

allusions*

UConn Creative Writing Program

English Department
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

The 48th Annual Wallace Stevens Poetry Program with August Kleinzahler



Credit Don Usner

BY DINA ADDORISIO, PROGRAM INTERN

August Kleinzahler was this year's featured reader at the 48th Annual Wallace Stevens Poetry Program. The program is sponsored by the Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc., The Hartford Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens, and the English Department in UConn's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Wallace Stevens Poetry Program began in 1964 with funding from The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc., to honor Modernist master poet Wallace Stevens, a former employee. In the years since then, the Program has brought a roster of the most important national and international poets of the last four decades to Connecticut. Kleinzahler read on April 19 at the Storrs campus and on April 20 at the Classical Magnet School in Hartford.

Kleinzahler is the author of ten books of poetry, including the International Griffin Poetry Prize winner *The Strange Hours Travelers Keep*; *Green Sees Things in Waves*; and *Red Sauce, Whiskey and Snow*. He has also published an acclaimed memoir, *Cutty, One Rock: Low Characters and Strange Places, Gently Explained*. His work has been honored with a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lila Acheson-Reader's Digest Award for Poetry, and an Academy Award in Literature. His now-famous scathing attack on Garrison Keillor's "The Writer's Almanac" sparked debate across the literary community and earned Kleinzahler a reputation as a "pugilist poet."

Three UConn students won awards in a campus-wide contest run by the Wallace Stevens Poetry Program. Altogether, students from various majors submitted roughly 300 poems, which were then judged by Professors Jonathan Hufstader, Darcie Dennigan, and Roger Wilkenfeld. "The range of subject matter and styles was impressive," says Dennigan. Rebecca Putman, an undergraduate from Farmington, was this year's \$1000-first prize winner. Timothy Stobierski, from Ansonia, took the \$500-second prize. Nicole Rubin of Norwich, an undergraduate double major in Biological Sciences and Health and Human Rights, was awarded the third prize of \$250. The winners will have their work published in UConn's nationally-award winning literary and arts journal, *The Long River Review*.

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FOUR DECADES TO CONNECTICUT."

Andrea Hairston Thrills with *Redwood and Wildfire*

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

On April 21, Andrea Hairston welcomed the crowd at the UConn Co-op for her reading of *Redwood and Wildfire*. Hairston, Artistic Director of Chrysalis Theatre and Louise Wolff Kahn 1931 Professor of Theatre and Afro-American Studies at Smith College, has been working with music, dance, and masks for over thirty years. Her work has been seen at Yale Rep, the Kennedy Center,

*spring and fall 2010 – 2011

Rites and Reason, Stagewest, and on National Public Radio and Television. She has won numerous awards, including the Carl Brandon Parallax Award and a National Endowment for the Arts Grant. This year, Hairston will be receiving the Distinguished Scholarship Award from the International Association of the Fantastic in honor of her contributions.

Hairston read from her second novel, *Redwood and Wildfire*, which was just released this March. The novel revolves around an African American woman, Redwood, and a Seminole Irish man, Aidan, as they journey from Georgia to Chicago. The characters are gifted performers and hoodoo conjurers, and they use their talents to aid them in the transition from desolate swampland to “the city of the future.”

Accompanying Hairston’s reading was Pan Morigan, a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist. Morigan grew up in the city, surrounded by immigrants with varying music tastes. These different tastes—including Blues and Jazz, Greek, Scottish, and Irish music— mixed with Midwestern roots to create a blend of different genres.

Together, music and prose merged into a beautiful presentation of Hairston’s iterative and Morigan’s instrumental geniuses.

**"TOGETHER, MUSIC AND PROSE
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The Connecticut Poetry Circuit Student Reading

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

Each year, the Connecticut Poetry Circuit recognizes talented undergraduate writers from around the state. Each Connecticut college or university may nominate

its one best poet. These nominees are then carefully considered by a panel of distinguished judges, who select the five most promising. These students receive an honorarium and tour schools across the state to share their work. On February 16th, the Poetry Circuit students read to an enthusiastic crowd at the UConn Co-op.

The crowd hushed as the first writer, Luisa Caycedo-Kimura, took the podium. Luisa represented Southern Connecticut State University. An English major, she has published work in *Folio*. Born in Columbia but raised in New York, Luisa shared her hope to teach someday at the college level. She read a number of poems she’s written throughout her undergraduate career, including “Maritza in the Pulls of the Street” and “On the Anniversary of My Mother’s Last Breath.”

Second at bat was Kate Lund, an English major from Yale University. Kate has received numerous awards in creative nonfiction and plans to accumulate more before she graduates in 2012. Her first poem, “Children of Naturalists,” was inspired by a biology class that focused on bugs. Other poems she read included “Folding” and “Waking,” two poems about growing up with her brother’s incessant guitar playing in the room next to hers and waking up in the arms of her father on the couch, respectively.

Tim Pettus from the University of Hartford was next. An English major from the class of 2011, he took first place in the Phyllis Bruce Poetry and Fiction Contest, and he has been published in two journals. He hopes to be a teacher and writer. The poems he shared were mostly fables, one about his hometown, and one a satirical dedication titled “To Florence,” addressing Florence Foster Jenkins, an American soprano who won notoriety in the early 1980s for her utter lack of rhythm, tone, pitch, and talent.

