Binocular Vision is a National Book Award Finalist

It seems like much of the action in the Publishing Laboratory this fall has been gearing up for Lookout Books’ second release, Steve Almond’s collection, God Bless America, but on Oct. 12, the hard work paused for some screaming and excitement with the announcement that Edith Pearlman’s book, Binocular Vision, was a finalist for the National Book Award. As the debut volume from a small, independent press, it was a most pleasant surprise to hear the news of such an accolade.

Binocular Vision earned high praise when it was released last year, distinguished in The New York Times Book Review as an Editors’ Choice, with Roxana Robinson calling Pearlman’s writing “intelligent, perceptive, funny, and quite beautiful… [Her] view of the world is large and compassionate, delivered through small, beautifully precise moments… The volume is an excellent introduction to a writer who should not need one. Maybe from now on everyone will know of Edith Pearlman.”

A year later, it seems many more people know of Edith Pearlman. The book of short stories deserves to be shortlisted for the National Book Award and it seems everyone in the Pub Lab, around the Department, and on campus couldn’t be happier to see it getting the attention it has certainly earned. What a wonderful beginning for a fabulous imprint!

The Night Train Pulls into the Station

David Gessner wasn’t the only very active faculty member this summer. Clyde Edgerton also kept busy. In July, his tenth novel, The Night Train, came out and received some glowing reviews in The New York Times, The Boston Globe, and was starred in Publisher’s Weekly and Booklist. The novel examines the forbidden friendship of two aspiring teenage musicians in a small North Carolina town in 1963. Of The Night Train, Publisher’s Weekly wrote, “The characters are drawn with compassion and droll humor, and while not much happens to them, what happens between them is the work of a generous, restrained writer whose skill and craft allows small scenes to tell a larger, more profound story.” Check out the book trailer here: http://vimeo.com/25265338.

Lookout’s Second Book Hits Shelves

After hard work and many hours in the Publishing Laboratory, Lookout Books released its second title, God Bless America, a collection of thirteen stories by Steve Almond. The new collection, which includes “Donkey Greedy, Donkey Gets Punched,” reprinted in Best American Short Stories, examines the country and Americana with comic wit and forlorn hope.

Those on campus can’t seem to help but notice that Steve Almond is all around these days. In addition to his new collection, which will be launched officially at Writers Week, Almond will be giving the keynote address, not to mention he is a visiting writer for the semester. His essay on Don DeLillo will be appearing in the new issue of Ecotone. On campus, we can’t seem to get enough of him and are thrilled he’ll be spending so much time around here this fall.

This summer, while vacationing with his family, President Obama tried to get a bit of reading done. Being the busy man that he is, the Boston Globe tried to help him out with a list of recommendations that included, David Gessner’s new book, My Green Manifesto: Down the Charles River in Pursuit of a New Environmentalism. Perhaps Gessner’s video on why Obama should read his book helped the family make their selection. In the video, endorsing the Globe’s suggestion, Gessner gives the President five reasons to pick up the book including: funny words and swearing, he’d be looking out for the underdog, and, it’s about falling in love and fighting for something special. It looks like the campaign worked. Early into their vacation, the First Family was photographed leaving a local bookstore with their very own copy. It’s been a busy year for Gessner, whose Green Manifesto was released in July and The Tarball Chronicles, on the aftermath of the of the Gulf Oil Spill, came out in September.
Interview with Melissa Range

Coast Line: You said in an interview with How a Poem Happens that you “typically construct poems by ear.” Talk more about the auditory nature of your work.

Melissa Range: I didn’t always do this. When I first started writing poetry, I would just start with an image or a line, and sometimes I still do that. I remember reading something, I think by Galway Kinnell, and he said he used to be more of a formalist, then started moving towards free verse, and he said ‘I was making all these columns of rhyming words in my journal and I thought, what a waste of time.’ But then, I found myself doing that and thought, ‘wow, this is fun.’ I think I naturally found that by my ear was the way I wanted to start writing poetry, and that’s when I decided that it was a lot more fun for me, and that’s when I started writing in form. I thought it was fun and because it was a challenge. I do write some free verse, but I feel like lots of it has an iambic bent to it.

