written before the contemporary (post-45) era can be discussed, the goal of this panel will be to trace how gender and genre intersect in contemporary autobiographies more specifically. However, gender is not the only aspect of identity that is to be considered -- an intersectional approach that encompasses gender along with sexuality, race, class, ability, religion, etc. is important for this panel. We will focus on work that is playful and experimental with both genre and identity, work that seeks to bend and break boundaries.

Please submit your proposal using ACCUTE's [Online Submission Form](mailto:). For further details email Anna Kozak at anna.kozak@mail.utoronto.ca
Grief refrains us. Words fail to contain it.

I am caught off guard by your last photograph. How it divides the present, and keels over.

Where is this place to hold, and be held by?

Try to read other poets, theorists, people. No one knows what to do so they apologize.

Learn that loss has its own time, and you are a small animal reeling.

Swim in pools of Freud’s theory, only to forget what I’ve read.

Write several elegies upside down.

Softly tell the body, this is only temporary.

“I don’t want a theory; I want the poem inside me. I want the poem to unfurl like a thousand monks chanting inside me,”

Sina Queyras, *MxT*
on my last night in the Plateau a sultry bartender
dances atop the table with another femme,
champagne coupes popped, arms raised
under half a dozen stuffed ostrich heads came back to life:
mouths agape, eyes wide, necks swinging left to right
as the dancer harnesses girls from Ipanema
who shashay and go ahhh
leaving this city in spring was a particular kind of woe—
now we’re all missing Montreal

Shannon Webb-Campbell is a
member of Qalipu Mi’kmaq First
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As academics, our lives are structured around various forms of connection. We connect daily with students, colleagues, and researchers to share knowledge and common experiences; these connections shape our lives and careers. Indeed, our vocation thrives on and demands connection — we are asked to teach and conference in equal measure, sharing our ideas as widely as possible and building lasting scholarly connections. In March 2020, the built-in avenues for connection with students and researchers changed fundamentally and, in many cases, disappeared altogether. Suddenly, we were confined to our homes, our streets, our towns, barred from our offices, our classrooms, and our conferences in every traditional sense. In a field that is already precarious for so many, this shift was a cataclysmic one. There were no longer avenues for connection built into our daily lives, and research sharing opportunities shrunk.

Now, almost two years beyond that moment, we are still coping with the changes COVID-19 wrought on our lives as researchers and educators. However, with the proliferation of online international conferences, talks, symposiums, and teaching, it seems that we have begun to see digital forms of learning, networking, and sharing research as opportunities rather than disappointing, best-case-scenario alternatives.
I have personally found ways of sharing my ideas and research with people all over the world in spite of the pandemic and its limitations. This shift in perspective is an important one, and I want to consider where and how I began to think differently about my relationship to digital learning and research, which brings me to #AcademicTwitter. As the pandemic forced us to change the way we research, network, and learn, #AcademicTwitter usage went up, and #AcademicTwitter, more than perhaps any other social media service, has accommodated this casual blend of personal and professional life when networking in person has remained an impossibility.

For the purposes of my work, I have chosen to define Academic Twitter, or #AcademicTwitter, as the online Twitter community of university faculty, graduate students, researchers, educators, and anyone else who classifies themselves as an academic. It typically encompasses various academic communities that are divided by discipline, such as the humanities or STEM. As with any social media platform, any given users’ engagement is curated by both the user (based on the people they follow) and the service (Twitter shows them tweets it thinks they might like). #AcademicTwitter is focused largely on the realities of the academy, CFPs, academic/research advice, and personal research and teaching anecdotes. There are whole accounts (such as the popular @AcademicChatter) that amplify and promote academic voices and struggles. Before the pandemic, this was a thriving community, and my contention is that usage increased afterwards.

I conducted a survey on Twitter in October 2021 to gauge academic users’ engagement with Twitter and their thoughts on the community post-pandemic. Overall, roughly 50 users participated in the survey, and despite variables inherent in this research — the survey was open to anyone from any discipline — the results speak to a general consensus about the way #AcademicTwitter functions in a research and networking context as we continue to live and work through this pandemic.