The fourth poet was Hannah Watkins from Middlesex Community College. Unlike the others, Hannah is a General Studies Major and is looking for a career in counseling, with the hope of incorporating creative writing into her counseling. Her poems—including “Haddam Bridge at Two AM,” “Breath of my Father,” and “Old News” — were mostly inspired by personal experience.

Finally, UConn’s own Joe Welch stepped up to the stage. Joe is no stranger to the Creative Writing world; he is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the *Long River Review* and has interned at *Long River Live!*

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through the Creative Writing Program. His work can be found in *LRR*. Joe also drew from personal experiences, penning pieces such as “Divination” and “Halfway to Jersey,” narratives about time spent with friends.

The event ended with pictures, conversation with the authors, and refreshments. All five poets had diverse styles that contributed to the enrapturing atmosphere of the reading. The Circuit will continue to present at other universities and colleges across the state.

"THESE STUDENTS RECEIVE AN HONORARIUM AND TOUR SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE TO SHARE THEIR WORK."

Darcie Dennigan: Poet & Visiting Professor

INTERVIEWED BY KRISELA KARAJA, AN HONORS ENGLISH MAJOR

This interview was conducted via email. Darcie Dennigan, a Visiting Professor in the English Department, taught two sections of creative writing in the fall 2010 semester. She is the winner of Fordham University's Poets Out Loud Prize, and her first book, *Corinna A-Maying the Apocalypse*, was published in 2008. Dennigan's poems have also appeared in publications including *The Nation*, *Tin House*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *H_NGM_N*.

Born on October 8, 1975, Dennigan is the eldest child of a nurse and a schoolteacher. Her father moved to China in order to teach, and her mother later became a lawyer and politician. She has lived in a variety of places, including Amherst, Boston, Dijon, Los Angeles, New York, and Providence. Being one of Dennigan's former Creative Writing students, I was particularly enthusiastic to conduct this interview, as it would allow me to better understand one of my own writing role-models.

How would you describe your writing process? For example—where do you prefer to write, with what medium (pen & paper, computer, etc.)? Do your poems come together all at once, or is each word painstakingly sought after—agonized over—before written down? How did *Corinna A-Maying the Apocalypse* come about? Were the poems crafted in the same order in which they are set in the book? Or were they done individually, over the years, and then a common theme was found?

Now, I love writing on legal pads in bed, but for the poems in *Corinna*, I preferred to write on a computer, because I was very interested in seeing how the typed lines would look on the page. For a lot of the poems, for better or worse, I was as interested in how they would look as how they would sound. Also I liked (and still do, but can't for the most part) to write amid noise—noisy coffee shops, noisy computer labs in grad school.

It's a mystery to me how poems come together. Flannery O'Connor said something about showing up to write every day, so that if inspiration comes, you're there to greet it (a bad paraphrase), and I guess I wrote almost every day from 2002 - 2006, but the poems in *Corinna* are all I have to show for it. There are pages and pages of unusable crap. Also, I would spend weeks and weeks on one poem, trying to work out an idea—which is always really death to the poem, or mine, anyway. And now I look back and the poems I sweated over are absolutely the worst ones in the book.

...Not to suggest that sweat isn't essential, but I think there's a type of sweat that is anathema to poetry. Sitting down to write and wanting to write a poem *about* a certain thing and imbue it with a certain tone and meaning... that seems to me now such a mistake. Dean Young says that the poem creates the poet to write it, and I mostly find that's true now. I guess I mean to say that I was always trying to control my poems and now with some distance from that book I'd say the only ones I can look at now are the ones where the poem controlled me.

Which is not to say that I'm playing on a ouija board or conducting a séance, like James Merrill (I'm not knocking that—I'm just not that tapped in/tuned in—yet! I'd like to be, somehow, because I think that's important for poets).

I just mean that poetry seems to need to access the unconscious. And for those of us in the 21st century who are not opium eaters, that can be difficult. It's almost a muscle you need to strengthen.

That's also almost impossible to teach!

We can teach *craft*, but we can't teach accessing the unconscious, which seems just as important.

When and how do you know that you have finished a poem (if ever)? When do you know that you are at least somewhat satisfied with the work you have done?

These days, I can tell right away when I have material that works altogether as a poem... But I am a messy writer, so once I have the poem, I will give it to my friend Kate, who is a phenomenal reader, and she will help me hack away at the detritus.

In her forward to *Corinna*, Alice Fulton suggests that your collection of poems depicts the famous 1977 blackout as palimpsested with “Augustine’s sacked Rome [...] the pre-Columbian ruins of Mesoamerica Teotihuacan [...] and Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, made famous in the film *City of God*.” How accurate would you characterize Fulton’s reading to your true intent as a poet? There seemed to be countless other allusions in your poetry—to Robert Herrick’s “Corinna’s Going A-Maying,” William Blake’s “The Tyger” and “The Lamb,” L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Tennyson’s “Break, Break, Break” and “The May Queen,” Ludwig Wittgenstein, your mother, your grandfather, etc. Is Fulton missing something in only focusing on these three allusions?

Well that is a great question. I think what your question is really getting at is 1) can I go back and investigate my influences/obsessions/preoccupations when writing those poems and 2) in what ways is the poem independent of the poet?

