The Coast Line

Newsletter of the UNCW Department of Creative Writing
This fall welcomed Issue 11 of *Chautauqua*, “Wonders of the World.” The annual journal’s dedication to expressing the values of the Chautauqua Institution have traditionally led the editorial staff to divide the anthology of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry into four themes: art, spirit, life lessons, and leisure. In addition to these core themes, Issue 11 debuted a young writers section, allowing for more reflection on personal, social, political, spiritual, and aesthetic inquiries. In “Wonders of the World,” these inquiries explore how curious and beautiful it is to be in awe of both the extraordinary and the ordinary.

Held on a late September afternoon in the courtyard of Wilmington’s Cameron Art Museum, the “Wonders of the World” launch party was well attended. It included cross-genre readings from the journal and musical accompaniment by Editor Phillip Gerard’s band, Whiskey Creek. Selected readings from Issue 11’s well over fifty contributors included Todd Davis, Susan Kushner Resnick, Kelly Hammond, Jacob Leitch, and Malena Mörling.

Todd Davis won the Chautauqua 2014 Editor’s Prize for his poem “The Last Time My Mother Lay Down With My Father.” Staff member Jake Bateman read the poem at the launch. Davis is the author of four books of poems, most recently *In the Kingdom of the Ditch* and *The Least of These*, both published by Michigan State University Press.

Staff member Diane Sorensen read Susan Kushner Resnick’s essay “Open,” which was first runner-up for the Chautauqua 2014 Editor’s Prize. Resnick is the author of two memoirs—*YOU SAVED ME; TOO: What a Holocaust Survivor Taught Me about Living, Dying, Loving, Fighting, and Swearing in Yiddish* and the first American memoir of postpartum depression, *Sleepless Days*. She teaches creative nonfiction writing at Brown University.

Kelly Hammond’s “The Working Hours” was second runner-up for Chautauqua’s 2014 Editor’s prize. Staff member Ashleigh Bryant Phillips read a selection of the short story at the launch. Hammond teaches in New York City and is currently working on a novel.

Young Voices Editor, Beth Gormley, read a young voices contribution—Jacob Leitch’s short story “Run Away.” Leitch is a ninth grader at Wilmington’s Coastal Christian High School, and this was his first publication.

UNCW’s own Malena Mörling brought the evening to an end with a reading of her poem “It’s Easy.” Mörling is the author of two books of poetry—*Ocean Avenue and Astoria*. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2007, and a Lannan Literary Fellowship in 2010. In addition to being core-faculty in the low-residency MFA program at New England College, she is an associate professor at UNCW.

Not only did the launch party celebrate exemplary creative writing from a variety of established and up-and-coming voices, but it was also a nice kick-off into the beginning of the fall semester, leading the Chautauqua Staff into the remainder of the reading season for the journal’s 12th issue, “Privacy and Secrets.”
Ecotone has of late been living up to its name, embodying a place of danger and opportunity. The magazine released its spring/summer issue in August, and launched its annual theme issue—this year, Sustenance—in late October. Recent action-packed months have resulted in Issue 17, featuring poetry from David Barber and Vievee Francis, nonfiction by Ander Monson and Joni Tevis, and fiction from Chantel Acevedo and Mikhail Iossel, among other extraordinary authors and artists.

The new, food- and appetite-focused Ecotone 18 boasts stories from Ron Carlson and Lee Upton, essays from Camas Davis and Matthew Gavin Frank, and poems from Elizabeth T. Gray Jr. and Rhina Espaillat. To fete this issue in a style befitting its content, Ecotone partnered with Feast Down East, a local food-systems development nonprofit, to host an al fresco farm-to-table community supper on November 7 in the courtyard of Kenan Hall. To top off the delicious launch, notable essayists Alison Hawthorne Deming and Randall Kenan, a native of Eastern North Carolina, performed readings of their work for the issue against the November evening sky. Deming and Kenan also signed guests’ copies of the issue. The event marked the conclusion of the Department of Creative Writing’s annual Writers Week, which featured many other Ecotone contributors.


In yet another homage to literal ecotones, this semester has seen Ecotone enter an exciting transition zone. In August, the magazine welcomed three new student editors: managing editor Katie O’Reilly, fiction editor Ryan Kaune, and nonfiction editor Peter Kusnic. Editor Anna Lena Phillips continues to lead the magazine and MFA practicum, joined by publisher and art director Emily Smith, associate editor Beth Staples, and poetry editor Laurel Jones. Founder David Gessner remains as editor-in-chief, and Ecotone continues to be produced thanks to much help from members of the MFA practicum and the staff of UNCW’s Publishing Laboratory.
This year, Lookout Books released its stunning anthology, *Astoria to Zion: Twenty-six Stories of Risk and Abandon* from Ecotone’s *First Decade*, to much acclaim. Booklist praised the collection, saying: “The breadth of the selected tales creates a satisfying and often enthralling collection that perfectly celebrates *Ecotone’s* first decade.” The *Harvard Review* said that the collection had “a feeling of urgency, as if the need for a short story must be argued for here and now.” *Astoria to Zion* also received a gold 2014 IPPY award in the anthology category from the Independent Publisher Book Awards.

With the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Lookout Books hosted a two-city literary mixer tour to promote the anthology. In Boston, Bill Roorbach, Steve Almond, and Matthew Neill Null (whose novel, *Honey from the Lion*, is forthcoming from Lookout in 2015) gave readings. The New York City event included authors David Means, Maggie Shipstead, and Douglas Watson. Several Lookout interns travelled with the faculty to set up and staff the events. Stephanie Harcrow, a second-year non-fiction MFA candidate, spoke about her experience planning and attending the events. “The act of writing is a communal experience that we share with fellow lovers of words,” said Harcrow. “The opportunity to participate in the *Astoria to Zion* literary mixer was a wonderful reminder of the social power of stories.”

In addition to planning outside events, the Lookout practicum, along with the *Ecotone* practicum, developed several new blog departments for the Lookout website this year—including “House Guest,” in which *Ecotone* and Lookout authors, cover artists, and editors discuss their work, processes, and answer questions; “Seven Questions” interviews with writers, editors, designers, and others working in publishing; “On Location,” which features photographs submitted by *Ecotone* and Lookout contributors; and “Lit News Roundup,” a weekly brief on current discussions in literature and publishing, as well as news about Lookout and *Ecotone* contributor accolades. Check out the Lookout blog at http://blog.lookout.org.
Writers-In-Action is a volunteer program run by the Department of Creative Writing in partnership with local schools. It was the brainchild of Layne Clark, an AIG teacher at John J. Blair Elementary. Since the program’s conception in 2000, it has grown immensely. I’ve had the privilege to work alongside Justin Klose and Heather Hammerbeck, the second- and third-year coordinators, respectively, placing mentors into classrooms. It has been an enlightening and wonderful experience.