I began the survey by asking, “Is your Twitter exclusively centered around your scholarly work or a blend of your personal/professional life?” Almost 74% of respondents answered “Personal/Professional.” #AcademicTwitter has a dual function in the academic community. It serves as a humanizing force, or a way for academics to control their own personal and professional narratives in contrast to the often-rigid value that the academy places on professional accomplishments. However, it also serves as a place for researchers to share ideas, ask questions, and promote publications, which has become a crucial avenue of research sharing during the pandemic. The ability to construct this dual identity and the way that construction varies based on each user might be one reason behind #AcademicTwitter’s prolific use amongst academics.

The survey continued by asking, “Do you see #AcademicTwitter as a community with networking opportunities? Have you made professional connections/friends over Twitter?” and almost 90% of people responded Yes. This question and its affirmative response points to the globalized nature of #AcademicTwitter.
In a time when our individual geographies take on a different meaning and the pandemic has forced us to limit our travel to both familiar and unfamiliar places, the no-place or place-less nature of the internet in general and Academic Twitter more specifically has taken on an important significance. As researchers, part of our jobs is to share our work with others, whether that is sharing in a strictly academic context or in a forward-facing humanities environment, and when that aspect of our work is limited, the focus on networking, interacting, and sharing via this platform again underscores its potential for community building that cannot be understated.

Meghan Burry, Doctoral Candidate at Queen's University and former Graduate Student Caucus President for ACCUTE, and Jesyka Traynor, Doctoral Candidate at Queen's University and ACCUTE member, agreed to be interviewed for this piece and they agree that Twitter's networking opportunities are beneficial. Traynor says that Twitter has connected her to scholars around the globe: “#AcademicTwitter has connected me to scholars I wouldn’t necessarily have the opportunity to meet. I’m an Americanist living in Canada and many of those scholars are inaccessible to me in various ways. It helps me to see what the American system is like [and] it keeps me in the loop.” Traynor’s primary networking opportunity came through virtual talks at universities all over the world. “Most of the talks that I attended, especially during the pandemic and in isolation, were because I learned about them on Twitter.” Burry believes that #AcademicTwitter has helped connect her with other academics who are coping with the daily conflicts of academia: “I find it useful to engage with the pedagogical approaches of other institutions but also with the issues graduate students are facing. I find academic Twitter gives us an inside look at those struggles in a different way than other platforms.”

The third question focused on how individuals primarily use #AcademicTwitter. The question was, “What is the primary purpose behind your engagement with #AcademicTwitter?” and gave four possible options: “Calls For Papers,” “Failings of the Academy,” “Help and Encouragement,” and “A Sense of Community.” The responses were split, perhaps because respondents felt torn between options, since these areas are where #AcademicTwitter coalesces the most.
However, it is extremely significant that almost 65% of respondents chose “A Sense of Community” as their ultimate answer. Indeed, Burry's and Traynor's responses to similar questions touched on each of these elements of #AcademicTwitter as a driving force behind their engagement with the community. Above all, this sense of a community with shared or similar interests, priorities, and struggles is what drives people’s engagement with this Twitter community.

The final survey question proved essential for considering #AcademicTwitter post-pandemic: “Since the start of the pandemic, has your engagement with #AcademicTwitter gone up?” 85% of respondents indicated that yes, their engagement had increased. When asked a similar question, Burry and Traynor were quick to agree. Burry said that “I joined #AcademicTwitter during the pandemic and it was a saving grace. It connects [us] to a sense of community and helps [us] feel less alone when academia is already so isolating.” Traynor concurs, saying that “I don't think I’m on Twitter any less or anymore than I was pre- or post-pandemic, but I've certainly relied on it to connect me to certain events, talks, or books that I wouldn't have been able to access, especially when the library was closed.”

There is something important to be said about the way Twitter interacts with our digital learning and research models. If we know that people seek out and engage with #AcademicTwitter for a sense of community that fosters networking and research sharing opportunities, then it follows that this application would become more significant in our lives when our teaching and research practices are more remote than they have ever been.