1. That’s awesome that you’re seeing the *Wizard of Oz* there. I never thought about that before and it wasn’t foremost in my mind, but I have seen it many times, and I am grateful that there might be allusions to it in my book. Basically, there were a few events/texts/writers that were always on my mind and my desk while I was writing those poems—9/11, Brigit Pegeen Kelly, and yes the Tractatus, to mention a few— but as I’m sure you know, *anything/everything* that you’re reading (and seeing! films, paintings... I was looking at Gauguin paintings a lot during those poems) feeds your work, in obvious and non-obvious ways.

2. Fulton’s reading of my work— well Krisela, just to be able to type a phrase like “Fulton’s reading of my work” is pretty awesome. You write and you have friends who read and get your work, and you know a lot of people who read your work and don’t like it, but then to have a person you admire— a person whose poems you were reading as you wrote your own— give serious thought to your work— let’s just say that if no one had ever read the book, I would have been ok, because Alice Fulton had read it, and in the end I couldn’t have asked for a more sympathetic reader. So yes, she picked up on some allusions (I think her foreword was mostly concentrating on one poem, “City of Gods”), and she may have missed some (to me that’s mostly a 9/11 poem), but she also saw things in that poem that I had not had in my mind, such as the pre-Columbian ruins. And after she said that, I could see why/how she saw that, even though I wasn’t familiar with the subject matter.

I definitely don’t love those readings of works that focus on author intention. Texts are dynamic, and if the readers can’t bring themselves and their own base of knowledge to a text and have that be just as viable as what the writer brought, then what’s the point?

What prompted you to set an apocalyptic backdrop to Herrick’s “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”? Why is your Corinna specifically

“A-Maying The Apocalypse”? Why the emphasis on Herrick’s poem—both for your poem regarding Corinna and for the title of your compilation?

Alice actually suggested that title. I had called it *The New Mothers*. But I liked how changing the title changed the way the collection seemed to hang together.

The book is dedicated to your mother, Betsy Dennigan. She is also mentioned in “City of Gods”: “The best god I ever saw is my mother named Betsy.” How would you describe your mother’s influence on you and your poetry—particularly on the poems featured in *Corinna*? Your grandfather’s influence? Other friends/family members?

My mom has never actually mentioned or acknowledged the dedication! I think it embarrasses her. But, she is always very encouraging of my writing in general. And while no one in my family talks about books, etc., because even reading is very private to them, I did notice growing up that my mom was a great reader.

One poem in particular—“The Feeling of the World as a Bounded Whale Is the Mystical”—is dedicated to Erinn. Who is Erinn, and how did she contribute to this piece?

Erinn is my friend, a very good friend, from high school. Not a writer, but probably the smartest person I know. But when we were younger we used to have great conversations about religion, spirituality, etc.— partly because we went to a Catholic school and partly because I guess that’s what you do when you’re young? Anyway, after college she pretty quickly reverted to a staunch Catholicism... and I guess I was disappointed that the conversation was over. When her father died a really terrible death, she, for a little while, was questioning things and— to be honest, I guess I was glad she was questioning. I’m sure that the story isn’t so simple in her head, but from afar, to see her all settled and going to church and baptizing her kids and seeming so sure— I guess that unsettled me. I don’t come out looking very good in this, but there you are.

Your work has been influenced by a number of other poets, movies, books, works of art, etc. For example, many of your UConn students have heard you cite individuals such as Donald Barthelme, James Tate, and Jorge Luis Borges as inspirational. Which of these past or present, real or fictional inspirations would you consider the most influential of all? [Feel free to list more than one if you cannot narrow it down]. Which has/have left the greatest impressions on you and your work, and how so?

I do absolutely love Donald Barthelme and James Tate and Anne Carson, and all those other luminaries I had you guys read. Lately, I have been hugely obsessed with (which I think translates into “influenced by” though I don’t try to trace a straight line from me to

them) the fiction writers David Markson, Amy Hempel, and Mary Robison. All three of them seem more like poets to me— because of their use of white space, and also the patterns they invent for their narratives. I've also been thinking I'd like to teach a class someday on the "lyric notebook"— which I'm not sure is actually a term— because I also really like Gabriel Gudding's *Rhode Island Notebook* and Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Briggs...* and maybe I'd put Anne Carson's Eros essays in that category. Also, a different strain: Laura Riding, Gertrude Stein.

But I don't think I'd read any of them when I was writing the poems in *Corinna...* Maybe Tate, but it's his more recent work I have really taken to, not the older stuff. So if you're asking about the book, it's hard to say— here are some off the top of my head...Kiki Smith, Dana Levin, Gauguin's Tahiti paintings (even though I know he was a scoundrel!), John Berryman, Gunnar Ekelof, Herman Melville, esp. "Bartleby the Scrivener," and of course Brigit Pegeen Kelly.

I guess I'd say the story "Bartleby the Scrivener" seems to me a perfect piece of writing— it is enigmatic & yet clear— Bartleby is an enigma, but Melville's writing itself is never muddy— a distinction which seems elementary, except in my experience, it's rare. It also switches registers & moods in such compelling ways! It's pontificating and then it's gloomy & then portentous and then bright— and funny almost until the end. I guess I'd have to say that, again, I don't know where to find evidence of Melville's influence, but I love him... I love especially his humor in the darkest moments. I would always rather watch a comedy about death than anything else.

How would you describe your own poetry? How would someone else describe your poetry? How would you want someone else to describe your own poetry?