In addition to placing other writers, I became a teacher myself. After my first class, I had terrible anxiety. I went home and tried to think of a way to get my students writing creatively. What I brought in the following week was the confidence boost that both the students and I needed to start a prosperous year—we brainstormed story ideas and made collages that the students now carry with them to keep the creativity flowing.

I was ecstatic when I saw how well the students responded. However, after that lesson, I noticed that the fourth graders needed much less prompting than older students to think creatively. When I mentioned this to another teacher I was told that children lose their creativity as they age. That idea changed how I approach my lesson plans. Now, I spend much more time coaxing the students to rely on their creative energies.

Some weeks I have an amazing lesson and others I walk away feeling as though I didn’t get through. But in either case, when I look at the work the children are producing, I can see that they are progressing. They are using their imaginations, and are engaging in the activities. Should I ever find my own creativity slipping, I will think of the students from Blair Elementary, who, despite a childhood filled with cartoons, smart phones, video games, and the Internet, invented new stories for me during every class. I can’t think of any way a Thursday morning could be more productive.
Most graduate programs are accustomed to steady turnover and transition, as faculty continue to climb the professional ladder. What makes Creative Writing at UNCW great is that our faculty have not done that; nearly all of us who have come here to teach have stayed. Lavonne has moved along on her journey, but not after giving far, far more to this community than any writing program, any university could ever hope for or expect. I say this not only as her friend and colleague but also as her former teacher.
When I first interviewed for a professorship at UNCW in the early spring of 1994, Lavonne served as my shepherd. She was an MA candidate in the English Department and had yet to begin her graduate studies as a writer. It’s an odd feeling now, 20 years later, for me to reflect back on the great distance Lavonne and I (and the rest of my colleagues) have covered together.

In brief, Lavonne was a fixture of poetry workshops that I taught back in the ’90s; she was among our first MFA in Creative Writing graduates and she was the first of our graduates to publish a collection of poetry. She was a dream as a student because she took everything so seriously and treated her classmates with such dignity and equanimity. These qualities simply are the hallmarks of her keen, ethical intelligence (as her students, and as all recent MFA graduates, can attest).

Lavonne had a great year in 1999. She finished her MFA, and was a lecturer in the newly formed Creative Writing Department. Philip Levine was our visiting writer that year, and he and Franny Levine liked Lavonne very much and often dined with her at her home. Lavonne’s first collection, Everyday Still Life, a gorgeously produced limited edition chapbook, won the Persephone Poetry Book Publication Award and came out that year. She was coming into her own, and enjoying it immensely.

As a lecturer, Lavonne would go on to publish two more poetry collections, each one winning a coveted publication prize. She became our MFA coordinator—a job she was perfectly suited for, as her skills in meticulous resource management, her careful and consistent insistence on fairness, and especially her unflagging kindness were in play throughout her time here. Indeed, these qualities were at the very heart of this department for many years. It’s impossible to imagine our MFA program without Lavonne’s steadying influence.

In fact, when I became department chair last year, perhaps the most comforting asset for me in assuming my new responsibilities was the fact that Lavonne would be MFA coordinator, and as long as she was in that office, I knew that our graduate program would be fine. I was thrilled to work beside her, and it was bracing to be exposed to such gentle and thorough administrative work. One thing that Lavonne made very clear to me, not only in meetings but in emails that came to me—even after hours, was that nothing mattered more to her than her students. It was as exactly as though each and every MFA student was family.

Lavonne Adams will always remain a cherished member of this community. In difficult times, I will ask myself what Lavonne would have done. She is the epitome of what a UNCW student can achieve, and what a UNCW colleague can aspire to in human terms.

It’s a cliché to say this, but the strength of our department comes down to one thing: the quality of the people who have chosen to invest much of their lives here, and the depth and quality of that investment itself.
ST: As a writer of fiction, how do you translate truth while also establishing trust in your reader?

KB: Fiction may not be literally true, but has to feel emotionally true, otherwise readers won’t believe it. A writer may start with something true, and then explore or exaggerate it; that’s the beauty of invention. But writing anything, nonfiction or fiction, can be daunting because you’re sharing a bit of yourself with others. It makes the writer vulnerable but it is also what makes the interaction between writer and reader so powerful.

ST: What questions do you seek to answer in your writing?

KB: The question differs in every project. I started my first novel, *Like Normal People*, when I was in my late twenties and was trying to figure out how one grows up and becomes an “adult.” By exploring the characters in the novel and their particular struggles with this issue, I tried to teach myself how to do this. In my second novel, *Town of Empty Rooms*, I wanted to explore the issue of how people communicate effectively. One metaphor I use to explore this is the idea that everyone lives in an “empty room,” listening to the sound of his/her own voice. When you can step out of this room, you are listening to another person. I found this a useful way to think about communication.
“I feel the joy of writing is staying with your work and watching it evolve.”

ST: You were born in California and attended the Iowa Writers Workshop, then moved to New York City, and now live here in Wilmington. In all of this movement, how have your personal experiences come to affect your voice?

KB: Eudora Welty has a wonderful line, “Everywhere you go, you meet part of your story.” Everything attaches to your work in some way, but you don’t know necessarily how it’s going to turn out until you sit down and work with your material. When we were in Taiwan, I wanted to learn about the country by writing nonfiction. So I went to a pet show and learned all about pet ownership in Taiwan, which was a specific and useful lens through which to see the culture. I also interviewed protesters who were involved in the Sunflower Movement, who had incredibly unique and powerful stories. As a writer, you never know how your experiences will leak into your work—it’s important to be open to all of them.

ST: There’s a lot of hype surrounding the phenomenon of categorizing writers, whether it be by gender, race, religion, etc. Do you find this to be helpful as an author?

KB: Sometimes my work deals more directly with issues of gender or religion, and sometimes they inform the story more indirectly. My second book focused on Jewish identity, partly because we had moved to North Carolina and for the first time and I felt that part of my identity was unusual. Growing up in West L.A. and then living in New York, Judaism just felt very ordinary. But here it definitely felt like it was a unique part of my identity. Fiction in its specificity is universal and can transport us into a multitude of different worlds. Honesty becomes a funnel that can lead you to different experiences within religion, race, class, and gender—any experience, really.

ST: Your fiction workshop this semester at UNCW focuses on the art of revision as part of the creative writing process. What led you to the philosophy of its importance, and why dedicate a course to this often-overlooked element?