Overall, the respondents use their #AcademicTwitter accounts as a window into both their personal and professional lives, they have made important and professional connections through Academic Twitter, they are looking for and finding a sense of community on Twitter, and since the start of the pandemic, their engagement with Twitter and all of the various forms of networking and research practice that it promotes has increased. Despite the variables in this casual survey, the results are an important window into what online communities can do for us as academics. We are in career positions that are often precarious and confusing to others, and we have become more isolated than ever as a result of the pandemic that has made all of our usual ways of communicating nearly impossible. Therefore, #AcademicTwitter is no longer a casual component of our profession. Rather, it seems vital to the new way in which we live and work.
A FIGURE

And I will figure a new way to make you move. My fingertips under your tongue will circumstance your tongue-tip tapping T behind your teeth, and these are principles, not rules, but I inhabit you, I make you move.

A FREIGHTER

A freighter ran aground against volcanic rocks and I waded into kneedeep water on the reef and scooped up an armful of lost things for you

And I ran barefoot on dry ground and cutting grass and I said, You will never get away with this, You will answer for what I found for you and I

Meghan Kemp-Gee lives somewhere between Vancouver, BC and Fredericton, NB. She writes poetry, comics, and scripts of all kinds. She co-created the webcomics Contested Strip and Space Heroines of El-Andoo, and her comics and short fiction have been published in numerous anthologies. Her poetry has recently appeared in PRISM, Copper Nickel, Rising Phoenix Review, Stone of Madness, Altadena Poetry Review, Anomaly, Train, and Rejection Letters. She studied at Amherst College and Chapman University and is currently a PhD student at the University of New Brunswick. She also teaches composition and plays ultimate frisbee. You can find her on Twitter @MadMollGreen.
INTRODUCING: THE/LA COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY LEARNING

PHILIP RICH

*Philip Rich* is the Research and Training Coordinator for *The/La Collaborative Inquiry Learning* and a Research Assistant for the Deindustrialization and Politics of Our Time (DePOT) project. He has an M.A. in Teaching and Learning from McGill University and an M.A. in History from the University of Guelph.

The/La Collaborative is a SSHRC-funded partnership led from McMaster University that is dedicated to creating new ways of mobilizing Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA) know-how directly within communities. It relies on the involvement of academic experts and graduate students from all SSHA disciplines to build stronger campus-community partnerships. Under the direction of Dr. Sandra Lapointe, The/La Collaborative has recently secured a series of new funding from SSHRC, Mitacs, and the Future Skills Centre to expand into a cross-sectoral educational network that reaches across Canada, and globally.

The/La Collaborative Inquiry Learning is being launched over the course of the 2021-22 academic year. The/La Collaborative Inquiry Learning allows SSHA experts to extend their “office hours” to the community — directly supporting elementary and secondary school teachers and students, and benefiting the communities that experts work and live in. These collaborations are organized through an innovative online platform that streamlines the collaboration process for both the teachers and the experts. Connection Brokers on the platform create and curate a new type of collaboration between K-12 teachers and academics experts focused on supporting deeper inquiry methods in the classroom.

“I really enjoyed meeting with the group of high school students to answer their questions about how to design an unbiased and effective social survey,” Dr. Michelle Dion, a faculty member at McMaster University who participated in a recent K-12 collaboration, writes. “I found them to be engaged and prepared to ask good questions, which gave us an opportunity to discuss both their current survey project as well as more general principles about how to collect opinion data and analyze it.”
A new kind of resource for Canadian teachers to access, The/La Collaborative Inquiry Learning aims to enhance the student learning experience by directly meeting the needs of teachers and, along the way, the needs of academics and graduate students as well. Teachers across Canada benefit from access to on-demand subject-matter/content experts who can enhance teachers’ capacity, expertise and resources for activities associated with inquiry learning approaches. This may include developing guiding questions, collecting data, or presenting results for formative or summative assessment, among other stages of inquiry-based learning projects. Subject-matter experts like academics, Ph.D students, and postdoctoral researchers have the extensive research know-how to support these inquiry learning tasks.

The/La Collaborative depends on the engagement of academic experts to meet the needs of teachers. With the support of academic experts, teachers increase their capacity and academics get the opportunity to share their research knowledge and know-how more broadly. By participating as an expert on the platform, ACCUTE members will have the opportunity to mobilize their research experience and disciplinary knowledge to enhance capacity around the teaching of English and Literature in elementary and secondary schools across the country. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of literary and cultural studies to dozens of students, potentially including future English and Cultural Studies undergraduates who may feel inspired after engaging directly with academics. Dr. Violetta Igneseki – another faculty member at McMaster – participated in an early pilot collaboration. “One of the things I hoped to get out of this experience was to open [the students’] eyes to what we do at the university level,” Igneseki explains, “and to get them excited about learning and asking questions and hopefully encourage them to come to university.”