CL: Do you find yourself returning to the same types of sounds?

MR: I probably do, but haven’t really analyzed it. One thing I’ve learned from Hopkins and Dickinson—my two favorites—is the playfulness and power of slant rhyming, because it always undercuts what you expect is going to happen. From Hopkins, I learned the charming fun of putting the rhymes everywhere. I think it’s the playful nature of the sound of language. Even if I’m writing more of a serious poem, there’s always a playfulness going on in the sound.

CL: Do you consider yourself a “Southern Writer”?

MR: I do consider myself a Southern writer. I don’t think everyone sees me as a Southern writer because mostly what I write about is not the South. I specifically consider myself an Appalachian poet because I’m from East Tennessee, and Appalachia, and that’s a different Southern experience.

CL: How does your sense of place affect your work?

MR: I think it affects my writing in a few ways: The images of where I grew up are always coming into my work. It’s more likely to see a bird or a mountain or grass or some kind of rural landscape that I’m pulling from my childhood, even if I’m casting it in another place. Another way that it plays into my writing is that I feel really committed to preserving the language. That’s one reason I use a lot of archaic words in my poems, and it’s also a reason that I want to continue to explore Southern slang and Southern construction, specifically the words and speech patterns of my grandmother’s generation. And the other way is that when I left my hometown, I immediately saw what people thought of where I’m from. They would hear my Southern accent and the way they talked about hillbillies or poor people—it really instilled in me a commitment to always being on the side of the oppressed or the underdog.

Interview by Emily McCrary
Interview with Luke Whisnant

Coast Line: You have published work in the forms of poetry and fiction. Can you explain the transition process between the two?

Luke Whisnant: I had teachers who taught prose in a poetic style. There really isn’t too much of a difference in the two genres. People can sit down and write narrative poetry, that is, fiction with a sense of fluidity behind it. Fiction can contain strongly metered lines, so therefore, it can also be read as poetry. A paragraph can be a unit of rhythm with metrical equivalence.

CL: So can it be safe to say that the length of a piece is a factor of its genre?

LW: The longer the piece, the more likely it is to be classified as a ‘short story.’ The shorter it is, the more we are to rely on the writing’s style and element of the piece. If you dial down one element, then you dial up another. This is where you’ll find more ‘magical’ or ‘lyrical’ pieces.

CL: What forms of advice can you offer to our MFA students?

LW: The number one thing is to take yourself seriously. Once you do this, everything else will fall into place. For example, if you can’t use a semi-colon, you sit down and learn how to use a semi-colon so you know for the next time you need to use it. Learn the market and set a schedule. Also, I’m sure everyone has heard this, but I’ll say it again: Read as much as you can!

Interview by Maxann Keller

Visiting Writers

1. Earl Bragg, UC Foundation and Battle Professor of English at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, is the author of seven books of poetry, including *Hat Dancer Blue* (1992 Anhinga Prize), *Crossing Tecumseh Street, House on Fontanka and In Which Language Do I Keep Silence: New and Selected Poems*. He won the 7th Annual Jack Kerouac International Fiction Prize for a chapter from his novel *Looking for Jack Kerouac*. In addition to many prizes and awards in poetry and fiction, he has received grants from Chattanooga Allied Arts and the Tennessee Commission for the Arts. Younger Than Neil, his latest collection of poems, was published in 2009. *The Syntactical Arrangements of Twisted Wind* is forthcoming from Anhinga Press in 2012.

2. Tom Grimes is the author of several novels and *Mentor: A Memoir*, which traces his long friendship with Frank Conroy. *Mentor* was a finalist for the 2010 PEN USA Award for Creative Nonfiction, a Best Nonfiction Book of 2010 by *The Washington Post* and *Kirkus Reviews*, and a “Top Seven Literary Biography” by Barnes & Noble, which selected the book for its 2010 “Discover Great Writers Series.”