KB: I started revising more seriously when I was in college. I would write a draft and then wonder how I was going to take the work to the next level. What I realized was that you have to be incredibly steely; sometimes people assume that if a draft isn’t perfect the first time, then that’s it. But that’s what’s problematic, because I feel that the joy of writing is staying with your work and watching it evolve. I also realized that I needed to nurture patience in myself. Once I was able to sit with my work longer, my work became better and better. You can create a vision of who you want to be as a writer, and this it can be achieved through revision.

In terms of devoting a class to revision, I thought we could treat the class as a lab and ask students to submit one story that evolves over the course of the semester. I started with undergraduates who never revised anything; the class opened them to the possibility of transformation and showed them that mastery of a story is possible—it’s not magic. That’s one of my favorite aspects of revision: anyone can do it. I love working with students because you don’t know what treasures are going to be found in their work.

ST: As a reader, what do you look for in good writing?

KB: I love to read work that feels risky, so certainly honesty. The writers I adore don’t hold back. I love Philip Roth, John Cheever, Erica Jong, Nabokov…writers who evoke reaction. I look for great sentences, the perceptions that help you see the world in a way you never have before. I’ve just started to read Karl Ove Knausgaard, who has amazing sentences that help you see things anew and expand your vision as a reader.

ST: Finally, if you could please complete the following sentence: Life is too short for…

KB: Worry, though this idea not one that I tend to follow. Life is also too short for doubting yourself and it’s very hard as a writer to not doubt because so much is uncertain. But the more that you can put fear and uncertainty in a box and close it away, the better off you’ll be. I hope to help students figure out psychologically how to find the right mind frame to continue working. One of the most difficult things to do in this culture is to become a writer, but it’s also one of the most rewarding.
Writers Week 2014

This year, Writers Week celebrated UNCW’s award-winning literary magazine, Ecotone. The week of craft talks, discussions, panels, and readings was concluded with a farm-to-table supper in Kenan Hall courtyard in collaboration with the nonprofit food system initiative Feast Down East, launching Ecotone’s Sustenance Issue.

November 3–7 marked the Department of Creative Writing’s 14th Writers Week. The annual symposium brings together visiting writers, UNCW students, and publishing professionals to discuss literature, craft, and current issues in the writing industry. Both MFA and BFA students attend presentations and manuscript conferences. All events are free and open to the public.
1. Kathryn Miles was the keynote speaker at Writers Week this year. She is an award-winning journalist and the author of three books: Adventures with Ari, All Standing, and Superstorm: Nine Days Inside Hurricane Sandy, which was just named a “must read” by Newsday. Her articles and essays have appeared in dozens of publications, including The Best American Essays 2009, History, Outside, Popular Mechanics, and UNCW’s own Ecotone. She currently serves as writer-in-residence for Green Mountain College and as a faculty member for Chamath University’s low-residency MFA program. She lives with her family in Portland, Maine.

2. Chantel Acevedo has received many awards for her fiction, including the Latino International Book Award and an Alabama State Council on the Arts Literature Fellowship. She is the editor of the Southern Humanities Review, and the author of several novels, including Love and Ghost Letters, A Falling Star, and The Distant Marvels, forthcoming from Europa Editions.

3. Belle Boggs is the author of Mattaponi Queen, winner of the Bakeless Prize and finalist for the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award. Her collection of essays, The Art of Waiting, and a novel, The Ugly Bear List, are both forthcoming from Graywolf Press.

4. Brock Clarke is the author of five books of fiction, the most recent of which are the novels Exley and An Arsonist’s Guide to Writers’ Homes in New England. His books have been awarded the Mary McCarthy Prize for Fiction, the Prairie Schooner Book Series Prize, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and an Ohio Council for the Arts Fellowship. Clarke’s individual stories and essays have appeared in the New York Times Magazine, the Boston Globe, the Virginia Quarterly Review, One Story, the Believer, the Georgia Review, New England Review, and the Southern Review, as well as in The Pushcart Prize and New Stories from the South anthologies, and on NPR’s Selected Shorts. Clarke’s sixth book, the novel The Happiest People in the World, will be published in November 2014. He lives in Portland, Maine, and teaches creative writing at Bowdoin College and in the University of Tampa’s low-residency MFA program.

5. Sarah Creech was born and raised in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and grew up in a house full of women who told stories about black cloud visions and other premonitions. Her work has appeared in StorySouth, Literary Mama, Aroostook Review, Glass, and as a finalist for Glimmer Train. She received an MFA from McNeese State University in 2008 and now teaches English and creative writing at Queens University of Charlotte. She currently lives in North Carolina with her two children and her husband, a poet. Season of the Dragonflies is her first novel.

6. Douglas Cutting is the broker in charge and vice president of real estate services of Garden & Gun LAND. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Davidson College, a master’s in creative writing from UNCW, a United States Coast Guard captain’s license, and real estate broker licenses in North Carolina and South Carolina. His work matches conservation-minded buyers with rural properties. Douglas spends his free time exploring duck, turkey, and fish habitats, and writing stories about those exploits in magazines like Sporting Classics. He lives on Daniel Island near Charleston, South Carolina, with his wife, Jeni, and three-year-old son, Hunter.
7. Amrita Das specializes in US Latino literature and culture and works with the construction of collective identities through literature. Her current research examines transnational Latino authors writing of Latin American issues. She also has an interest in contemporary post-modern Latin American and Caribbean literature, especially in issues of race, gender, and class. Amrita grew up and studied in India, and tries to bring her unique perspective to studying different cultures. She is the founder and organizer of Latino Book Club, which promotes US Latino culture through its literature and supports bilingual literacy among children in the community through outreach programs. She is also the founder of the student theater group Puro Teatro and currently the faculty advisor to the group.

8. Alison Hawthorne Deming’s most recent book is Zoologies: On Animals and the Human Spirit. She is the author of four nonfiction books and four poetry books, the most recent of which is Rope. Her first book, Science and Other Poems, won the Academy of American Poets’ Walt Whitman Award. She is the Agnese Nelms Haury endowed chair in environment and social justice at the University of Arizona and teaches in the creative writing program. She lives in Tucson, Arizona, and Grand Manan, New Brunswick.

9. Rochelle Hurt is the author of The Rusted City, published in the Marie Alexander Poetry Series at White Pine Press (2014). Her work has been included in Best New Poets 2013, and she has been awarded literary prizes from Crab Orchard Review, Arts & Letters, Hunger Mountain, and Poetry International. Her poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction have been published in journals like Mid-American Review, the Southeast Review, the Kenyon Review Online, Versal, and Image. She holds an MFA from UNCW, and is currently a PhD student in the Creative Writing program at the University of Cincinnati.

