The Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington is designated one of the top 25 M.F.A. programs in creative writing in the nation in the Nov./Dec. 2009 issue of Poets & Writers magazine. One of the pre-eminent publications in the creative writing profession, Poets & Writers ranks UNC Wilmington’s program fifth in creative nonfiction and ranks it at number 22 in poetry and number 25 in fiction.

“These rankings support and validate the remarkable work that UNCW faculty and staff have done in developing and nurturing the M.F.A. in Creative Writing,” said Chancellor Rosemary DePaolo. “It is astounding that a program created in 1996 has risen to challenge some of the most highly regarded creative writing programs in the country.”

Overall, the UNCW M.F.A. program was ranked number 24, ahead of well-established and highly funded programs at Arizona State University, Sarah Lawrence College, University of Houston, University of Arizona, Boston University, George Mason, Ohio State, Florida State, Penn State, the University of Virginia, Purdue and the University of Maryland, among others. The UNCW M.F.A. program has steadily gained national recognition in recent years. It was named one of the “Five Top Innovative/Unique Programs in Creative Writing” in The Atlantic magazine’s 2007 Fiction Issue.

“These rankings say something about our program,” said Philip Gerard, chair of the Department of Creative Writing. “Clearly, we’re going in the right direction. When we created this program 15 years ago, we were very intentional and very conscious of what we were doing and why we were doing it. As faculty members, we created the kind of program we wished we had been part of when we were students.”

Alumni agree that UNCW’s program is student-centered and that faculty provide needed support and encouragement to help students become successful writers.

“What made this program stand out for me were the professors,” said Kirsten Holmstedt, 2006 M.F.A. graduate and author of Band of Sisters and The Girls...continued on page 8

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Come Marching Home. “I felt their commitment when I entered the program in fall 2002 until my book was finished in spring 2006. They challenged me, and along the way, the belief that I could be published replaced self-doubt. In the end, it’s the combination of selfless professors and the high quality of students that has made the program such a success.”

In addition to the program rankings, the magazine notes funding levels for each of the M.F.A. programs included in its top 50 list. UNC Wilmington ranked 41st in overall funding and 42nd in annual funding. Sixteen of the programs ranked above UNCW are able to give full funding to their creative writing graduate students. Currently, UNCW is able to offer funding support to about 40 percent of its students.

“The comparison between our academic ranking and our funding ranking was pretty telling,” said Gerard. “There’s a big disparity there. As a program, we’re performing about twice as well as our funding level says we should be.”

Gerard’s goal, which he noted is shared by administrators at UNCW who are very supportive of the M.F.A. program, is to increase that funding in the future, primarily through gifts and grants from private sources. In the meantime, Gerard said the faculty members intend to continue doing the things they are doing right that have brought the program to its current prominence.

In addition to the intentional, student-oriented design of the program, Gerard points to other successful aspects such as the program’s sense of community, the consistency and longevity of program faculty and the support of university administration. There are also two unique pieces that only UNCW can offer: The Publishing Laboratory and Ecotone, the nationally acclaimed literary journal that focuses on place, both in the literal sense of honoring the environment and the metaphorical sense of reckoning with aesthetic boundaries.

Eli Hastings, 2004 M.F.A. graduate and author of the award-winning memoir Falling Room, added that the program is rigorous, and faculty have high expectations for students and their work.

“The M.F.A. program at UNCW is, first of all, serious,” Hasting said. “The three years to complete it speaks to that, as does the focus on producing a publishable thesis by the time one completes the degree. It pushes students to become professional, published writers and makes sure the people coming into the program have that as their aim. I wanted my butt kicked, frankly, in terms of deadlines, critiques and work. I wasn’t disappointed.”

Gerard notes that social networking has rapidly spread word of the many unique aspects of UNCW’s program to prospective M.F.A. students around the country. Prospective students seek out current students through Facebook and Twitter to ask them about their experience at UNCW, and the responses they receive influence their decision to apply.

“The best promotion for our program is the word of mouth of our current students and alumni,” he said.

UNCW M.F.A. program students and alumni have published more than 30 books and dozens of shorter works; core faculty have published more than 50 books as well as hundreds of shorter pieces.

Article courtesy of UNCW Marketing and Communications

What’s new with Ecotone?

Ecotone’s fall 2009 issue hit the stands in November. This “Brutality” issue features a full-length play by Denis Johnson, poetry from Sherman Alexie and Marvin Bell, our first-ever comics from Eisner-nominee Jamie Tanner, and much more.

It has been an exciting year for Ecotone. Katherine Miles’ essay “Dog Is Our Copilot” from our “Evolution” issue was reprinted in Best American Essays, and Cary Holladay’s story “Horse People” was included in New Stories from the South 2009: The Year’s Best.

In addition to these reprints, several other essays and stories from the “Evolution” issue received honorable mentions in the Best American Series. Daniel Orozco’s story “Only Connect,” from the “Evolution” issue, will be listed as one of two “Recommended Stories” in the next volume of the O. Henry Prize Stories, and Daniel also will be featured on the Web site when the volume comes out next May. This is the first such honor for Ecotone.