I just want a few people I respect to read it.

How do you balance teaching with writing, writing with teaching? What goals do you have, as a professor? What are the advantages/disadvantages of this profession (i.e. your favorite/least favorite aspects)? Do any of your former educators (in grade school and college) stand out as especially motivational?

Goals as a professor:

I once worked as a teaching assistant to Dean Young, and there was one particular thing that I really loved about his approach to student poems: He would say "I'm not interested in the poem you brought in today as much as the poem you'll write tomorrow." He would talk about the student's poem, but in a very descriptive way— not in a prescriptive way. Instead of saying, "Well, that line is really weak, and you should change it," he'd say "Look at that third line— you really changed tone there didn't you? I wonder what would happen in your poems if you changed registers more often, or less often?" I just thought it was great how

deeply he dove into each poem, and yet how much he left the responsibility of editing it up to the poet. I do try to emulate that approach— respecting the student's work, talking about its big and small choices & the effects of the reader of those choices, and ultimately leaving the poet eager to make some of those choices again in her/his next poem.

I also have taken several classes with the poet Brigit Pegeen Kelly, who is one of the idols of my life, and I think she is rather hard to imitate, even as a teacher, because she is so...herself, but I very much like how seriously she takes poetry and how un-seriously she takes herself. At the first class, she presented herself as a student of poetry, not as an authority, which was silly in one respect because she was teaching a master class at a serious writing conference. And some of the students were immediately grumbling after the first class because she really didn't "lead" in the customary manner. But she talked about writers like James Merrill or Sylvia Plath with such reverence and knowledge. And she considered each student's poem so carefully, and like Dean Young, was hesitant to give any prescriptions. She didn't win over everyone, but she won me over. I confess that it suits me to not have to feel like an authority on writing, or poetry. I don't have my Ph.D, and don't have all that many years of experience writing. But I do utterly love poetry, and I always remember how seriously, and with what generosity, my early poetry teachers approached my poems, and I think it's important— and often very easy— to be similarly enthralled by my students' work.

More content-related goals:

To talk about form in poetry! Not as it relates to closed forms like the sonnet, etc. exactly, but how poetry's greatest freedom (more than any other genre) is form. I will give you the first four items from Susan Wheeler's essay on form, because she makes several good points, and if I could spend a semester just working with a class on the ideas in her essay (http://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/poetry/crossroads/on_poetry/on_form_susan_wheeler/), I would be delighted:

1. *Saying a particular poem is "formless" is as nuts as saying it isn't "political": form and politics obtain as soon as there are words. IMHO*
2. *Using a highly patterned form can up the tension level even if the poem isn't sagging.*
3. *Formal devices—repetition, rhyme, regular meters—serve to double time back on itself, to create the illusion of spontaneity, as opposed to techniques in narrative, which frequently aim to create the illusion of more time.*
4. *You got mascara. Use it.*

I know most people won't go on to study poetry or fiction, but in general, my goal is to have students leave the class feeling inspired to read more (and more seriously) and to leave feeling positive about the act of writing itself, even when they're not that great at it, because

writing is an optimistic, productive, non-materialistic act, and the world needs more of those.

Which of your own poems is your favorite? Which is your least favorite? Why? Are you working on any new poems right now that have the potential to become favorites?

Well I always like the newest ones. Don't you? Right now I am working on a series called "Reasons for Living Blithely"—I have 8 poems and would like to have 15 in the series. I really like them. They are prose blocks but they steal Celine's ellipsis. But then again, in a few months, I might realize they're nothing.

In an interview with Sarah Fay of The Paris Review, poet Kay Ryan was asked, "What would you say to people who say they can't understand your poems?" How would you respond to this same question?

I'm not asking for them to be understood. Just listened to. I don't understand my favorite poems on any kind of intellectual level, and I don't view poems as ciphers. But I guess if people are going to poems for a meaning or a solution to the puzzle, they're not going to mine... I'm interested in playing and sound and looks and in "meaning" only afterward. Which is not to say that I don't hope there's meaning there, but it's not the main point. I never 'got' John Ashbery's poems really until I went to one of his readings and just sat there and listened and he explained nothing, he just read poem after poem— you couldn't stop and "figure them out" because they just kept coming in waves, and that was the best experience. I felt really moved by the reading— I felt a certain heady nostalgia from the reading, and that is the feeling I get from Ashbery poems, and that is enough for me— I don't want to understand him, I want to listen to him.

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David Baker: Writers Who Edit/Editors Who Write

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

The UConn Co-op was packed for David Baker's reading, and racks of merchandise had to be moved and more seating added in order to accommodate the growing crowd. Baker has published ten collections of poems, including *Never-Ending Birds* and *Changeable Thunder*. He is also poetry editor of *The Kenyon Review*, one of the preeminent literary journals in the country. He was an ideal guest for the Writers Who Edit series, designed to introduce students to authors who work in both end of the publishing world. Baker read from his poetry, followed by a discussion about careers in editing and how to balance life as a writer with editing.

Baker opened the evening with a poem about his daughter Kate, who had been diagnosed with ADHD. He read many poems about Kate and her experiences, such as "Homecoming," which related the story of Kate and her friends discussing typical teenage topics in a coffee shop before school. Baker took a great deal of inspiration from his personal life, such as writing about his experience gelding a horse (which resulted in the poem "Bay") and his reaction to seeing a bobcat drag its prey up a tree ("The Rumor"). Baker confessed "I tend to tell stories, and I tend to want the stories to sing."