10. Randall Kenan’s first novel, A Visitation of Spirits, was published by Grove Press in 1989. Let the Dead Bury Their Dead, a collection of stories, was published in 1992 to wide critical acclaim. He is also the author of Walking on Water: Black American Lives at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century, and The Fire This Time. He recently edited and wrote the introduction to The Cross of Redemption: The Uncollected Writings of James Baldwin.

11. Anna Lena Phillips is editor of Ecotone. She formerly served as senior editor and book review editor at American Scientist magazine, and was a founding editor of the online journal, Fringe. A Pocket Book of Forms, her letterpress-printed, travel-sized guide to poetic forms, is forthcoming this fall. Her projects and pursuits are documented at todointhenewyear.net.

12. Patrick Phillips’ third book, Elegy for a Broken Machine, is forthcoming from Alfred A. Knopf in 2015. A recent Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts fellow in poetry, he is the author of two earlier collections, Boy and Chattahoochee, and translator of When We Leave Each Other: Selected Poems of Henrik Nordbrandt. His work has appeared in many venues, including Poetry, Ploughshares, the Nation, and The Pushcart Prize. His honors include the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Lyric Poetry Award from the Poetry Society of America. He lives in Brooklyn and teaches at Drew University.
13. Emily Louise Smith is director of the Publishing Laboratory and founder and publisher of Lookout Books and its sister magazine, Ecotone. She teaches Books & Publishing, Bookbuilding, and the Publishing Practicum, among other courses. With a background in advertising and development, Emily began her publishing career as an assistant to former CEO of HarperCollins Canada and Pub Lab founder, Stanley Colbert. After earning her MFA in poetry, she went on to work as an editor, designer, and publicist for Hub City Press, and in 2007, returned to UNCW to direct the department’s publishing certificate program and teaching press.

14. Mark Spitzer is the Editor in Chief of the award-winning Toad Suck Review, which is published by the University of Central Arkansas, where he is an associate professor of creative writing. Spitzer is a multi-genre writer and the author of 20 books, including Season of the Gar (University of Arkansas Press), Chum (Zoland Books), and Bottom Feeder (Creative Arts). Upcoming books include Return of the Gar (University of North Texas Press), Beautifully Grotesque Fish of the American West (University of Nebraska Press), and the eco-novel Garapaima (Moonwillow Press). Look for Spitzer on reruns of the Animal Planet series “River Monsters”.

15. Beth Staples is the assistant director of the Publishing Laboratory at UNCW, and Associate Editor for Ecotone and Lookout Books. She joined the UNCW faculty from The Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University where she managed the literary journal Hayden’s Ferry Review and the Center’s other publications from 2007 to 2012. She has taught classes and given lectures on editing, publishing, and fiction writing at various universities and conferences, and received her MFA in fiction writing from Arizona State.

16. Heidi Lynn Staples is the author of four volumes, including Noise Event (Ahsahta, 2013). Her debut collection, Guess Can Gallop, won the New Issues Poetry Prize, and her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including Best American Poetry, Chicago Review, Denver Quarterly, McSweeney’s Sestinas, and Ploughshares. She is assistant professor of English at Piedmont College in Athens, Georgia.

17. Patrick Thomas serves as the managing director for Milkweed Editions in Minneapolis. He acquires and edits books for the nonfiction list, manages marketing and promotion, while also managing a range of organizational operations, including tasks in finance, inventory, and distribution. He studied English and environmental studies at St. Olaf College.

18. Jay Varner received his MFA in creative nonfiction from the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His first book, Nothing Left to Burn, was published by Algonquin Books in 2010. His essays have appeared in Black Warrior Review, Oxford American, Lake Effect, and other places. He teaches writing at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.
Anna Lena Phillips joined the UNCW creative writing faculty in 2013 as the editor of Ecotone. She also teaches the Ecotone practicum, and special topics courses in publishing. Before coming to North Carolina, she served as the senior editor and book review editor at American Scientist magazine, and was a founding editor of the online journal, Fringe. She spoke with first-year fiction student Kate McMullen about her latest letterpress project, A Pocket Book of Forms.

Anna Lena Phillips makes books the way she writes poetry. Her most recent project, A Pocket Book of Forms, is a back-pocket sized guide to poetic forms. A fine-press object made with practicality in mind, each little book is handmade, each heading is handwritten, the text handset. It started as a fold up reference for a train trip, but A Pocket Book of Forms has made the transformation, as poetry can, from the personal to the beautifully intricate.

I had the chance to talk with Phillips about her love of poetry, her love of books, and about how doing something with one’s hands can feel like poetry. “Poets have thought of themselves for a long time as engaged in craft and the act of making,” she said. “For me and so many of us, our working lives are sitting in front of a computer and moving very little. There’s something really vital about making something with your hands, and about working on something that will have a physical result in the world.”

A Pocket Book of Forms, her most recent project, is currently on display with other selected submissions in Asheville, NC at Bookworks’s BookOpolis, a bi-annual celebration of book arts. Phillips mentioned some of the other creations there, including work by Jessica White, a printer from Asheville whose book consists of a continuous scroll viewed by rolling it through a diorama-style box. I told her about a friend who made a box out of folded paper triangles holding the text of a story, and the hundred or so triangles fit together to make a delicate box. “I think a lot of book artists are working at that intersection,” she said. “Books last a long time, they’re durable but they also are fragile. It’s easy to mess up a book, but at the same time we have books that have been with us for centuries. They live at the intersection of strength and fragility.”

That is exactly what A Pocket Book of Forms does. A sturdy little book, the elements of its design are intricate, and so are the techniques Phillips used to make them. The book developed from a guide she used to avoid hauling big books of form on long train trips. “When I looked around at all my guides to poetic form,” she explained, “they were all giant. There were big, hefty books, and I wanted to travel light, which is a challenge for me. So I decided that I needed a little travel-sized guide to some of the forms that I would likely want to write in.” The finished version of the book was the work of a 2013 winter residency at Penland School of Crafts, where she handwrote headings until they looked just right, scanned them and created photopolymer plates, then used the plates and other carefully selected typefaces as she handset her text, line by line, like crafting a poem.

“The necessity of getting up and moving around and thinking spatially and visually and using your whole body to make something—all this felt really important to me. I think when I bring that back to the work of writing, I feel more ready for it, more refreshed. People will say poetry lives in the body, right? It lives when we take it into our bodies and we when we speak it aloud.”

I told her I wasn’t sure I would carry the book in my own pocket, that I might worry something would happen to it. “I wanted it to be a beautiful object, but I wanted it to be durable,” she said. “I want people to feel like they can use it and get it dirty, dog ear the pages.”