We recently received the good news that the NEA has awarded Ecotone with a grant for the second year in a row. Please keep an eye out for new changes to our Web site: http://www.ecotonejournal.com.
If you haven’t seen a copy of the department’s textbook Show & Tell: Writers on Writing in a while, you may want to take another look. What began eight years ago as a handbook featuring the writing of eleven faculty members is now a 432-page anthology of award-winning published works and essays on how to create them. Illuminating the fundamentals of writing fiction, creative non-fiction and poetry, the sixth edition guides readers through practical and inspiring conversations with faculty, visiting writers and alumni.

The sixth edition, published in August, has come a long way since its initial 2001 impression, published under the visionary guidance of former visiting professor Stanley Colbert. Wrapped in a no-frills cover and produced on demand in the department’s then-fledgling Publishing Laboratory, the first edition was sold exclusively to UNC Wilmington students. With each incarnation, editors have added a handful of new contributors, but this edition marks a major overhaul and the first to add so many new authors.

Now featuring more than thirty contributors, the sixth edition constitutes virtually a new book and reflects a thriving creative community, collecting side-by-side the work of 18 faculty members, five visiting writers and five published alumni. Many of the book’s longtime contributors have replaced previous selections with recent, award-winning work. New stories, essays and poems have been anthologized in the Best American and Pushcart Prize series and have garnered the prestigious National Magazine Award.

Unlike most publishers, The Publishing Laboratory had the advantage of studying its textbook in use, as well as getting access to valuable feedback from veteran instructors and TAs. At their behest, editors working with pub lab director Emily Smith solicited and added essays on grammar, revision and the art of editing, as well as a glossary of essential terms. M.F.A. students Tom Dunn, Corinne Manning, Erin Sroka and Jennifer Weathers shepherded the book through the copyediting, proofreading and design process.

Although Show & Tell has wide application in the classroom, it will appeal to all readers of contemporary literature. The creative selections alone—more than thirty stories, essays and groups of poems—provide an excellent introduction to the department’s growing and talented community of writers. Also new to the sixth edition, “After Words” reveal the authors’ fascinations and vulnerabilities, offering rare glimpses into how the selections came to fruition. Star-News reviewer Ben Steelman remarked, “You might actually want to read this book, even if it wasn’t assigned for credit.”

Still the primary textbook for students in the popular introductory writing course, the book has been adopted by several other universities and is available to general readership in bookstores and on Amazon. To order a desk copy, contact Emily Smith in The Publishing Laboratory. To adopt the textbook for your class, contact distributor John F. Blair by calling 1-800-222-9796 or visiting www.blairpub.com. Ask about discounts for schools.

In this edition of Show & Tell:

- Wendy Brenner reveals her sources for creating rich and eccentric detail in fiction.
- Clyde Edgerton explains the relationship between narrator and plot.
- Philip Gerard clarifies: just what is creative nonfiction, anyhow?
- Peter Trachtenberg stretches the bars on the cage of nonfiction.
- Michael White finds the inherent music in poetry.
- “Tools & Tips” offers advice on editing, revision and what to do with workshop feedback.
Announcing Lookout Books

Established in 2009, Lookout Books will operate as an imprint of the Publishing Laboratory and in concert with the literary journal Ecotone to publish books of fiction, creative nonfiction and poetry. The new venture expands the scope and possibilities of both the Publishing Lab and Ecotone, giving the journal a chance to highlight its best authors and strengthen its relationships with them, and The Publishing Laboratory an opportunity to reach beyond its regional-press roots to become a boutique literary press.

Lookout Books is not just a fancy title—it’s a publishing philosophy. Founders Ben George, editor of Ecotone, and Emily Smith, director of The Publishing Laboratory, pledge to be “on the lookout” for emerging literary voices, as well as for works by established writers that may have been overlooked by commercial houses. In a publishing environment increasingly indifferent to literary innovation, they hope to provide a haven for books that matter, to develop lasting relationships with authors, to convey the intimacy between writer and reader through well-made and attractive books and to set a standard of excellence in the world of independent publishing.

Lookout is not interested in flash-in-the-pan, but in enduring light. Comprised of George, Smith, and students in the M.F.A. program, the staff believes that books matter, that they have the power to make a difference, decades after publication. The boutique press counts itself among those publishers who make a lasting impact by publishing that which demands to be in the world.

Edith Pearlman

Over the past thirty years, Edith Pearlman has established herself as one of America’s finest short story writers. With Binocular Vision: New and Selected Works, Lookout Books hopes to introduce a new generation of readers to her fiction. Pearlman’s sophisticated yet accessible stories have been published in more than 250 venues, including national magazines, literary journals and anthologies. Her work has appeared in Best American Short Stories, The O. Henry Prize Collection, News Stories from the South, and Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses. Her first collection of stories, Vaquita, won the Drue Heinz Prize for Literature, and her second, Love Among the Greats, won the Spokane Annual Fiction Prize. Her third, How to Fall, was published by Sarabande in February 2005 and won the Mary McCarthy Prize.

Binocular Vision, a kind of portable Pearlman, will feature thirty-four of her most dazzling stories, including thirteen new ones.