During the question and answer session, Baker let the audience know more about him personally. He delved into stories about Kate often as well, discussing her growth and development from a four-year-old clever enough to coin the phrase "never-ending birds" into the well-rounded college freshman she is today. He also jokingly told the audience that he was only allowed to read poems about her when she was in a separate state.

In regards to his writing, Baker held no secrets from the audience. He confessed that he never planned his style; rather, as he put it, "style is something that happens and accrues after a while. Voice and tone, however, are always intentional." While writing, Baker thinks hard about harmony and other sound devices, and he joked that his musical training had flooded into his poems. On the topic of inspiration, Baker admits to taking notes when inspiration hits, and then filing them away until he has a small collection of scribbles and rough ideas. Then he works to blend them into one poem, which is how many of his poems become so layered. He compared his process to taking multiple pictures on an old camera without winding the film, so the pictures would overlap. The process "makes weird pictures, but cool poems."

Many students were interested in Baker's personal reaction to growing so famous. When asked how he felt about complete classes being devoted to picking his work apart, he responded honestly: "it completely freaks me out. The work is not even mine anymore. It's yours." But Baker was careful to denounce any delusions about being a famous poet, stating simply that "poetry is not a profession. I am a teacher first."

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STUDENT VIEWS: ON DAVID BAKER

BY ANDREW BROWN, UCONN STUDENT

David Baker, poetry editor for *The Kenyon Review* and author of many poems, visited the UConn Co-op last week to give a poetry reading and discussion. Baker described his works as "singing narratives." They utilize a vast palette of images derived from Baker's experiences, and his reading provided additional insights beyond what one would get from simply reading his works on a page.

After reading a handful of "sad" poems, Baker laughingly conceded that he had no "happy poems." But, before beginning his next poem, Baker remarked with a grin: "they're all love poems." This amusing inter-poem commentary and juxtaposition of statements was typical of Baker's engaging reading. His comment alludes to Baker's broad definition of love and some of the common pitfalls associated with the romantic definition. It seems Baker has cause for his jaded (or perhaps *learned*) attitude towards romantic love. Yet through his images of the American Midwest, Baker's poems conveyed a non-romantic love for nature and his daughter.

Baker discussed his writing process, likening it to photographic "multiple exposures," but with multiple ideas layered to form one poem. When Baker gets an idea for a poem he writes it down and puts it away. After accumulating a number of contrasting ideas, he works to merge them into one poem. Baker remarked that this process often creates drastic or surprising turns in the final poem.

The first piece Baker read at the event, "Hyper," begins and ends with images of deer. Yet we soon learned that the deer is a partial metaphor

for his daughter and himself. The poem explores the "treatment" of his daughter for ADHD, and raises the question "How many ways do we measure things by what they are not?" This type of questioning of values seems to be typical of Baker's poetry, as we saw in another poem "Murder," which explores both the perils of love (or lust) and the adequacy of language for conveying such emotion.

Paying heed to the pastoral tradition, Baker's poems brought the natural world into focus by showing how closely it inflects humans' daily lives.

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STUDENT VIEWS: DAVID BAKER'S PASTORAL SONG

BY ANDREW KELFKENS, UCONN STUDENT

"Then a stillness descended the blue hills," David Baker began. The minor murmurs and side conversations in the audience ceased, and stillness too descended on the event. He had not read the poem's title, and he opened, like the poem itself, *in medias res*. As the audience soon learned, the poem "Hyper" is a complex and beautiful braid of differing thematic threads. The poem seamlessly jumped between this serene scene of deer and the trials Baker's daughter faces with her ADHD. The final line of the poem, in which the daughter compares her father to a wounded deer, reinforced its lyrical imagery, and readers were struck with a third poignant theme: Baker's ability to acknowledge his own flaws as a father.

It was characteristic of Baker's style to use the pastoral image of the deer as a means to show how poorly understood his daughter's condition is. The poem implies the question: How can a child who struggles so greatly with focus be able to observe a still scene of deer, and subsequently to draw a picture of it? It seems a contradiction. Using a litany of medical jargon associated with differing theories of ADHD, Baker's poem effectively criticizes conventional perceptions of the condition. Consequently, listeners see an evolution in his own perception of his daughter, from an impatient and less-understanding view to one of fascination and respect.

Key to the poem is the speaker's acknowledgment that he has read his daughter's diary and seen her remarks about him: "*I have his bad temper.*" Listeners surmise that his temper could be exacerbated by the fact that he, too, struggles with his own impatience. And by giving him her detailed drawing of the deer, his daughter gives him the same understanding he realizes he should afford her. In a comment downplaying the severity of her father's temper as well as offering sympathy, his daughter describes the wounded deer she has drawn: "Silly. He's not hurt that bad...That one's you." And in effect, Baker shifts our perspective so we see that the hurt individual is less the daughter struggling with ADHD than the father struggling with his temper.

All in all, I really enjoyed this poetry event. Of all of poets that we've been exposed to in this course, Baker has been my favorite. And having the opportunity to hear him read his work in his own voice was special due to the song-like qualities of his poetry.

Deb Olin Unferth: Viva la Revolución!