We agreed that poetry is like that, too. “Poetry does endure,” Phillips said. “People think it’s fragile, but it’s going to stick around.”
Robert Anthony Siegel is an associate professor of creative writing at UNCW. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Oxford American*, *Tin House*, and *Bookforum*, among others. His short story, “The Right Imaginary Person,” won a 2014 O. Henry Prize, and his essay “Unreliable Tour Guide,” which originally appeared in *Ploughshares*, was named a notable essay in *Best American Essays 2014*. He has written two novels, *All the Money in the World* and *All Will be Revealed*. In addition to his many writing accolades, Siegel has also been a Fulbright Scholar at Tunghai University in Taiwan, and a Mombukagakusho Fellow at the University of Tokyo. He recently sat down with first-year nonfiction MFA candidate Griffin Limerick to talk about Tokyo, foreign languages, and being a stranger.
GL: At the beginning of your essay “Unreliable Tour Guide,” there’s this beautiful image of a telephone booth-sized shrine shoved between two concrete skyscrapers in Tokyo, your little nook of tranquility at the heart of organized chaos. Have you found your shrine here in Wilmington?

RS: I think everybody should have that shrine. Sometimes it’s just a book that you find so inspiring, you read a few pages and you’re ready to write. Or, just hold it in your hands, so you can feel that energy. The thing about Wilmington for me is we came here at a very chaotic time in our personal lives. We had a toddler and another one on the way, and it was my first experience in academics. So, the world was rolling around and I just had to catch as catch can. Often there’s no designated place in the house for me to write. I have to go to a room where there’s not somebody else, and that can be anywhere, including a closet. The shrine can be a particular place you go to. I know people have writing shacks, and I think that’s great. It could be a particular time of day. There are people who work only very early, or very late, and that becomes a place that they go, temporally.

GL: You speak Japanese and were able to access the country through language. It’s clearly helpful to get to know a foreign country by talking to its people. But can you see any benefits to traveling through a country and not knowing its language, relying only on motions or secondhand words?

RS: Totally. There’s this whole sort of underground academic movement, interested in what they call exophonic writing, which is writing that takes place between languages or bridging the gap between languages. A prominent figure in this sub-sub-sub-genre is a wonderful Japanese writer by the name of Yoko Tawada. After college, she moved to Germany and eventually got a PhD at a German university, and spends her adult life in Germany writing in either Japanese or German as the spirit moves her, sometimes in between them within the same work. But she writes a great deal about that interim period, when she didn’t speak German, and the experience of being out of language, in which I think there’s an enormous value. Because of course, we’re always in language, so it’s a different kind of engagement. I remember the first time I went to Japan, it was a much different country, less international than it has become. Stepping out of the airplane and into the airport—because of the lack of an alphabet—it was like I had gone to another planet. I hadn’t realized how dependent I was on the alphabet, not simply for communication and directional needs, but for a sense of comfort. I had been to Europe, but had never felt so lost as that moment, and it was that moment where I felt like “I have gone through the looking glass.”

GL: And how did you come out on the other side?

RS: I’m writing about this now, actually, in an essay about Taiwan. Coming out the other side is an experience of radical openness. Being a stranger is the best thing to be, because it’s what we really are. We’re here for a very short time, and we’ll never know more than a fraction of what there is to know. So that disorientation forces this openness to experience every moment, and every moment feels incredibly alive, because you don’t understand, or you’re struggling to understand, or you realize how little you understand, or you finally understand more than you did yesterday.

GL: I kind of feel like you have to practice at becoming a stranger. To become a traveler, to become a writer, you have to learn how to be a stranger too.

RS: That’s absolutely true. But you know, there’s a certain kind of traveler who is so absolutely experienced, they’re almost frictionless. They’ve negotiated with cab drivers throughout India; there’s no problem they can’t handle, and that’s not good either. What you want is to mess up. Big time. All the time. That’s being a stranger. If you ever read The Odyssey, Ulysses is traveling home, he’s in all these new situations, and there are elaborate questions of what the correct etiquette is, to talk to a Cyclops, to talk to a foreign prince, and stepping in it—the wrong foot in the wrong place—is what he does, all the time, with interesting results.

GL: And then he comes back home, and the place isn’t even his home anymore. His idea of home has changed altogether.

RS: And of course that’s the truism, right? Home is never the home we thought it was. Familiarity breeds the illusion of home.
SH: Let’s start with the really important stuff. You are addicted to Korean soap operas. Tell me more!

MC: Watch “Dae Jang Geum” about an orphan girl who serves as a palace cook and becomes the first female royal physician. It’s got amazing Korean food, politics, intrigue, costumes, the works. What’s not to love?

SH: Do you find that you do have a writing “routine” that works for you?

MC: I used to write after midnight after I’d gotten all my other work done for the day and I would not allow myself to sleep until I had finished four pages. I can no longer do that. Now, I can only write when I’m well-rested and calm. So whatever time of day that is!

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May-lee Chai, a new addition to UNCW’s Creative Writing faculty, is a writer and educator who has published books, short stories, essays, and journalism. Born in Redlands, California she is the eldest daughter of an artistically gifted Irish American mother and Shanghai born political scientist father. May-lee has lived in fourteen states and four countries. Before joining the University of North Carolina Wilmington, she taught at various universities, including San Francisco State University, the University of Wyoming, and Amherst College in Massachusetts. Chai is addicted to Korean soap operas.

She spoke with second-year nonfiction MFA candidate Stephanie Harcrow about fiction, nonfiction, and researching new projects.
SH: I really enjoyed your welcome reading. You did such a nice job of grounding your stories in place and time by recounting the headlines of the day in a list format. In what ways do current events inform your work? What is the relationship between your writing and the news?

MC: Thanks, Stephanie! It’s more like how current events inform my life. I grew up the daughter of a political scientist. When my father calls me, he doesn’t ask, How are you? He always says, “What did you see on the news today? Anything interesting?”

SH: Your family memoir, *The Girl from the Purple Mountain*, is a beautiful cross-generational account that you constructed in collaboration with your father. As he has a PhD and was the founding department chair of City College’s Asian Studies Department, you have referred to his formidable opinions. How was it collaborating with someone who is both a family member and an academic?

MC: Well, we didn’t have to worry about being polite with each other, for one. We had well-established habits of communication. He’s my father. He can yell at me, he can berate, but he can also trust me and reveal himself and know that I will do my best to convey what he’s trying to say. I’d already taken care of him through open-heart surgery so we did have that level of well-he-trusts-me-with-his life attitude going into the project.

His academic side came out when he started “grading” my rough drafts. He’d write in his red correcting pen: “N.A. Not Acceptable.” And “Bad!” or “Wrong!” It’s quite humbling!

SH: Have you inherited anything from him regarding teaching style / method?

MC: Oh, god. I don’t even want to go there. You tell me!