What happens when a little girl gets lost in Boston? When two cousins fall in love? When a devoted father falls terminally ill? Edith Pearlman’s quietly powerful stories unveil complex characters in a few sentences, rich and colorful portraits of men and women, young and old, from a Boston suburb to modern Jerusalem to an unnamed Latin American country. The narrator of the title story, a child made powerful by her ability to observe her neighbors, unnoticed, through her father’s binoculars, embodies the precision and care with which the author observes the world.

With her subtle hand, Pearlman addresses the sweep of human experience, including the Holocaust, phobias and love. Binding these stories together is the intricate individuality of family.

Ecotone and the Publishing Lab are two of the reasons UNCW’s Master of Fine Arts program consistently ranks among the top 25 M.F.A. programs in the nation. Combining literary and aesthetic concerns with commercial savvy, both provide excellent training grounds for careers in publishing. Smith and George work with students in the M.F.A. program to select, edit and design all Lookout titles. The first will be Binocular Vision, new and selected stories by Edith Pearlman, due out in early 2011.

Writers should note that the best way to introduce work to the editors is through submission to Ecotone. For the time being, Lookout Books does not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Ecotone gets a new logotype and cover design

You may have noticed that the new issue of Ecotone, its eighth, features an updated logo and cover design to match the spiffy new interior layout, revamped last year with illustrated spreads and full-bleed images for the special “Evolution” issue. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Contributor and essayist Robert Vivian wrote, “I just got the issue, and, my God, it’s the most beautiful journal I’ve ever been a small part of: my deepest and awe-filled thanks.” And Antonya Nelson sent an e-mail saying, “Wow, it looks great. Thanks so much for inviting me in! I love the photos, and the whole idea of including a play . . . it is just super impressive.”
The Department of Creative Writing accepted 46 new students to the Creative Writing major in the Fall 2009 semester. The department has 160 undergraduate students and dozens of minors.

Fifteen students received the B.F.A. degree during graduation ceremonies in December 2009.

The 2009 N.C. Sorosis Award was presented to senior Laura Cowden during a ceremony November 8. Laura is pursuing the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in creative nonfiction and a B.A. degree in English. She transferred to UNCW in 2007 after attending Chattanooga State Technical Community College.

N.C. Sorosis presented the $500 scholarship to Cowden in honor of Kirsten Holmstedt, who received her Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing (creative nonfiction) from UNCW in 2006. Holmstedt is the author of *Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq* and *The Girls Come Marching Home: Stories of Women Warriors Returning from the War in Iraq*. 

The 2009 Rice-Evans Scholarship was awarded to senior Jenica Jones. The $1,000 scholarship is reserved for a B.F.A. student who demonstrates a spirit of volunteerism and has a strong record of community/public service. Jones is a UNCW Honors Scholar, and she is pursuing a B.F.A. in fiction and a B.A. in psychology. Her writing has appeared in *New River High Tide, Bootleg Magazine* and the campus arts journal *Atlantis*.

Senior C.J. Williams received the undergraduate Bookstore Scholarship.

In the fall 2009 semester, five B.F.A. students held internships in the Wilmington area. The internship agencies included the Chautauqua literary journal, Wrightsville Beach Magazine, Bootleg Magazine and Cape Fear River Watch. The spring 2010 internship agencies will include the Muscular Dystrophy Association, UNCW Marketing and Communications and the UNCW Writing Center.

Writers Week 2009 included a special panel discussion for undergraduate students: “What I Wish I’d Known—Pointers for Applying to M.F.A. Programs.” Presenters were M.F.A. students Kiki Johnson, Nick Miller, Rachel Richardson and Megan Simmons.

In addition to its usual lineup of classes for the fall semester, the B.F.A. Program offered three special courses in Fall 2009—CRW 315: Confessional Poetry, CRW 320: The Story Re-Visioned and CRW 320: Writing Short-Short Fiction.

Longtime B.F.A. Coordinator Lavonne Adams became the M.F.A. coordinator in Fall 2009. Tim Bass, a lecturer in creative writing, took over as B.F.A. coordinator. He also handles internships and departmental outreach.

B.F.A. student Kevin Dublin was selected as a Student Poet to work with a Distinguished North Carolina poet as part of the N.C. Poetry Society’s Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series. Kevin will work with Professor John Hoppenthaler.
On October 23, 2009, the M.F.A. program hosted its third Art Show—Re-Vision: A Change of Art—with an opening reception at Parallelogram gallery in Wilmington. The show, including 13 artists from the M.F.A. program, featured more than 50 student pieces in a wide range of styles and media. More than 70 people attended the opening, and three student pieces sold on opening night.

Art show co-chairs Chris Guppy and Rochelle Hurt were committed to making the show happen after a brief hiatus following the graduation of alumna Janie Miller. Janie, a 2008 graduate of the M.F.A. program, started the show in the 2006–07 school year. Both Guppy and Hurt are second-year students who felt that a continued presence in and connection to the Wilmington area were essential for the program. In addition to artists profiting from the sale of their work and higher visibility for the program in town, voluntary donations were welcomed to benefit DREAMS of Wilmington, an organization committed to bringing arts education to underserved children in the area.