We would love to hear from you! If you have any questions or are interested in learning more about supporting K-12 teachers in your community please don’t hesitate to contact Phil — Research and Training Coordinator for The/La Collaborative Inquiry Learning — at philip.rich@yourcollaborative.org or sign-up today by visiting www.yourcollaborativeinquiry.org and select ‘I am an Academic Researcher’.

Inquiry-based learning is used in elementary and secondary schools to help students develop indispensable skills: critical thinking, problem solving, information literacy, deliberative reasoning, creativity, empathy, and citizenship knowledge.

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✓ Click ‘I am an academic expert’ and sign up with your university email
✓ That’s it you’re signed up! A connection broker will contact you when a teacher needs your research know-how and expertise
AN EXCERPT FROM: “THIS IS HOW I REMEMBER HER”

DOUBLE WAHALA, DOUBLE TROUBLE

UCHECHUKWU PETER UMEZURIKE

Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike holds a PhD in English from the University of Alberta. He is a poet, fiction writer, essayist, and literary journalist. An alumnus of the International Writing Program, Iowa, USA, Umezurike is a recipient of the James Patrick Folinsbee Memorial Scholarship in Creative Writing from the University of Alberta and the Norma Epstein Foundation Award for Creative Writing from the University of Toronto, among many honours. He is a co-editor of Wreaths for a Wayfarer, an anthology of poems. His children’s book, Wish Maker, was published with Masobe Books in 2021.

My mom pauses as if she heard what they called my dad. She turns around, gripping her broom. Her knuckles are jagged and white. Her cheeks are flaky like she’s moulting. Her eyes creep over the crowd, then settle on me. Eyes, more moonless than I’ve ever seen, bore through me. She doesn’t seem to recognize me. Maybe she has forgotten about me. Or maybe she is only pretending.

There was a man, a shell of a man, a wrinkled old man, who once sat at my school gate. He had shreds for clothes — that is, what was left of his faded army uniform. And he sang about the Biafra war, bony children with bellies the size of pumpkins, mothers with ribs dry as stalks. He sang about it almost every day, his voice a string of sighs, a slow-moving stream, a trace of something past and foul, grey with longing. Something had tricked his mind during the war, they said. That thing had snapped his mind apart shortly after. The look he gave us when we stopped to laugh at him. That was the same look in my mom’s eyes now — eyes that had gone on a journey, far, far, into the night, and had forgotten their way home.

The air clenches, and I feel its jab below my heart. I blink back the tears, but my eyes hurt. I can see clearer now. I dip my hand into my pocket, squeeze the angel pendant, and bring it into the light. I want to hold out my palm to her, so she can see its glitter. She will see that it’s still with me — safe, undamaged. And that I’m still here, waiting for her to come back.

My mom leaps forward.
The crowd scatters like flies off a half-eaten mango.

I remain standing, sure that she’ll not hurt me, that she will, at last, recognize me. She draws a circle in the sand with the broom, mumbling under her breath. Then she jumps into the circle and stands still for a moment, clutching the broom against her chest and squinting at all of us. She slowly raises her face to the evening sky.

“He’s up there,” my mom mutters, gripping the broom so hard the bones stick out in her knuckles.

Everyone throws their eyes up.

A few voices slither through the crowd.

“Who?” whispers a woman behind me.

“God?” another says.

“Mba nu,” someone else interjects. “She’s probably referring to the governor’s wife.”

“Open the door. He’s been waiting for me.” My mom’s voice quavers.

But that voice is not really hers. It sounds like water running through a sieve. Like the voice of the woman who used to speak to herself as she cantered up and down our neighbouring street. The woman had mysteriously disappeared after months of prowling the street, leaving behind her five children. Neighbours still talk about the pain her husband had burned into her when he ran off with her best friend.

“This is How I Remember Her,” is one of eleven stories included in Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike’s debut collection, Double Wahala, Double Trouble, released in November 2021. "In these compelling stories," observes Chika Unigwe, "Umezurike limns the lives of ordinary people trying to survive whichever way they can. Whether he is writing about a lover who makes a disturbing and unexpected sacrifice to secure her love or a man who loses his life in a case of mistaken identity, Umezurike's prose shines like something very carefully polished."