SH: To quote a great teacher of mine, “Oh, god. I don’t even want to go there.” Well then, how would you describe your own approach to teaching? What should people who take your classes expect?

MC: Lots of discussion. Prepare to participate! And think of revision as an opportunity rather than a chore.

SH: You teach across genre, and you mentioned at the reading that you began *The Girl from the Purple Mountain* as a fictionalized project. Why was that?

MC: I thought I’d never convince my father to cooperate, so I’d have to write it as a novel and guess at reasons why things had happened in our family. Why my grandmother had wanted to be buried alone, for one. But then I discovered fiction gave me too much freedom. For a novel to work I’d have to make up reasons in order for things to make sense, whereas in real life things were quite mysterious. I wanted to explore that mystery so I decided I had to write it as creative nonfiction, using the novelistic techniques to get into scene but sticking to the facts of the story as I knew them.

SH: That’s so interesting that a story has to make more sense in fiction. As you write across genre—both fiction and nonfiction—have you discovered any tells for knowing that a story seed should be planted in one realm or the other?

MC: I’ll try. If a real event ultimately just feels like an anecdote, then stretching it out won’t help. That’s when it’s time to think about using the material in a novel so fiction can expand and contextualize. If the real event is central to your reasons for wanting to write something, then the quest to understand the real event can be the story, hence nonfiction.
SH: You have an impressive educational background, including a Masters in East Asian Studies from Yale University. How has this academic experience influenced the way you research/prepare for new writing projects?

MC: I still love reading academic books on history. They are so important for gaining perspective on people’s attitudes, politics, events, motivations, now and in the past. And learning to do in-depth primary source research was invaluable!

SH: I believe that you learned Chinese in order to research your family memoir—many of the documents you had were in Chinese. Is that correct?

MC: Yes! Those were brutal years and years and years.

SH: Given your understanding of multiple languages—you also majored in French as an undergraduate—I’m curious about your perspective on language. Are there any characteristics particular to the English language that you have noticed as uniquely helpful and/or restrictive?

MC: What’s uniquely helpful about English is that it’s my native tongue and thus the only one I can use to write in a literary manner! However, being able to read and speak other languages gave me insight into how culture shapes how we see the world, our expectations, our values.

For example, in China people ask each other, “Have you eaten yet?” (Ni chiguo fan mei you?) as a greeting. It’s a sign of closeness. Why don’t we do that in English? Why don’t we ask our friends this in America? I wonder.

SH: I’m in your Travel Narratives class this term, which has a fantastic and varied reading list. We are reading an American journalist’s account of El Salvador, a Mexican-American’s Pulitzer Prize finalist account of immigration, and of a Vietnamese-American’s novel set in both Vietnam and America. Do you have any other books or writers that you love that people might not have encountered yet?

MC: I read three new novels this summer that I can’t praise enough: Roxane Gay’s An Untamed State about a Haitian American woman who is kidnapped and held for ransom in Haiti; Kathryn Ma’s The Year She Left Us about a badass Chinese adoptee searching for her roots; and Celeste Ng’s Everything I Never Told You a whodunnit about the death of a mixed-race girl in small town Ohio in the 1970s.

SH: Thank you so much for your time and fabulous responses, May-lee! This is my first faculty profile, so I’m thinking we should really go big with the bow that ties up this interview. It’s only right that the query comes from the Proust Questionnaire diddy: What is your present state of mind?

MC: Fuzzy! It’s that time in the afternoon where I could use a caffeine infusion... 🎆

MFA student Stephen Anim was the recipient of the 2014 Jane Logan Lackey scholarship, awarded by the UNCW Graduate School.

MFA student Isabelle Shepherd was the recipient of the 2014 UNCW Sylvia and B.D. Schwartz Graduate Fellowship Award.

MFA students Benjamin Rachlin, Beth Roddy, and Jillian Weiss received 2014 Ralph W. Brauer Fellowship, awarded by the UNCW Graduate School.
Bridget Apfeld has two poems, “41 North” and “We Eat” on Verse Wisconsin. Read them at http://versewisconsin.org/issue113/poems/apfeld.html.


Christina Clark’s poetry series “The Incorrigibles” was chosen first runner up in the Poet’s Bilingual Pangea Prize contest. Her poem “Aunt Em” was featured in the Summer 2014 issue of Off the Coast.

Jonathan Russell Clark has a review up for the Colorado Review at http://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/reviews/white-girls/ and two reviews up on The Rumpus at http://therumpus.net/author/jonathan-russell-clark/. He has four new essays up on The Millions (with mentions on NPR.org, BBC.com, The Browser, and Bookforum’s website), which can be read at www.themillions.com/author/jonathan-russell-clark. He published two reviews in Slant Magazine, an essay in PANK, and had a review accepted at the Georgia Review. He also got an essay accepted at Black Heart Magazine: http://blackheartmagazine.com/2014/04/18/liking-the-tomato-by-jonathan-russell-clark/.

Anna Coe’s poem “The Foremost Terrestrial Biome of Unknowing” was a finalist for the 2014 Ruth Stone Poetry Prize, and appeared in the Prizewinner Issue of Hunger Mountain.

Elizabeth Davis had two of her poems featured in the October 2014 issue of Prick of the Spindle: “En route to their weekly parental visit, three foster children eat muscadines” and “Your Carolina home, as it finally falls in.”

Alexa Doran had two ‘Dada’ poems selected as finalists in the Third Coast Poetry Contest. She was named a finalist in the Puerto del Sol poetry contest for her poem, “After you can an artist can,” and was selected as a finalist in the Fairy Tale Review Contest for her poem, “Peter Pan on the Problem of Pillow Talk.”

Dina Greenberg’s story “Oceanaire” will be published in the fall issue of East Coast Literary Review. Her flash fiction piece, “Bambino,” has been accepted for publication in the fall 2014 issue of Existere (U.K.).


Pernille Larsen’s poem “24-Hour Ghazal” will appear in the upcoming issue of Hartskill Review.

Mitchell McInnis has a book review titled “The Algorithms of American Surrealism” in the Collagist and three poems from his manuscript, “Thanksgiving Motel,” in the upcoming issue of the Southeast Review.


Brenda Nicholas’ poem “Cinderella Night Out” appeared in Helix literary journal.

Ashley Palmer completed her (ongoing) PhD program at Baylor University in Waco, Texas and successfully defended her dissertation, “Romantic Partner Selection in a Religious Marriage Market.” Her concentrations were in the sociology of religion, marriage, and family, and she brought those areas together in her doctoral research, which was an extended qualitative study of dating patterns and relationship formation in a religious group.