High-profile publicity pieces in the Wilmington Star-News and Encore magazine, as well as a calendar blurb in Wrightsville Beach Magazine and airtime on WHQR, Wilmington’s local NPR station, all helped to boost the visibility of the show. Artists and non-artists alike joined to help support the show, providing design services, as well as refreshments and supplies for the opening. Funding from the Department of Creative Writing and the Graduate Student Association also helped make the opening reception a success.

A new addition to the show this year was a selection of participating artist-writers reading from their recent work. Several of the artists included in the show also sat on a panel during Writers Week, November 2–6, 2009, discussing their artwork and how it related to and affected their writing life.

The three-week show closed on November 13. Both Hurt and Guppy hope that future students will take on the challenge of heading up the M.F.A. art show for years to come.
Coast Line: First of all, congratulations on such a successful Writers Week. How was this year’s conference different than previous ones?

Rebecca Lee: Thank you. I would say this year’s Writers Week, for me, was notably different in the sense that our funding was in jeopardy until the last moment, about two weeks before Writers Week, so it was pulled together rapidly. Luckily, we had great luck in getting some of the most formidable writers in the South to come here for the week. It was very heartening to just ask and receive. Some people came with literally a few days’ advance notice. Obviously it’s the students themselves and their work that make the M.F.A. program what it is, but it’s also the constant revolving door of incredible writers visiting for a day or a week or a month or a year that makes our program so continually interesting and different.

CL: Why did you choose the theme “A Southern Homecoming”?

RL: Our three keynote speakers—Elizabeth Spencer, Allan Gurganus and James Applewhite—are members of The Fellowship of Southern Writers, as is faculty member Clyde Edgerton. I think for a long time we’d been kicking around the idea of doing a Writers Week that was exclusively “southern” as a way to pay homage to the environment this particular M.F.A. program is enveloped in. In some ways, the M.F.A. program can seem region-free at times, since it’s such a blending of people from all over the country, but it’s also benefited enormously from the powerful and rich literary tradition around it.

CL: How do you think the goals of UNCW’s M.F.A. program fit this year’s theme?

RL: One of the goals for our M.F.A. program is that writers here find or refine a voice that is truly their own, and has a privacy and urgency to it, but it’s also pretty important that the writer find themselves inside a tradition or a community of fellow-writers. One of the goals we have for writers in the program is that they be able to come in contact with many different voices and approaches to writing, and Writers Week is one way of addressing that hope.
**CL:** There was a great variety in the conference speakers’ genres, backgrounds, ages and personalities. Was it difficult to get so much diversity while working within the boundaries of “A Southern Homecoming?”

**RL:** We had to stretch the theme a little bit to include Peter (Trachtenberg), who we wanted to bring back to deliver his brilliant lecture. He only fit into the category of “homecoming,” not “southern.” We did try to plumb his background for anything southern, but there was nothing. Except love! He loves it here.

**CL:** This year’s keynote address by Allan Gurganus explored the complexities of combining history and fiction. How do you think these two topics relate to the current state of fiction?

**RL:** Allan Gurganus is somebody who, in his own fiction, seems to smuggle in so many passions and concerns. His fiction contains multitudes. So it doesn’t surprise me to hear him discussing how to fit history inside fiction. He’s spent his life fitting everything inside fiction. That should be the goal, it seems, of every fiction writer. How to get what matters in there...

**CL:** What sort of feedback did you receive from this year’s writers?

**RL:** So many of the writers said really wonderful things. I just received a note from one of our visitors, James Applewhite, which says, “The students in the program were bright, interested and deeply literate. It is clear to me that the UNC W writing program is remarkably fine—and also singularly committed to real literary values. Authentic things—persons, places, programs—are rare these days. You are all part of something to be cherished.”

**CL:** What was the best surprise about this year’s conference?

**RL:** The best surprise was that we were able to persuade one of the true living legends, Elizabeth Spencer, to come give a reading right as the Modern Library was putting out her collection of stories. She’s a true gem of the south—her stories are so formal and polite, but sneakily brilliant and explosive too.

**CL:** How will the success of “A Southern Homecoming” affect how you plan the next Writers Week?

**RL:** I think we’re going to have another themed Writers Week! Possibly Nature Writing or Politics and Writing. Maybe something sillier. It’d be fun to have a whole week to seriously ponder Comical Writing. It’s still inchoate, though, next year’s theme. It’s to be announced.

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**“Accelerated Success”**

...continued from page 1

much so quickly in shaping an excellent education for the benefit of its creative writing students, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

“The accelerated success of this program is due to four factors: (1) the bold decision of the university leadership’s to give the program autonomy as its own department; (2) the expertise and perseverance of the department chairs, Mark Cox, Phil Furia, and Philip Gerard; (3) the dedication of the faculty as a whole in building the program; and (4) the university’s allocation of special resources in facilities and financial support. ‘Talent perceives differences; genius, unity,’ said William Butler Yeats. UNCW has exercised the rare genius of unified purpose in forging this program so quickly and so well.