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

"Other kids do drugs. I became a Christian and joined the Revolution." Thus the spring Aetna Writer-in-Residence Deb Olin Unferth began her experience as a college student—or rather, as an ex-college student. Unferth's new memoir, *Revolution: The Year I Fell in Love and Went to Join the War*, tells how at eighteen she and her boyfriend dropped out of college to travel to Nicaragua during the turbulent 1980s. Unferth sent a letter home telling her parents of her plans, and then disappeared into Central America.

In Konover Auditorium on February 22, Unferth read passages about all walks of her experience: converting to Christianity, getting lost in shanty towns, following a priest through a slum, hanging out in Central America hostels with other internationals, and the declining relationship with boyfriend George.

At the Q&A after the reading, Unferth explained that she began writing this book at age 25, years after she had returned from her adventure. She had written down dialogues and short anecdotes about her experience, and then filed these away. She explained that even though she knew she wanted to write about her experiences, she was unsure of what to say about them, and she was hesitant to write a memoir. At first, she said, she viewed memoirs as a lesser form of writing, finding them "whiny and self-indulgent." Eventually, however, Unferth said that she found such energy in the genre that she learned to respect memoir as

"an artistic form worthy of attention."

"OTHER KIDS DO DRUGS, I BECAME A CHRISTIAN AND JOINED THE REVOLUTION."

Geraldine Mills and Lisa Taylor: The 2011 Elizabeth Shanley Gerson Irish Literature Reading

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

Irish author Geraldine Mills and American writer Lisa Taylor joined forces to present poems from their co-authored book, *The Other Side of Longing*, on April 5th at the UConn Alumni Center. The authors were here as featured guests of the Elizabeth Shanley Gerson Irish Literature Reading. This annual reading series was endowed by Professor Emeritus Louis L. Gerson in honor of his late wife, and it has become a much-anticipated event on the Irish Studies and Creative Writing Program calendars.

Geraldine Mills has published two fiction collections, *The Weight of Feathers* and *Lick of the Lizard*. She has also published four collections of poetry, including *Toil the Dark Harvest* and *An Urgency of Stars*. Her writing has earned her an OKI Award, the Moore Medallion, the RTÉ/Penguin Short Story Competition, and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. She was also named the Millennium winner of the Hennessy/*Sunday Tribune* New Irish Writer Award. Connecticut poet Lisa C. Taylor is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *Talking to Trees* (2007) which was nominated for the L.L. Winship PEN New England Award.

Mills and Taylor struck up a friendship at the Cape Cod Writers' Conference in 2008. The following year, Lisa was awarded a Surdna Arts Teaching Fellowship to travel to Ireland to explore landscape, culture, and folklore with Geraldine. In the fall of 2009, Geraldine traveled to Connecticut to teach workshops, read, and experience Lisa's landscape. *The Other Side of Longing* is the result of their deep collaboration.

The Gerson Irish Literature series has over the years brought some of the most exciting Irish authors to campus, including Edna O'Brien, Colum McCann, Colm Toibin, Paul Muldoon, and Eavan Boland. We are excited to add Geraldine Mills and Lisa Taylor to the list!

KAREN TEI YAMASHITA AND I HOTEL

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

On March 1, Karen Tei Yamashita read from her fifth book, *I Hotel*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award. Her reading was organized by the Asian American Studies Institute.

Before she dove into the political, social, and economic uprisings that inform her novel, Yamashita provided background information regarding the Asian-American Movement that took place in San Francisco in the late 1960s. Yamashita detailed the efforts made by students of local colleges to spread immigrant tolerance, and the successes that these protests and public demonstrations brought about.

The profile of the Movement flowed directly into Yamashita's reading. With the aid of a Powerpoint presentation, she explained that the International Hotel—the I Hotel of the title— was a real hotel on the corner of Kearny and Jackson Streets in San Francisco, an area of the city known as “Manilatown” or “Filipinotown.” In the late ‘60s, the area was in danger of redevelopment as contractors and builders wanted to replace the hotel with a parking lot. The novel revolves around the city's attempted eviction of the hotel's residents, Filipino immigrants looking for work, and about the lives of those living in the hotel and their contribution to the Asian-American Movement.

Yamashita read from two chapters in the novel. One was about a pig roast that took place under a freeway; the other described the mass protest in August 1977, which involved a ring of 5,000 people around the hotel. The author read these passages with energy and enthusiasm, yet the dark undertone of her prose suggested that the hotel's demolition in 1978 was all but inevitable. But the iconic building has since been rebuilt, with construction completed in the last four years, as Yamashita's presentation revealed.

Yamashita ties her own writing process closely back to the Movement. Many critics in the wider public have asked her “Is this art, or is it politics?” Her reply, time and time again, is “Of course, it's both.” Yet in the end, Yamishita sees that her novel is not just about art, nor just about politics. Rather, as she reflects, “It was also about preserving history.”

LONG RIVER REVIEW

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

The 2011 edition of *Long River Review*, UConn's award-winning literary and arts magazine, was released on April 28 to an eager crowd in the UConn Co-op. *LRR's* mission is to give undergraduate editors the opportunity to produce a high-quality journal featuring exemplary literary and visual works by UConn students. The journal is a collaborative venture between students in English and students in the Design Center at the School of Fine Arts.