Katie Prince’s piece “poem in which acid rain is just acid” appears on Spork Press online. Read it at http://sporkpress.com/?p=4838. As a bonus, see video of Katie reading a poem “Sometimes I Want You to Throw Things” by Samantha Deal (MFA ’13).

Benjamin Rachlin was the recipient of a partial scholarship to attend the Virginia Quarterly Review conference in Charlottesville, Virginia. The conference focused on Southern literature.

Beth Roddy was awarded a Student Assistantship for the Annual Esri International User Conference in San Diego, California.

Cathe Shubert won 1st place and a cash prize for the Robert Haiduke Poetry Award, given out annually by the Bread Loaf School of English for the best poem written by a member of the Bread Loaf community. She also was the recipient of the Anthony Penale Scholarship Award for Teacher Leadership. Her poem “Interpretive Trail” was accepted to the second issue/Summer 2014 edition of the Bread Loaf School of English literary journal for publication. She has been offered a bi-monthly Literary Round Down post blogging for Flugshorses.

Laura Price Steele’s fiction piece “Going it Alone” appeared in flyway journal. Read it at http://flyway.org/fiction/going-it-alone/.

Bethany Tap’s short piece, “For Your Studies,” appears in issue 3 of The Barking Sycamore.

Jonathan Wallin had three poems from his working thesis manuscript Ridiculous Flying Machines published. Read them at http://keepthisbagawayfromchildren.com/?p=4288

Emily Wilson’s poem, “Passport,” which was the first runner-up in the 2014 Indiana Review Poetry Prize, will appear in DIALOGIST. Her poems “intonation” and “for Prážsky: Prague Astronomical Clock” have been accepted for publication in PANK. In addition, her poem, “to Karl v Most: Charles Bridge,” was in the Summer 2014 issue of 491, and her poem “Postcard I almost send to an almost lover” was published in the October issue of The Bohemyn. Her essay “Does Your Foundation’s Privilege Need Unpacking? The Difference Between ‘Light’ and ‘Dark’ and Why It Matters” will be published on Bustle. She has also had an essay accepted by Passages North and a poem accepted by Green Mountains Review. Her translations of 15th century Italian poet Antonio Geraldini can now be read at Asymptote. NewPages reviewed her poem, “[from August on],” first published in The Raleigh Review, which is also currently pending for inclusion in Best New Poets 2014.
Hannah Dela Cruz Abrams (MFA ’07) had a piece in the Oxford American Summer Issue (no. 85).


Samantha Deal (MFA ’13) has two poems appearing in the next issue of Elsewhere. She has been named a finalist for the Anhinga Press’s Robert Dana Poetry Prize. In addition, she has been named a semifinalist for the 2014 Akron Poetry Prize for her poem “Taxonomies / Something Opened.” Samantha was also selected as a finalist in the 2014 Rattle Poetry Prize for her poem, “Taxonomy of an Automobile Accident,” and will be published in the winter issue of Rattle this December. She is a PhD candidate in English and creative writing at Western Michigan University.

Regina DiPerna (MFA ’13) had a poem, “Elegy For What Adapts,” in the Spring 2014 issue of Redivider, and her poem “Death As Mutation” will appear in the spring issue of Meridian. She has also been awarded a three-month writing residency at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, New Mexico.

Jason Frye (MFA ’05) had two books come out this year. Avalon Travel (publisher of Rick Steve’s Europe guidebooks) released Moon North Carolina in April and Moon North Carolina Coast in May. Available through Amazon and in stores nationwide, these travel guides give visitors an insider’s look at North Carolina. He is working on a third travel guide, Moon Road Trips: Blue Ridge Parkway, set for release in spring 2015

Jeremy Hawkins (MFA ’11) was awarded a fellowship to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts for the month of October.

Christine Hennesssey’s (MFA ’14) piece “Hatchling” appears in Issue 19 of Switchback, and was also second runner up for the Issue’s Editor Prize. Read it at http://swback.com/issues/019/hatchling/1.html. Her work also appeared in the summer 2014 double-issue of the Heavy Feather Review.

Ben Hoffman’s (MFA’13) story “Reports from a Higher Roof” won first place in the Zoetrope Short Fiction Contest. Read it at www.all-story.com/issues.

cgi?action=show_story&story_id=528. His story “This Will All Be Over Soon” won the 2014 Nelson Algren Short Story Award, and he was the recipient of a $30,000 fellowship from the Wisconsin Institution for Creative Writing.

Rochelle Hurt (MFA ’11) had poems appear in John Hoppenthaler’s Poetry Congeries at Connotation Press, An Online Artifact, and PANK. Her poem “Hallucinate with Bees” appeared in Green Mountains Review, and her poems “Self-Portrait in Imalone, Wisconsin” and “Self-Portrait in Miracle, Kentucky” appeared in The Florida Review. She was interviewed in Fairy Tale Review: http://fairytalereview.com/pins-needles-no-7-rochelle-hurt, and received an honorable mention for the Gabehard Prize from the Kentucky Women Writers Conference.

Katharine Johnsen’s (MFA ’14) poem “Consolation,” announced in March, is available to read at http://pbq.drexel.edu/katharine-johnsen-consolation/. Her poem “Subscription” appeared in Ninth Letter. She was also included in Tupelo Quarterly’s feature on women in form. Three poems found their home in this issue: “L’Âge mûr,” “When We Dead Awaken,” and “Montdevengerues, 1943.” Read them, and the interview, at www.tupeloquarterly.com/women-in-form-katherine-johnsen/.

Sally Johnson’s (MFA ’14) lyric/experimental essay “Etymology of Yellow: Shine or Cry Out” was published in Heavy Feather Review, and her lyric essay “Mama Never Told Me There’d Be Days Like These Because She Met My Father in Kindergarten and Carried Only His Name in Her Notebook All the Years Since” was published online at The Bohemyth. She had poems in Everyday Genius, Voicemail Poems, Spoon River Poetry Review, and So To Speak. Her poems “Final Instar” and “he says its what the girl wants to hear” will appear in the twelfth issue of Weave Magazine in early 2015. Her essay, “Teach My Body How To Behave,” was a finalist for Redivider’s Beacon Street Prize. She was also featured in an interview with the Collagist, and accepted a job as a publicity assistant at John F. Blair, Publisher in Winston-Salem.

Marc Johnston (MFA ’03) was one of ten finalists in the 2014 James Applewhite Poetry Prize competition, selected by NCLR’s Poetry Editor Jeff Franklin.

Katie Jones (MFA ’14) had two poems, “The Dunes are Stardust” and “The Quick and the Dead,” in the fall 2014 issue of the Boiler Journal. She also had a poem appear in Ninth Letter, and the summer 2014 double-issue of the Heavy Feather Review.