“Many of the components of the program are exemplary, and they may serve as models to other programs. UNCW’s dedicated faculty, administration, student handbook, Web site, publishing lab, seminars, facilities, publications, service-learning programs and philosophy are among the most effectively assembled and unified components that we have seen.”
James Applewhite has written numerous books of poetry, including the award-winning *Daytime and Starlight* and *A Diary of Altered Light*. He is the recipient of the Ragan-Rubin Award from the North Carolina English Teachers Association, the 1998 Brockman-Campbell Award from the North Carolina Poetry Society, and the North Carolina Award in Literature. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Jean Stein Award in Poetry. Applewhite was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 2008. He is professor emeritus at Duke University.

Todd Berliner is Associate Professor of Film Studies at UNCW. He is the author of *Hollywood Incoherent: Narration in Seventies Cinema* (forthcoming 2010). His articles have appeared in *Film Quarterly, Cinema Journal, Journal of Film and Video, Style, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Film International, Style, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Quarterly, Cinema Journal, Journal of Film Studies* at UNCW.

Lisa Bertini directed and produced the documentary short film *The Lost Colony* (2007, 11:06) for her capstone project of the Masters in Liberal Studies program at UNCW. The documentary-short reveals the life of a family in Crusoe Island, a secluded community in the Green Swamp of North Carolina once known for its suspicion of outsiders and subsistence living along the Waccamaw River. Because of the centuries-old isolation of this community, the residents developed their own unique lifestyle and (nearly intelligible) dialect—quite a similar situation as one would find in the “hollers” of mountainous regions of the eastern part of the United States. Her film screened at the Cucalorus Film Festival in Wilmington, N.C., in November 2007, and at the Trade & Row Film Festival in Los Angeles, Calif., in October 2008. It received the award for Best Documentary Short at the Great Lakes Film Festival in Erie, Pa., in September 2009.

Mike Craver graduated from the University of North Carolina and was a member of the Red Clay Ramblers for 12 years, appearing in Diamond Studs and Sam Shepard’s *A Lie of the Mind*, recording nine albums, and touring the U.S., Canada, Europe, Scandinavia, Africa and the Middle East. After leaving the Ramblers, Mike got involved in more theatre, both as a writer and performer. Off-Broadway credits also include *The Oil City Symphony* (co-author and original cast member, Drama Desk award), *Smoke on the Mountain, Radio Gals* (co-author and original cast member, LA Ovation award), *Wilder* (co-author and original cast), *Lunch at the Piccadilly* (co-writer and original cast), *Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming* (arranger and additional music and lyrics). He has worked in theatres across the country, including the Pasadena Playhouse, Actors Theatre of Louisville and the Cape Playhouse in Dennis, Mass.

Allan Gurganus, a native of Rocky Mount, N.C., is the author of novels, essays and short stories. His novels include *Older Living, Confederate Widow Tells All* and *Plays Well with Others*. His short fiction includes *White People* and *The Practical Heart: Four Novellas*. Gurganus’s stories have been honored with the O. Henry Prize and included in *Best New Stories of the South*. He was awarded the Sue Kaufman Award from the American Academy for Best First Work of American Fiction, the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction for *White People*, the Lambda Literary Award and the National Magazine Prize for *The Practical Heart*. His books have been translated into 16 languages.

Brad Land studied creative writing at the UNCW and at Western Michigan University. He has twice been a fellow at the MacDowell Colony. A memoir, *Goat*, and a novel, *Pilgrims Upon the Earth*, were published by Random House. Killer
Films is producing a screen adaptation of *Goat*, written by David Gordon Green and to be directed by Jeff Nichols. His work has appeared in the anthology *When I Was a Loser: True Stories of (Barely) Surviving High School*, edited by John McNally and published by Free Press, in *Gentleman’s Quarterly*, the *Oxford American*, the *Southeast Review*, *Third Coast* and *Ecotone*.

Sarah Messer is an associate professor of poetry and creative nonfiction at UNCW. She has published a book of poetry, *Bandit Letters* (New Issues, 2001), and a hybrid history/memoir, *Red House: Being a Mostly Accurate Account of New England’s Oldest Continuously Lived-in House* (Viking, 2004), which was a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers pick for fall 2004. She was a 2008–09 Radcliffe Institute Fellow.

Jason Mott is a graduate of both the B.F.A. (fiction) and M.F.A. (poetry) programs at UNCW. His debut poetry collection, *We Call This Thing Between Us Love*, was published by Main Street Rag in December 2009. His fiction and poetry have appeared in journals such as *Prick of the Spindle*, *Kakalak Anthology of Carolina Poets*, *Measure* and *Chautauqua*.

Elizabeth Spencer, acclaimed author of numerous books of fiction and a memoir, is a five-time recipient of the O. Henry Award for short fiction. Her books include *The Night Travellers*, *The Light in the Piazza*, *Jack of Diamonds* and *The Southern Woman: New and Selected Fiction*. Her novella, *The Light in the Piazza*, was adapted for Broadway in 2005 and garnered six Tony Awards. Spencer is a founding member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

John Jeremiah Sullivan is a writer-at-large for *GQ* and a contributing editor at *Harper’s Magazine*. He is the author of the book *Blood Horses*. He is a PEN Literary Award finalist.