All *Long River Review* literary editors register for a three-credit course in small magazine production, offered each spring by the English Department. Here they read widely in contemporary literary journals and define the *LRR's* aesthetic objectives. They then tackle the hand-on tasks of selecting submissions, developing publicity strategies, and organizing a publication event. Students also blog about literature and art on the journal's website, www.longriverreview.com.

The *LRR* serves as a showcase for many of UConn's most prestigious annual writing and art awards, including the Edward R. & Frances Schreiber Collins Literary Prizes, the Jennie Hackman Memorial Award for Short Fiction, and the Gloriana Gill Art Awards. Hats off to this year's publication!

**"LRR'S MISSION IS TO GIVE
UNDERGRADUATE EDITORS THE
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EXEMPLARY LITERARY AND VISUAL
WORKS BY UCONN STUDENTS."**

Spring Long River Live!

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

Twice a month throughout the spring, students gathered for the captivating experience that is *Long River Live!* An eclectic mix of undergraduates, faculty, staff, graduate students, and musicians joined together to share their poetry, stories, musical talents, and plays. Each event opened and closed with an open mic aimed at encouraging students to take pride in their work and share it with colleagues.

In February, Long River Live! hosted a story slam with the theme “Bad Romance.” Student contestants competed to tell the most engaging tale of love gone wrong. Dina Addorisio’s story, “Hair of the Dog that Bit Me,” an energetic narrative about an unfortunate evening, took first place. This story slam was the first here at UConn and was co-hosted with the Connecticut Story Telling Center. All participants were given free passes to the Story Telling Festival Slam in April.

At another *Long River Live!* event, featured poet Amber West read works ranging from dramatic lyrics to mad song stanzas. She also presented a puppetry piece, “Tiffany,” based on the toy theatres popular in the United States and Britain in the early nineteenth century. The same evening also saw the release of *.45 Mag*, an exciting new campus publication featuring poetry, prose, photography, and graphics by students.

In March, *Long River Live!* collaborated with the Leadership Learning Community and Poetic Release to host an Invisible Children Poetry Slam event. This event used creative expression to raise awareness of child soldiers. Poetry on a variety of topics framed a video about Invisible Children and the wars in Uganda.

Long River Live! will continue next fall, fostering creativity in multiple arts while encouraging students to share their talents.

NEAG Professor Tom Hubbard Reads from Marie B.

BY TARA CORDNER, PROGRAM INTERN

Below-freezing temperatures could not keep the audience away from the UConn Co-op on February 9, when faculty and students turned out to hear Scottish writer and scholar Tom Hubbard read from his first novel,

Marie B. The book was inspired by the life of Marie Bashkirtseff, a Ukrainian painter, diarist, and feminist who lived in France and Tsarist Russia during the late nineteenth century. Hubbard himself is a professor at the University of Ireland, Maynooth. He is here at UConn this spring as the Lynn Wood Neag Distinguished Visiting Professor in Scottish Literature.

Marie Bashkirtseff was an active feminist in the Ukraine, and she used her paintings as her protest. Throughout life, she kept a detailed journal about her adventures and musings. When Marie died from tuberculosis at twenty-six, her mother removed most of the feminist and rebellious passages from Marie’s journal before publishing the remaining entries. Hubbard used the published journal and his knowledge of the period to piece together the real Marie. In his own words, this allowed Hubbard to “catch the voice of it, if you’d like.

Hubbard started the evening by reading a few of his favorite passages, changing his voice and mannerisms for each character. His portrayal of Marie’s father, a gruff Russian, enthralled the audience. Hubbard later explained that the painting on the cover of his novel was a self-portrait of Marie, one that had come to her in a dream. Hubbard said the painting had served as his inspiration for the novel.

During the question and answer session following his reading, Hubbard provided useful advice to aspiring novelists in the audience. When asked how exactly to approach writing a novel, he exclaimed “Go into the damn thing! And write it as quickly as you can. Get it out there.” Hubbard spent thirteen years working on his own novel (“too long,” he said), researching and writing while holding professorships. The novel was therefore formed in many countries. The idea started in France, developed in the United States, and took solid shape in Scotland, Hungary, and Ireland. Hubbard joked that the wandering involved in creating the novel mirrors his protagonist’s wandering across Europe in search of identity.

On final reflection, Hubbard noted that writing his first novel was “liberating, especially compared to academic writing.” He advised writers that once inspiration strikes, “let it churn about inside you—like a disease of the imagination.”



Set Me Free, Sandy Honig
Long River Art Award, \$250



Ballerina, Caroline Palumbo
Gloriana Gill Award for Photography, \$1000



Happy National Morticians Day, Sarah Parsons
Gloriana Gill Award for Illustration, \$1000

2010–2011 Creative Writing and Art Award Winners

The Edward R. and Frances S. Collins

Literary Prizes

Poetry (\$2960): Nicole Rubin for “Sóng Lúa”

Fiction (\$2960): Colleen Lynch for “Two Peas”

The Jennie Hackman Memorial Award for Short Fiction

First Prize (\$1000): Carolyn Shefcyk for “Herbie the Elm Tree”

Second Prize (\$500): Ryan McLean for “Marco in the Forest, Dreaming”

Third Prize (\$250): Miranda DePoi for “Children of the Earth”

The Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

First Prize (\$1000): Rebecca Putman

Second Prize (\$500): Tim Stobierski

Third Prize (\$250): Nicole Rubin

The Aetna Creative Works-in-Progress Grant

Winner (\$250): Jennifer Holley, “Close Reading: An Examination of Life and Literature”