This excerpt is reprinted with the permission of Griots Lounge Publishing.
Brandon McFarlane is an award-winning Professor of Creativity and Leadership at Sheridan College. He leads the Creative Humanities initiative which responds to the creative turn in culture, the economy, and higher education by exploring the special nature of humanities creativity and how humanists bring value to society through just innovation. He has launched a number of Tri-Council funded social innovation projects in partnership with not-for-profits that have removed barriers to equity and inclusion in Canada’s creative industries. Similarly, he has led creative activities that adapted innovation management and creative leadership practices to make critical theory more accessible to diploma and undergraduate students, and piloted a new co-creation process for illustrated children’s books that represent themes of social justice. He authored the Omnibus Review of Emergent Fiction for the University of Toronto Quarterly from 2015 to 2019, and edited a special issue on the Creative Humanities (91.1) that will be published in February 2022.

Eric Schmaltz: Thanks for taking the time to discuss your work with me for The Angle, Brandon. Let’s start with your background. As I understand it, you completed Doctoral training in English at the University of Toronto with a focus on Canadian literature. Can you tell me about your research and area of focus in literature?

Brandon McFarlane: My dissertation was the first major study of Canada’s urban fiction. It introduced two novel ideas: firstly, literary scholars had no idea what ‘urban’ actually meant. The term was typically used as a euphemism for something else that was perceived to be threatening. So, ‘urban’ was often used to describe feminist, socialist, or immoral fiction. Later, it became a stand-in for foreign, immigrant, ethnic, or Black. It wasn’t until the 1990s that urban began to be associated with fiction about cities, urbanities, or hipsters, and it was most often used in a pejorative manner. These trends were the product of Canadian nat-
ionalism that often invoked a rural-urban dichotomy in which rural typically symbolized idealized Canadianness and urban symbolized an existential threat. I consulted other disciplines to find out how they defined and thought about the urban. So, for example, statistics Canada defined urban as a community with a population greater than 1,000 people. Geographers and economists often use urbanization to describe how even rural communities and wilderness spaces are part of a broader economic and cultural network typically anchored by a metropole. With this new knowledge, I began re-reading Canadian fiction from the perspective urbanism, not only to delineate the ‘great themes’ of Canada’s history of urbanization but also how authors aesthetically represented urbanism.

I became particularly interested in the broadscale creative turn in Canada. In the early 21st century, policymakers were highly influenced by Richard Florida’s creative city and creative class theses which, basically, argued that regions and nations that win the global battle for creative talent will be the economic winners of the 21st century. In response, Canadian cultural and higher education policy was reimagined to underwrite economic growth with an emphasis on attracting and training world-class talent. The policy shifts reimagined art and culture as industries that were funded and celebrated due to their commercial potential and ability to stimulate growth in other areas, especially tourism and hospitality. And higher education, especially in provinces such as Ontario and Alberta, was reimagined as a manufacturing line for training labour for the creative industries and incubating research that could be commercialized. In short, how Canadian society conceptualized and valued art, creativity, culture, and higher education radically transformed. The creative turn is a major theme in contemporary Canadian fiction. Authors were and still are taking issue with the broad-scale neoliberalization of creativity.

ES: You now teach Creativity and Creative Thinking at Sheridan College in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. When I first met you, the idea of “creativity studies” was new to me. Can you explain what creativity studies is and what a typical classroom looks like for you?

BM: Creativity studies is what it sounds like: the scholarly study of creativity. The field of inquiry was formalized by J.P. Guilford through his 1950 President’s Address to the American Psychological Association. He argued understanding and figuring out how to exploit creativity would be essential for maintaining America’s economic and military hegemony, and, at the time, there was little to no research on creativity. This context is important because creativity studies was, originally, the domain of psychology and cognitive science, which conceptualized creativity in ways that could be measured and studied through empirical research (and from the perspective of post-war American imper-
ialism). Creativity was something that happened in an individual's brain. For example, fluency is the ability to generate many ideas. Flexibility is the ability to generate ideas from many perspectives. Standard tests commonly measure fluency and flexibility alongside originality to determine an individual's level of creativity. The field gradually expanded to incorporate perspectives from design, business management, sociology, engineering, the arts, and, more recently, the humanities. Scholars from these fields introduced socio-cultural perspectives, and a newfound criticality that was more attuned to how creativity is used and abused—what scholars now call the 'dark side of creativity.' After decades of relative obscurity, creativity studies emerged in step with the creative economy as a major field of interdisciplinary scholarship.