Peter Trachtenberg is a writer based in upstate New York and the author of the memoir *7 Tattoos* and *The Book of Calamities: Five Questions About Suffering and Its Meaning*, a book that combines reportage, memoir and moral philosophy to explore suffering and its narratives. His essays, journalism and short fiction have been published in *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s*, *BOMB*, *TriQuarterly*, *O, The New York Times Travel Magazine* and *A Public Space*. His commentaries have been broadcast on NPR’S *All Things Considered*. He was a visiting writer at UNCW in 2008-09.

Ben Fountain earned a B.A. in English at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and a law degree from Duke University. His fiction has appeared in *Harper’s*, *The Paris Review*, and *Zoetrope: All Story*, and he has been awarded an O. Henry Prize, two Pushcart Prizes, and the PEN/Hemingway Award. He lives with his wife and their two children in Dallas, Texas.

Michael Thomas received his B.A. from Hunter College in New York City and his M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College in Asheville, N.C. *Man Gone Down*, his first novel, was one of *The New York Times Book Review’s* Ten Best Books of the Year and winner of the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award for 2009. He teaches at Hunter College and lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.
Kirk Barrett (B.F.A.) won first-place in Press 53’s Open Awards for his story “Sarajevo Roses.”

Michelle Bliss recently completed a professional news internship with WHOR, Wilmington’s Public Radio station. Her feature “Baghdad Shooting Victim Counseled Soldiers” aired on NPR’s All Things Considered in June. Since then, her essay “Fiction” was published in River Teeth 11:1, and her short story “Driving Home” was a finalist for the NC State 2009 Brenda L. Smart Fiction Prize contest in November.

Kevin Dublin (B.F.A.) was selected as a Student Poet to work with a Distinguished North Carolina poet as part of the N.C. Poetry Society’s Gilbert-ChapPELL Distinguished Poet Series. He will work with Professor John Hoppenthaler. Dublin was published in the fall edition of the online literary journal Word Salad Poetry Magazine in September. He was chosen to read at the Poetry SparkCON sponsored by the N.C. Writer’s Network in Raleigh, N.C. In October, he read at the West End Poetry Festival in Carrboro, N.C. Dublin also has started making more contributions to poetry around Wilmington and bringing it to the internet with a YouTube poetry channel titled “Port City Poetry.” The channel features readings around Wilmington and visual poetry projects that fuse poetry and short film.

Tom Dunn’s story “Dogs and Demons” was published in the Winter 2009 issue of Blue Earth Review.

Will Flowers’ poem “Gifts” (which appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of Apple Valley Review) has been nominated for a 2009 Pushcart Prize.

Chris Guppy, with the help of Corinne Manning (Writers in Action) and Linda Connor (Duke Medical Center), taught a semester-long creative writing class called “Teens Out Loud” to nine HIV-positive students. The class culminated in the publication of a book, Teens Out Loud: Positive Voices Speak Out, filled with the students’ writing and art, and a book release party on campus. One of the students also was featured on The Huffington Post. More recently, Guppy met with social workers in Durham to tell them about the class, and reported that they all want to replicate it in their areas. The department is currently looking into further funding, through grants and/or other university support.

Keith Kopka has won a Vermont Studio Center fellowship for a four-week residency in July 2010.

Kris Lockridge’s story “I Know Your Face” is in the fall issue of You Must Be This Tall to Ride, an online quarterly, and can be found at http://youmustbethistalltoride.net.

Josh Maclvor-Andersen was first runner-up for the Fourth Genre Editor’s Prize and will be published in the Fall 2010 issue. He also won the Arts & Letters Susan Atefat Prize in Creative Nonfiction and will be published in the Spring 2010 issue of the Arts & Letters Journal of Contemporary Culture. This summer, Maclvor-Andersen’s piece “Arbor awe” was published in the online journal Catapult Magazine and his Geez Magazine article “Searching for a good trade on the coast of Carolina” was featured by the Wilmington Star News.

Rod McClain’s interview with the band Herds was featured in the June issue of Maximum Rocknroll, a newsprint music magazine with worldwide distribution.

Kiah McCoy (B.F.A.) was one of six finalists for the annual Anthony Abbott Poetry Competition. As a part of this, she traveled to Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C., to do a public reading of her poem “Under the Sun.” Afterwards, McCoy received a cash prize and attended a reception where she spoke with Mr. Abbott and the other finalists.

Erika Moya’s poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in The Best American Poetry blog run by David Lehman, Unsaid Magazine, and Holly Rose Review. Moya has a review forthcoming in Le Pink Elephant Press.

Ariana Nash’s poems “The Orange” and “Over Breakfast” were published in The 2River View. Nash’s poems, and a clip of her reading them, can be found at http://www.2river.org/2RView/14_1/poems/nash.html. This summer, Nash’s poem “Instructions for Preparing Your Skin” was published in the online journal Xenith.

Rachel Richardson’s story “Circulation” is in the latest issue of Brink Magazine, an online quarterly (www.brinklit.com).

Tony Sams has had a poem accepted for the upcoming issue (#7) of The Los Angeles Review, scheduled for release in March 2010. He also received an Honorable Mention for his piece “Ich Bin Ein” in the NC State 2009 Brenda L. Smart Fiction Prize contest.

Megan Starks’ short story “Harvest Hulls” was a semi-finalist in the recent NC State 2009 Brenda L. Smart Fiction Prize contest.