3. Melissa Range’s first book of poems, *Horse and Rider*, a finalist for the 2011 Kate Tufts Discovery Prize, won the 2010 Wide McDonald Prize in Poetry and was published by Texas Tech University Press. Her poems have appeared in *32 Poems*, *The Hudson Review*, *Image*, *New England Review*, *The Paris Review* and others. She is the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award, a “Discovery” / *The Nation* prize, and a scholarship from the Sewanee Writers’ Conference; she has held residencies at Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. Originally from East Tennessee, she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English and creative writing at the University of Missouri.

4. Leslie Rubinkowski is the author of *Impersonating Elvis*. A journalist, feature writer and film critic, she teaches writing at the University of Pittsburgh. Her work has appeared in *Harper’s*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. She was the director of the news-editorial program at West Virginia University’s School of Journalism and has lectured at the
Visiting Editors

8. Margaret Bauer is the Rives Chair of Southern Literature at East Carolina University and, since 1997, has served as editor of the North Carolina Literary Review. She is the author of The Fiction of Ellen Gilchrist (1999), William Faulkner’s Legacy (2005), and Understanding Tim Gautreaux (2010), as well as numerous articles in scholarly journals. In 2007, Bauer was named one of ECU’s 10 Women of Distinction and received the Parnassus Award for Significant Editorial Achievement from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. She is also a recipient of ECU’s Scholar/Teacher Award and Five-Year Research/Creative Activity Award.


Visiting Agent

11. Michael Strong graduated from Middlebury College, then was a sailing instructor at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, a carpenter in Berkeley, California, an English teacher at a school for dyslexic students, and a graduate student in English at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he read for Carolina Quarterly. He was a Ph.D. candidate at the Program in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught classes on technology and ethics, wrote a dissertation on Finnegans Wake, and was assistant director of the Penn National Commission. After seven years in digital marketing at Sotheby’s, he now handles marketing and publicity at Regal Literary. He yearns for fine literary fiction and ambitious thrillers, and for non-fiction about art, politics, science, business, sports, and, as he is fond of saying, “boy does he love boats and the ocean they float on.”
Recent MFA Graduates Receive Prestigious Residencies

Rochelle Hurt (M.F.A. ’11) and Ariana Nash (M.F.A. ’11), both poets, recently left Wilmington for residencies at Jentel in Sheridan, Wyoming and the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, respectively. Here, they take a moment to reflect on their experiences and how their time at UNCW prepared them for their next journeys.

The Jentel Artist Residency Program is located in the Pine Creek Valley in Wyoming with views of the Big Horn Mountains. On the ranch, where residents live and work, they are surrounded by undisturbed natural life, where one would have to travel 20 miles in any direction to find some rust or concrete. Artists live in a supportive environment dedicated to their creative development and are able to reflect and meditate in an untamed, untouched environment. That being said, Rochelle didn’t have to rope any steers during her time there.

The MacDowell Colony is tucked away in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire with a quaint city life surrounded by New England’s natural beauty. The retreat offers autonomy and seclusion while still being able to participate and live in a community of artists. To allow for focused, undisturbed work, Ariana learned to relax about where she is in life and where she “should” be. Her experience in Wyoming led her to explore an interest in new subject matter including cultural and environmental issues, the concept of wilderness, and the line between humans and other animals.

For Ariana, being away from UNCW, she writes, “I very much miss the chances for sharing my work with fellow writers. Sharing work for me was not just a matter of workshop. The best experiences I had came from exchanging work outside the classroom with those who’s aesthetic and instincts I trusted. This is a resource that is so difficult to find once you leave if you don’t establish it there. But more importantly and more to the point, the encouragement I received in the MFA program at UNCW taught me to go from saying, ‘I am trying to be a poet,’ to saying ‘I am a poet.’ For me, this has made a tremendous difference.”

During their residencies, Rochelle and Ariana found freedom in the isolation. Both stressed the importance of taking the time they’d been given to write and how they’ve grown as writers. They couldn’t seem to stress enough the importance of submitting work to journals and applying for similar opportunities.

What both Rochelle and Ariana seemed to cherish most from their experiences was the ability to only wear the “writer” hat. Being able to focus solely on writing for the duration of their residencies is really what the opportunity is about and neither seemed to take it for granted. Ariana adds, “It is a gift that all writers should try to give themselves at some point.”