For the last seven years, I've been instructing courses in Sheridan's Board Undergraduate Certificate in Creativity and Creative Problem Solving. It is a bouquet of breadth electives that survey creativity studies with an emphasis on fostering a creative personality, learning how to lead innovative organizations, and how to facilitate creative collaborations without coming to daggers. Sheridan is Canada's leading arts polytechnic, and we host a number of internationally top-ranked BA programs in animation, game design, and music theatre. Our students predominately enter the creative industries as either artrepreneurs who operate sole proprietorships or creative professionals working in highly collaborative settings. So, the intention is to enhance the employability and long-term resilience of graduates by helping them become reliable creative thinkers and innovative leaders. And, for me, this also involves training graduates who can positively transform toxic industries.

The metaphor I use to describe a creativity classroom is a sandbox, particularly the video game genre. Sim City is a classic sandbox game: there's no real telos. You imagine something, build it, appreciate it, demolish it, reflect upon the process, and have fun while doing so. In terms of teaching, this involves designing an environment that encourages tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking, and failure to nurture a creative personality. And it also involves transforming almost every activity into a collaborative creative challenge in which students apply course knowledge to make something or solve a problem. For example, Introduction to Creativity Studies begins by surveying definitions of creativity from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. I then point out a very interesting irony: we overwhelmingly use tired cliches to express creativity such as 'thinking outside of the box,' a sparking lightbulb, or iridescent colours exploding from a brain. I then provide teams with Play-Doh, and ask them to design an original monument to creativity. Importantly, the exercise activates creativity AND criticality, for students apply critical thinking and their knowledge of socio-cultural context to determine if their idea is indeed new. My colleague Dr. Alexander Hollenberg calls
this ability "critical creativity," and he makes a compelling case that humanists excel at nurturing this competency (see ESC 43.1). I actually do very little in the classroom beyond facilitating the experience, for most of the time students are collaborating away on challenges, sharing results, and reflecting upon the experience. It is more like a studio than a classroom.

**ES:** One of the things I'm interested in exploring is the transition you made from English literature to creativity studies. Can you tell me a little about that transition?

**BM:** My transition was influenced by intellectual curiosity and systemic challenges. By the time I finished my doctoral studies in 2012, I was mostly interested in researching intersections between creativity, culture, capital, and cities, or what I now call the 4Cs for short. The creative turn opened up some very exciting opportunities. Never before had art and culture been so essential to Canada's future but, oddly, that importance primarily emerged from their economic impact. In order to effectively research contemporary culture, one requires a knowledge of creativity studies and related insights from economic geography, urban planning, policy analysis, and innovation management (or, at least I think so).

Other factors related to the culture of the humanities. I was frustrated with 'armchair social justice.' By this, I mean the pursuit of social justice is essential to what we do as humanists, but there's an unfortunate tendency to prioritize research that has little impact in terms of achieving social justice. Yes, there's the 'trickle-down effect' from peer-reviewed research when it influences how a subject is taught and hence reaches a mass audience of undergraduates. But, I questioned what we accomplished by publishing highly abstract and amazingly rigorous essays in academic journals that only a handful of people read and even fewer cite. Sure, publishing an article is intrinsically rewarding (fun!) and can get you a job or promotion (money and more resources are great!) but we rarely try to solve the issues we problematize in our scholarship. I saw an opportunity to take what I learned about creativity studies and innovation management, and apply that knowledge to address the second-order consequences of the creative economy: inequity, gigification, precarity, and new forms of exclusion. In doing so, I attempt to bring new value and impact to others’ more traditional scholarship by applying their insights to create innovations that solve pertinent social and cultural challenges. Interpreting art and scholarship is essential to my innovative process, and I'm working on formalizing the process—tentatively called the Humanities Innovation Process (HIP)—to help others do so as well.