Daniel Nathan Terry’s poem “Coroner’s Aubade” was published in The MacGuffin and his first chapbook of poetry, Waxwings, was a finalist for the Robin Becker Prize. Also, his book Capturing the Dead was nominated for the SIBA award.

Jessica Thummel was a finalist for her story “The Replacement” in the NC State 2009 Brenda L. Smart Fiction Prize.
The following departmental honors were awarded in Spring 2009:

**Lavonne Adams Award:** Kate Sweeney
To a graduating M.F.A. student who, throughout his or her enrollment in the program, has shown an all-around dedication to the M.F.A. program, his or her work, and the creative writing community, and has contributed to the academic and social health of the program, as well as the writing community at large.
Voted on by M.F.A. students.

**Robert H. Byington Award:** Carmen Rodriguez
To honor the outstanding leadership and pioneering work of Dr. Robert H. Byington in establishing the Creative Writing Program, to a second-year M.F.A. student of outstanding creative achievement who has demonstrated unusual generosity of spirit toward faculty, staff and peers and has contributed significantly to the morale, community spirit, and excellence of the M.F.A. program.

**Philip Furia Award:** David Harris-Gershon
To a graduating M.F.A. student who has shown superior knowledge of the historic development of his or her literary genre.

**Margaret Shannon Morton Fellowship:** Jeremy Hawkins
To an M.F.A. student at the end of the first year, for outstanding creative achievement.

**Outstanding M.F.A. Thesis Award:**
Fiction – Tim Conrad
Creative Nonfiction – Kate Sweeney
Poetry – Jen Shepard

**Outstanding B.F.A. Thesis Award:**
Fiction – Lindsey Johnson
Creative Nonfiction – Zachary Dixon
Poetry – Tyler Sparks

**Outstanding Faculty Award:** Peter Trachtenberg
Voted on by M.F.A. students.

**UNCW Graduate Teaching Award 2009:**
Lukis Kauffman, Tim Conrad

**UNCW Bookstore Award 2009:**
Corinne Manning (M.F.A.), Carl James Williams (B.F.A.)

**UNCW Writing Place Tutoring Awards:**
Rachel Schmidt, Hope Bordeaux, Michelle Bliss

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Anne Barnhill’s short story collection *What You Long For* was published in June 2009, by Main Street Rag and recently received a positive review from the *Winston-Salem Journal*. One of the stories in the collection, “Dickhead,” was first runner-up in the Thomas Wolfe Fiction Contest this year. Also, one of the chapters from Barnhill’s memoir, *At Home in the Land of Oz*, will be included in a forthcoming book from Jessica Kingsley Publishers (London) about siblings and autism. In addition to a number of readings in North and South Carolina to promote *What You Long For*, Barnhill recently taught a fiction workshop in the new creative writing program at Central Carolina Community College. She recently signed with an agent for her Tudor-era novel.

Aubyn Burnside is currently working as a Documentation Specialist, writing training documents for The Walt Disney World Resort in Florida.

Simona Chitescu won first place in *The Adirondack Review’s* 46ers Prize Contest for her poem “Story in the Late Style of the City,” which was published in the review’s winter issue.

Kate Cumiskey’s poem “1971” was awarded Honorable Mention in the 2009 Allen Ginsberg Awards and will appear in *The Paterson Literary Review*. Her book *Surfing in New Smyrna Beach* is in press with Arcadia Publishing and is due out in early spring. A portion of the profits go to the Scholarship Fund of the Smyrna Surfari Club. Cumiskey currently teaches at the University of Central Florida.

Nina de Gramont’s book *Gossip of the Starlings* was spotlighted this summer under the “Great Reads” feature in *People Magazine*: “Last year’s spellbinding gem of a novel about prep school girls living dangerously. Don’t miss it.”

Alison Harney was a finalist for the *Southeast Review Poetry* Contest and will be published in Vol. 28, 2010.

Kianoosh Hashemzadeh (B.F.A.) had a creative nonfiction piece, “Summer is Over,” published by *Brevity* this summer.

Kirsten Holmstedt’s second book *The Girls Come Marching Home* was recently published by Stackpole Books.

Shawna Kenney’s essay “Seven Minutes” appeared in the anthology *Hos, Hookers, Callgirls and Rent Boys: Professionals Writing on Love, Sex, Money and Life* (Soft Skull Press). The book has already sold out its first printing, received positive reviews, and was featured on the cover of the *New York Times Sunday Book Review.*
Robert Lurie’s book *No Certainty Attached*, which began as his M.F.A. thesis under David Gessner, was released this summer in Australia and the US from Verse Chorus Press. The book, which Lurie worked on for seven years, has now been released on three continents.

Jason Mott’s collection of poems, *We Call This Thing Between Us Love*, was first runner-up in the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award Contest and was recently published by Main Street Rag. Mott performed a reading at this year’s Writers Week. This summer, two of his poems, “Issue #100: Death in the Family!” and “Thinly Veiled, Young Man Comes to Me Seeking a Friendly Face (The Joker),” appeared in *Chautauqua* #6, “The Story and Storytelling Issue.”

Derek Nikitas’s new novel *The Long Division* earned a very positive review from Marilyn Stasio in the *New York Times* Sunday Book Review (11/15/09).