Keep on the lookout: Rochelle has four poems from her thesis coming out this winter in the *Cincinnati Review*, as well as individual poems in *The Portland Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, CALYX, and fiction in the *Bellingham Review’s* online edition. In the spring, she’ll have poems in *Arts & Letters*, and an essay in *apostrophe*.

What’s going on at *Ecotone*?

*Ecotone’s “Happiness” issue* hit newstands and mailboxes in mid-November, featuring new work by Jonathan Lethem, Robert Olen Butler, Ander Monson, Joy Williams, Steve Almond and Natasha Trethewey, among others. Bruce Smith’s book, *Devotions*, was named a finalist for the National Book Award; his poem, “Devotion: Wuthering Heights,” first appeared in the Spring 2010 5th Anniversary issue of *Ecotone*. David Wagoner’s poem, ”Thoreau and the Lightning,” also from the 5th Anniversary issue, was included in this year’s Best American Poetry. This past summer two stories from the spring issue, Kevin Wilson’s “A Birth in the Woods” and Alice Mattison “The Vandercook,” received the O. Henry Prize, and will be included in *THE PEN/O. HENRY PRIZE STORIES 2012*. That marks back-to-back years in which *Ecotone* has received two of the 20 overall annual O. Henry Prizes.

Three MFA Students Awarded Brauer Fellowships

MFA students Kathryn Miller, Carson Vaughan, and Sara Wood have been granted Ralph Brauer Graduate Student Fellowships, awarded by the Graduate School after a competitive process.

Miller will use the funds to travel to conduct interviews for her memoir which is about her being shot in a school shooting when she was seven years old.

Vaughan’s research aims to chronicle the rise and fall, in 2005, of a roadside zoo in Royal, Nebraska, and how it affected the community as a whole, in order to tell a story of community survival in the Great Plains.

Wood is working on a story about the North Carolina Eugenics Board Program that peaked between 1930 and 1968. With the Brauer Fellowship, she plans to locate and interview sterilization victims and those involved with the Board at that time.

Philip Furia writes, “I’ve been continuing my radio show, ‘The Great American Song Book,’ on WHQR Wilmington Public Radio, done several concert performances based on the show at the Bellamy Mansion (Oct. 8) and Thalian Hall (Sept. 24). I also gave a series of talks and performances at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania organized by one of our alums, Jesse Waters, who teaches and does event planning there.”

1993 Visiting Writer-in-Residence Philip Levine has been named the 18th poet laureate of the United States.

2010 Visiting Writer Peter Makuck’s poem “Toward Paris” appeared on NPR’s The Writer’s Almanac with Garrison Keillor recently.


Malena Mörling’s translation into Swedish of the current United States Poet Laureate Philip Levine’s collection of poems, 1933, was published in August. Her translation of Swedish Nobel Prize winner Tomas Tranströmer’s First Poems along with her translation of an essay by Tranströmer entitled Notes From The Land of Lip Fever is just out from Tavern Books. Another book of Tranströmer’s entitled Prison, Nine Haiku with an accompanying essay about the relationship between Tranströmer’s life as a psychologist and a poet is also due out from Tavern Books this fall. Malena has a portfolio of poems in the current issue of Poetry International.

Robert Siegel’s essay “Scan,” which was in Harvard Review 58, won a Pushcart Prize and will be in the 2012 Pushcart Prize Anthology.

Emily Smith did an interview for Ploughshares as part of the Innovators in Lit series; http://word.emerson.edu/ploughshares/2011/10/10/innovators-in-lit-lookout-books/. She also had three poems in the summer 2011 issue of New South and received the 2011 UNCW Lecturer of the Year Award at the fall faculty meeting on September 1.

Mina de Gramont sold her novel, This, and My Heart Beside, to Algonquin.

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www.uncw.edu/campaignkenanchallenge.html
Hannah Dela Cruz Abrams (M.F.A. ’02) is the recipient of a 2013-14 Artist Fellowship award from the North Carolina Arts Council.