The humanities need to respond to the creative turn and strategically situate programs within neoliberal higher education. As we all know, humanities programs have experienced significant cuts and, generally speaking, enrollment
in degree programs have dramatically declined over the last 20 years (though, I suspect enrollment in breadth electives has skyrocketed). Every discipline is reacting to the neoliberalization of higher education. There's no reason why the humanities can't thrive or at least find a niche. But doing so requires trying new things. There have been few jobs in Canadian Literature, and beyond digital humanities communities there was little appetite for applied and innovative approaches to research and teaching. It was challenging to find a home for the type of research I wanted to pursue due to a scarcity of opportunity and, I suspect, resistance to new ideas which are often perceived to be threatening. So, there were broader systemic factors that pushed me towards creativity studies or rather a new community of interdisciplinary scholars interested in creativity.

I am very thankful I joined Sheridan College in 2015. They were eager to try out new approaches to the humanities grounded in criticality, creativity, innovation, and community service. And I’m also thankful to have the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with my creativity studies and creative writing & publishing colleagues. Similarly, there are few silos at Sheridan, so there are all sorts of opportunities to collaborate with wonderfully talented people from pretty much every discipline. We’re shaped by our institutions, their cultures, and the opportunities they provide. I became a Creative Humanist who brought creativity studies insights to the humanities and vice versa.

**ES:** The innovations in research and forms of community engagement that you mention above are refreshing. I also think the disciplinary pivots you mention are noteworthy for graduate students and emerging scholars in English who face a tough academic market as you did in 2012. What advice do you have for students finishing their degrees and trying to think about their next steps?

1. **Embrace risk-taking and failure.** True innovations require many years of failure (see all the ideas cut from your dissertation). In the classroom, try one new thing each week, disclose the pilot, and debrief. You'll dramatically improve your pedagogy and show vulnerability—students are learning a lot, which means they are failing a lot. They'll be empathetic and appreciative. Celebrate failures in hiring and pitching situations. Follow Lindy Ledohowski on social media, a pro at risk-taking and intelligent failure.

2. **Learn how to collaborate.** If your program provides few opportunities, volunteer for not-for-profits. Such experiences are also helpful for developing partnerships for grants or experiential learning, and/or securing alt-ac opportunities.

3. **Find the most important problems.** When networking, ask: what are the big problems you’re facing? Network broadly, disparate stakeholders are trying to solve the same wicked problems.
4. **Become a leader.** You can’t solve wicked problems on your lonesome. Meet lots of talented people. Discover their motivations. When you find your big problem, you’ll be leading the collaboration by recruiting a team of highly motivated people, securing resources, and helping teammates innovate. Channel your inner Dr. Smaro Kamboureli. Read Ed Catmull’s *Creativity Inc.* If you’re not ready to lead, find a mentor.

5. **Champion your innovations.** Innovation simply involves implementing ideas to create value. If you try a new lesson plan, you just innovated. Congrats! The challenge is explaining the newness of the idea and demonstrating its value, especially to non-experts. Write a story about the wicked challenge, how you struggled to overcome it, and the impact you created. See Robert McKee’s work on storytelling.

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The **Creative Writing Collective (CWC)** is a group of writer-academics, both students and professors, who answered ACCUTE’s invitation to all members to attend a meeting with respect to the founding of a Creative Writing Collective (CWC). We are pleased to share the news that the CWC now makes up a formal caucus within ACCUTE.

If you are an ACCUTE member with an interest in Creative Writing and you would like to be involved, please contact Erin Knight at info.accute@gmail.com. We extend a special welcome to any members who identify as belonging to an equity-deserving group, since our mandate puts diversity and equity at the heart of the Collective.

Find out more about the Creative Writing Collective [here](#).
Ruth Panofsky (Ryerson/x University) is pleased to announce the publication of a special issue of *The Journal of Canadian Jewish Studies / Études Juives Canadiennes* (issue 32) on Canadian Holocaust Literature. Dr. Panofsky was guest co-editor with Dr. Goldie Morgentaler of the issue. The first collection of essays on the subject, the issue features work by established and emerging scholars in the field. Contributors include Norman Ravvin, Jesse Toufexis, Nathalie Dolbec, Catherine Khordoc, Lucas F.W. Wilson, Sara Monahan, Brenda Beckman-Long, Joanna Krongold, and Anne Quéma.