Sumanth Prabhaker recently started a small non-profit company called Madras Press, publishing individually bound short stories and novellas and donating the proceeds to a growing list of charitable causes chosen by its authors. The first series of titles includes stories by Aimee Bender, Trinie Dalton, UNCW’s Rebecca Lee and Prabhaker, and benefits a number of very deserving organizations. Information about Madras’s books, submission guidelines, and online ordering can be found at www.madraspress.com.

Dr. Anne Russell’s American Studies doctoral dissertation, *Patsy Takemoto Mink: Political Woman*, a biography of Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink of Hawaii, has been extensively utilized as a source for the television documentary *Patsy Mink: Ahead of the Majority*, which has been presented on PBS and has won numerous best feature awards in film festivals.

Dana Sach’s new nonfiction book *The Life We Were Given: Operation Babylift, International Adoption, and the Children of War in Vietnam* will be published by Beacon Press in April.

Jen Shepard’s poem “Conversations About Making A Movie and It’s Harder Than We Thought” recently appeared in the *Denver Quarterly*. Shepard was also a finalist for the Gerald Stern Poetry prize sponsored by *The Dirty Napkin*, an independent journal.

Cyra Sherburn (B.F.A.) recently received Honorable Mention for her short story “The Inside” in the NCSU Short-Short Fiction Contest.

Kate Sweeney’s essay “Memory Maker” was recently accepted for the spring issue of the *New South* journal.

Mallory Tarses was a finalist for her story “Tennis Lesson” in the NC State 2009 Brenda L. Smart Fiction Prize. Mallory was also a finalist for “How Was Your Weekend?” in the 2009 Brenda L. Smart Award for Short Fiction.

Jamie Trost is now partner-captain of *The Pride of Baltimore II* and brought the ship to Wilmington in May. UNCW’s Philip Gerard sailed with him down to Jacksonville, Fla., and wrote an article, “Master and Commander: a Creative Writer at Sea,” for *UNCW Magazine*.

Matt Tullis has published several pieces in *Cleveland Magazine* over the last six months, including his essay “Sweating Out This Indians’ Summer,” which was published in September. He also had two pieces in the December issue: a profile of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, and a story on what it’s like to be Santa Clause in a mall over the holidays. In September, Tullis read a portion of his still-unpublished memoir, *Sick Cookie*, at the Childhood Cancer Survivor’s Conference in Akron, Ohio, and took part in a panel discussion. He also has had a panel accepted for the 2010 AWP in Denver, which will focus on teaching with the M.F.A. in academia.

Jay Varner’s essay “Sport for Our Neighbors” will be in the upcoming issue *The Southeast Review* (28:1).

Eric Vithalani will have two poems published in the upcoming issue of *Blood Orange Review*. He now lives, works, plays music and writes in Wilmington, N.C., and, in June 2010, will set out to bicycle across the United States and overseas; follow him at http://ericvithalani.wordpress.com/ .

Jennifer Weather’s poem “On the Deer Carcass that Hung in the Garage” was published in the Fall 2009 issue of the *Cimarron Review*.

Audrey Weis will be getting married on April 25, 2010, at Orton Plantation, N.C., to Shawn Johnson, ICU nurse extraordinaire and love of her life.
**Lavonne Adams** recently had poetry published in *Southern Humanities Review* and the online journal *r.kv.r.y.* This past summer, she completed a six-week residency at the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, New Mexico, followed by a month at the Vermont Studio Center. Adams also gave a reading at Café Muse (Word Works Press), Chevy Chase, Md., in August. This fall, she took over as UNCW’s M.F.A. Coordinator in the Creative Department after 14 years coordinating the B.F.A. program.


**Mark Cox** has poems appearing or forthcoming in *New Ohio Review* and *Aspects of Robinson: Homage to Weldon Kees*. He has recently read at Dartmouth College, the UT-Chattanooga Summer Writers’ Conference and at the Vermont College Literary Residency in Slovenia.

**Clyde Edgerton**’s story “Debra’s Flap and Snap” appeared in *Image Journal*’s new book, *Bearing the Mystery*. Also, Edgerton’s newest novel, *The Bible Salesman*, was chosen by *O: The Oprah Magazine* as one of the 20 Best Books of Summer 2009.

**Phil Furia** published an essay on Irving Berlin in Harvard’s *New Literary History of America*, wrote and emceed a centenary “Big Band” tribute to Johnny Mercer in Atlanta in November of 2009, and was interviewed about Mercer by the BBC and other radio stations as well as several newspapers, including *The Wall Street Journal*. His next book, *The Songs of Hollywood*, with co-author and wife Laurie Patterson, will be published by Oxford University Press in March. In July, Furia was featured in the *New York Times* Theater section. He was quoted about the early days of Tin Pan Alley on a spread showcasing a new Broadway musical about Irving Berlin and Scott Joplin.

**Robert Siegel** has been honored as the recipient of the 2008-2009 NCAC Artists Fellowship.

**Michael White** has two poems, “Out Back” and “Vermeer: Woman in a Red Hat,” appearing this spring in the *Kenyon Review*. He also gave a reading recently in Lynchburg, VA.