Shawna Kenney’s (’07) essay “All That Glitters” appeared in Narratively.

Robert Dean Lurie’s (MFA ’05) essay on Bob Dylan appeared in the May-June issue of The American Conservative. Read it at www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/unlike-a-rolling-stone/. His three-part profile on the band Broken Bells appeared on Blur magazine’s website.

Jeremy Morris (MFA ’14) was named a finalist for the Crab Orchard Poetry First Book Award.

Jason Mott (MFA ’08) was featured on USA Today. He discussed his debut novel, The Returned, and his second novel, The Wonder of All Things. The latter, which was released September, has already been optioned by Lionsgate films.

Kyle Mustain’s (MFA ’12) essay, “metarrhythmisis, i,” appeared in the fall issue of the St. Sebastian Review, a literary journal for LGBTQ Christians. It can be read at http://stsebastianreview.com/current.

Ariana Nadia Nash (MFA ’11) will be adjunct teaching at the University of Chicago as well as teaching an online course at the Loft Literary Center. She was a finalist for the Edes Prize, and her second poetry manuscript was a finalist for the 2013 Benjamin Saltman Award from Red Hen Press and a semi-finalist in the 2014 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition. She was awarded a residency at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts. Her work has recently been published in Rock & Sling, Belleville Park Pages, HOOT Review, and the Boiler Journal.

Rebecca Petruk’s (MFA ’07) debut novel, Steering Toward Normal, was chosen by the American Booksellers Association as an “Indie Introduce New Voices” selection, and was a “Spring Kids Indie Next List” pick for ages 9-12. It was chosen by Los Angeles Times for its Summer Books Preview. It was also named one of Christian Science Monitor’s 25 Best New Middle Grade Novels, and was part of the International Reading Association’s list “Books Can Be A Tool of Peace.” Steering Toward Normal received a starred review by The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, was selected for the 2014 ABC Best Books for Children Catalog, and was highlighted by VanityFair.com’s Hollywood as one of “10 Books We’d Like to See Made Into Films.”

Erica Sklar’s (MFA ’14) essay “Identify Yourself” was chosen as a finalist for the Crab Orchard Review’s contest.

Megan Starks (MFA ’10) was a lead designer on the video game Wildstar® (a sci-fi themed massive multiplayer online game) and did much of its writing. Wildstar® is available for purchase at http://wildstar-online.com and at all major retailers.

Anna B. Sutton (MFA ’13) has poems forthcoming in the Southeast Review, Tinderbox Poetry Journal, and Third Coast. Her poem “Inheritance” appeared in Cactus Heart Journal. Her poems “Conservation” and “For Shame” appeared in Pinch Journal. She has a poem in issue 82 of Quarterly West, and another in issue 13 of Superstition Review. Her personal essay “Aspiration” was accepted by Phoebe and was a finalist for their Nonfiction Prize. She also started a nonprofit literary organization called The Porch Writers’ Collective in Nashville, TN, and was interviewed on her writing process at http://dearouterspace.blogspot.com/2014/07/interview-sutton.html.

Kate Sweeney’s (MFA ’09) book American Afterlife was featured in a story on CNN.com, and she was interviewed for the national radio program Backstory: with the American History Guys. American Afterlife was also voted by the readers of Creative Loafing Atlanta as the best by an Atlanta author in 2014 (alongside Bruce Covey, who shares that honor). Her story on R. Thomas, his 70-year-old bird Sparkle, and his restaurant on Peachtree, won an Edward R. Murrow award. Read it at http://wabe.org/post/bird-restaurant-peachtree.


Tara Thompson (MFA ’05) had an essay, “Obits,” published in Prick of the Spindle.

Eric Tran’s (MFA ’13) lyric essay “Stories of Fire and Water” appeared in Green Mountains Review. He had a lyric essay, “Portraits of Handwashing,” accepted for publication by the Collagist, and an interview about his manuscript Affairs with Men in Suits appeared at http://chrisricecooper.blogspot.com/2014/06/poet-and-medical-student-eric-tran.html.

Matt Tullis (MFA ’05) had an article on Johnny Manziel and the Cleveland Browns on SB Nation.


Eric Vithalani’s (MFA ’07) photo of Cody Leutgens (BFA ’11) surfing is the cover of 40,000 2014-15 welcome maps for Topsail Island.


Sara Wood (MFA ’14) accepted a position as an oral historian with the Southern Foodways Alliance, an institution of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Joe Worthen’s (MFA ’14) piece, “County Maps,” was chosen as a finalist and will be published in The Master’s Review Volume III: https://mastersreview.com/finalists-announced-the-masters-review-volume-iii. His fiction piece “Cold Planet” appeared in Cartridge Lit online. Read it at http://cartridgeit.com/2014/06/16/cold-planet/. He is also working on a 10-episode web series called “The Girl From Carolina.” The project was featured on Fox Carolina 21.
Lavonne J. Adams was named a finalist in the *Yemassee Literary Journal* (University of South Carolina) annual poetry prize, and was a finalist for the Randall Jarrell poetry competition, sponsored by the North Carolina Writers’ Network. Her poetry collection, *The Luminous Conjunction of Nothing and All*, was a finalist in the *Georgetown Review* poetry manuscript contest. She also gave a presentation on the life and art of Georgia O’Keeffe for the UNCW Osher Lifelong Learning Institute’s W.O.W. (Women on Wednesdays).


Phil Furia hosts the daily segment “The Great American Songbook” on WHQR from 1:30 to 2 p.m. and during the Morning Edition on Fridays at 6 a.m.

Philip Gerard’s narrative essay, “Freedom Fighter,” originally appearing in *Our State* in March 2013, was named a Notable Essay in *Best American Essays 2014*. This is his second notable mention. He was featured in an interview in the September 2014 issue of the AWP Writers Chronicle. His series “The Civil War: Life in North Carolina” is being featured in installments in *Our State* and will continue to be released monthly through May 2015. The series can be read at www.ourstate.com/civil-war. He is a regular commentator on WHQR. His broadcasts run every other Thursday at 7:35 a.m., 8:50 a.m., and 5:45 p.m. and can be heard at www.whqr.org/people/philip-gerard.

Anna Lena Phillips has a poem, “To Do in The Next Year,” and a short essay about making it, in the current issue of *Redux*.


Beth Staples was featured in the June 2014 issue of *Willma*. Read the article at www.wilmaontheweb.com/June-2014/Storybook-Career/.

Michael White, chair of the Department of Creative Writing, published a new book of poetry entitled *Vermeer in Hell*. The book was selected by Persea Books as the winner of the 2013 Lexi Rudnitsky Editor’s Prize. For more information, see perseabooks.com/detail.php?bookID=114.