Ruth Panofsky is an award-winning poet, writer, and editor. Her book of poems, *Laike and Nahum: A Poem in Two Voices*, won the Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award. She is the editor of the two-volume edition of the collected poems of Miriam Waddington and is recognized as “Canada’s foremost Wiseman scholar” for her books on the novelist Adele Wiseman. Visit her at ruthpanofsky.com/.

To read the issue online or to order print copies, please visit the website for *The Journal of Canadian Jewish Studies*. 
Mark Kaethler (Medicine Hat College) is happy to announce the publication of his monograph, *Thomas Middleton and the Plural Politics of Jacobean Drama*, part of Cristina León Alfar and Helen Ostovich’s series *Late Tudor and Early Stuart Drama: Gender, Performance, and Material Culture* (Medieval Institute Publications and De Gruyter.)

*Thomas Middleton and the Plural Politics of Jacobean Drama* represents the first sustained study of Middleton’s dramatic works as responses to James I’s governance. Through examining Middleton’s poiesis in relation to the political theology of Jacobean London, Kaethler explores early forms of free speech, namely parrhēsia, and rhetorical devices, such as irony and allegory, to elucidate the ways in which Middleton’s plural art exposes the limitations of the monarch’s sovereign image. By drawing upon earlier forms of dramatic intervention, James’s writings, and popular literature that blossomed during the Jacobean period, including news pamphlets, the book surveys a selection of Middleton’s writings, ranging from his first extant play *The Phoenix* (1604) to his scandalous finale *A Game at Chess* (1624). In the course of this investigation, the author identifies that although Middleton’s drama spurs political awareness and questions authority, it nevertheless simultaneously promotes alternative structures of power, which manifest as misogyny and white supremacy.

For more details about *Thomas Middleton and the Plural Politics of Jacobean Drama*, please visit the De Gruyter website.
ACCUTE is delighted to announce the publication of the second edition of *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry* (Broadview Press) by Susan Holbrook (University of Windsor). ACCUTE President Gregory Betts has described this book as “a consummate guide to the rich, nuanced field of poetry. For nervous novitiates, it demystifies the artform and provides an array of practical points of access. Holbrook is a wonderful, welcoming guide.”

*How to Read (and Write About) Poetry* invites students and others curious about poetry to join the critical conversation about a genre many find a little mystifying, even intimidating. In an accessible, engaging manner, this book introduces the productive questions, reading strategies, literary terms, and secondary research tips that will empower readers to participate in literary analysis. Holbrook explicates a number of poems, initiating readers into critical discourse while highlighting key poetic terms. The explications are followed by selections of related works, so the book thus offers what amounts to a brief anthology, ideal for a poetry unit or introductory class on poetry and poetics. A chapter on meter illuminates the rhythmic dimension of poetry and guides readers through methods of scansion.

The second edition is updated throughout and includes a fresh selection of poems and the latest MLA citation guidance.

For more details about *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry* please visit the Broadview Press website.

Electronic exam copies are available upon request.
Micheline Maylor (Mount Royal University) has published a new collection of poetry, *The Bad Wife* (University of Alberta Press).

*The Bad Wife* is an intimate, first-hand account of how to ruin a marriage. This is a story of divorce, love, and what should have been, told in a brave and unflinching voice. Pulling the reader into a startling web of sensuality, guilt, resentment, and pleasure, this collection asks: what if you set off a bomb in your own house? What if you lose love and destroy everything you ever knew? These poems have a disarming immediacy, full of surprising imagery, dark humour, and the bold thoughts of a vibrant and flawed protagonist. Balancing a need for wildness and the space to dwell, *The Bad Wife* explores the taut confines of those vivid, earthly pleasures that we all know and sometimes can’t escape.

I forgot the oath:

Do no harm.

-from “Yesterday, I Went to the Market”

Please visit the [University of Alberta Press](https://ualberta.ca) website for details. Find Micheline Maylor at [michelinemaylor.com](http://michelinemaylor.com).
ACCUTE’s mission is to promote the interests of those teaching and researching in the various fields of English Studies in Canadian colleges and universities. Your membership is more important today than ever. Visit accute.ca to renew.

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The Angle is a forum to make your voice heard. If you wish to contribute to this newsletter or submit Letters to the Editor, please contact info.accute@gmail.com.