Anne Clineard Barnhill’s (M.F.A. ’01) first poetry chapbook, Coal, Baby is coming out early next year from Finishing Line Press.

Pat Bjorklund’s (M.F.A. ’08) title chapter from her memoir-in-progress “U.S. and Them” is featured in the current issue of the Missouri Review, and another chapter “Space Race” is due out in Palooka this summer.

Douglass Bourne (M.F.A. ’09) recently accepted a full-time teaching position in the English Department at University of Alaska Anchorage. His screenplay, “The Old Way” (formerly known as “Stagger Lee”) won a Sir Douglass Bourne (M.F.A. ’09) was on the show in October. He’s also on the advisory board, with Chris McSween. We’d greatly appreciate help getting the word out.” Check out the website: http://talusorscreen.com/ and keep up on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Talus-Or-Screen/218555741496344 Additionally, Patrick is associate editor for Conduit Magazine where he recently interviewed David Gesner. Check it out here: www.conduit.org

Daren Dean’s (M.F.A. ’03) story “Furious” will be in a new online magazine called Fiction Southeast alongside Robert Olen Butler, Donald Ray Pollock, Joyce Carol Oates and others.

Jason Frye (M.F.A. ’05) is the hospitality columnist for the Greater Wilmington Business Journal, as well as a contributing writer for their print and online editions. His profile of local legend Pops Peterson appeared in Our State Magazine, as did a piece on Richard Etheridge, the first African-American United States Life Saving Service Station Captain in the U.S. He also had a story in the December issue of Our State Magazine. The North Carolina Department of Tourism just named him a North Carolina Outdoor Adventure Expert and he’s filming a series of videos for use as pitch material to target regional and national morning TV programs. One of the videos will be up on VisitNC.com soon. He recently helped an author in Charlotte, N.C. bring his book, “Low Budget Hell,” to print. It documents his time as a low-budget film producer with John Waters and later independently.

Ashley Hudson (M.F.A. ’08) has a poem forthcoming in the Fairy Tale Review.

Rochelle Hurt (M.F.A. ’11) won the Arts & Letters Bumi Prize in Poetry.

Marc Johnston’s (M.F.A. ’03) poem “reconnaissance” was selected as a runner-up-in the 2011 Yemassee Pocataligo Poetry Contest. He will receive a $100 prize and recognition at http://yemasseejournalonline.org/poetry_winners20092010.html

Lukis Kaufman’s (M.F.A. ’09) work appears in the 2011 issue of The Briar Cliff Review.

Josh Macivor-Andersen (M.F.A. ’11) began as assistant professor of English at Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Mich. this fall.

Janie Miller (M.F.A. ’08) just began a full-time lecturership at the University of Washington, Tacoma.


She is working on a Master’s degree in Creative Writing in Fiction at Queen’s University in Charlotte, N.C., as well as gathering research for my latest novel project while working abroad in Germany.

From Ashley Shivar: I graduated from the M.F.A. in May of 2010. Since then I attended East Carolina University to get 18 hours in English Studies. I then taught English at Wayne Community College and Craven Community College. I am now teaching English at Cape Fear Community College. I have poems online with Pinion Journal currently, and have poems forthcoming from The Portland Review, Black Heart Magazine and BlueSTEM.

Daniel Terry (M.F.A. ’10) is featured in the anthology collective BRIGHTNESS: LGBTIQ Poems on Faith, Religion & Spirituality with two poems: “Because you read on the web,” and “I would hold you in my arms.” He also had seven poems come out in the October 2011 issue of Ansacus and will be releasing his new chapbook Days of Dark Miracles soon.

Eric Vroosman (M.F.A. ’00) won the Vita experienced 2011 Summer Story Contest and read his entry, “The Sheik,” at the Brave New Workshop in Minneapolis.

Augusta-Heritage Press published Nicole Yatsunsky’s two short stories “Gone With the Sand” and “Just Like the Movies” this summer in the anthology Summer Sun and Sand.

Luba Zakharov (M.F.A. ’06) has taken a job as associate professor in the University Libraries at Azusa Pacific University (http://www.apu.edu/library/faculty/lzakharov) and has a few short publications.