The Aetna Creative Nonfiction Award

Graduate First Prize (\$250): Matt Salyer for “Prelude: Jerusalem Dump”

Graduate Second Prize (\$100): Jeanette Zissell for “Sleepers Awake”

Undergraduate First Prize (\$125): Ryan O’Connell for “Standing Order”

Undergraduate Second Prize (\$75): Kerri Brown for “Food for Thought”

Undergraduate Third Prize (\$50): Dante Gonzales for “A Moment in Time”

The Long River Graduate Writing Award

Winner (\$250): Michael Pontacoloni for “Sometimes Another is Within One”

The Edwin Way Teal Awards

Graduate Winner (\$100): Zara Rix for “Neag Cancer Center”

Undergraduate Winners (\$100): Mindy Brown, for “Discovering Gampo Abbey” and Melissa McCleary, for “Feathered Soul” (tied)

The RAAB Associates Prize for Creative Writing for Children:

Amanda Montes de Oca, for “Palabras.”

The Gloriana Gill Art Awards

Caroline Palumbo, Photography (\$1000)

Sarah Parsons, Illustration (\$1000)

Andy Croft

BY KATELYN WILSON

On November 3rd at the UConn Co-Op, Andy Croft walked up to the podium and said, “I bring greetings from a different galaxy known as the United Kingdom.” Croft is the author of three novels, nine collections of poetry, forty-two books of poetry, and is the founder of Smokestack Books. Croft began the reading with the title poem from his collection *Sticky*, which he explained was inspired by George W. Bush. The poem was about the numerous words in the English language that end with “stic.” Each “stic” word in the poem was represented by a literal stick, which exhibited the traits of the word it was representing.

Croft’s next poem was about a pack of elephants that march into a town and are admired for their uniqueness, but are later forced to leave because they are too different. Although the poem sounded like it could have been written by Dr. Seuss, it was clear that it had an underlying political message. Croft explained that the poem was based on his neighbors, who were forced to take down their elephant statues because they were representative of a different culture.

He described himself as being “a poet of travel,” and this sentiment was clearly expressed in the subject matter of his poems, which were set in Berlin to the Moscow train system and everywhere in between. Although the majority of his poems had a serious message, they were also rhymed, metrical and often funny.

During the Q&A, Croft was asked why his poetry rhymes and he joked that it was because he had a “rhyming disease in his head.” He also explained that he feels he writes better poems if they rhyme and are metrically precise, because it “allows the audience to anticipate what’s coming next.” He ended the reading by asking the audience if they liked poems that rhymed. And then they eagerly signed... Yes!

Darcie Dennigan

BY KATELYN WILSON

On her September 16th reading at the UConn Co-Op, Darcie Dennigan walked to the podium and said, “A guy walks into a bar...” Her opening words weren’t the beginning of a well known joke, but rather the first line of one of her poems. Dennigan’s opening set the tone for

her reading, during which the audience listened intently, trying to discover whether she was telling an anecdote or beginning another poem. The man walking into the bar was, in fact, the first line of Dennigan’s “Sentimental Atom Smasher.” The poem is one of several she read from her collection *Corinna A-Maying the Apocalypse*. Dennigan is a 2007 Discovery/The Nation winner and *Corinna A-Maying the Apocalypse* is her first published collection of poems. Besides poems from her collection, she also read a handful of poems she had recently completed.

Dennigan’s poetry was full of playful lines such as, “When two angels enjoy interpenetration,” and sprinkled with words that were twisted to mean something else, such as referring to her daughter in one poem as “my held.” Dennigan didn’t try to explain the poems or their meaning to her audience, but rather let them interpret them as they wished. Between each poem, Dennigan talked about life and growing up with her mother who “has a distrust for words.” Dennigan’s anecdotes were funny and gave the audience insight into her childhood and the inspiration behind her poems. Dennigan’s passion for her writing was clear in the way she read and by the expression on her face during the reading.

During the Q & A session, Dennigan was asked about her usual writing area. Dennigan replied that she liked to “get out or go to a coffee shop or write at home in the quiet.” When asked how she begins a poem, Dennigan replied, “I see what comes. Poems are better if you don’t try so hard.” She also explained that sometimes inspiration comes when she mishears a word, and that mishearing slowly builds into a poem.

Fall Long River Live!

BY ALYSSA PALAZZO

The UConn Creative Writing Program’s popular art series *Long River Live!* was the new place to be on alternate Monday nights last fall. The series’ curators, Ph.D. candidate D. Michael Jones, and 5th semester English major, Carissa Kerpen, have transformed *Long River Live!* into a show that is truly undergraduate oriented. The result? A jam-packed audience with crowds spilling out the door. The show has become so popular that it even draws students from other campuses, including Eastern Connecticut State University and Avery Point.

Amidst dozens of cups of coffee and strings of Christmas lights, both the musicality of the artists’ words and the power of the arts filled the

room. On October 25th Aubrey Haboush's poetic response to T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" sent the audience into tears of laughter as she narrated what it might be like to have Eliot as a lover. Haboush's performance was preceded by Devin Samuels' political slam poetry. On November 8th Josh Leibowitz' performance featured found art with excerpts from truly esoteric sources such as a book of dirty limericks, romance novels, and the founder of Kellogg Cereal's "incentives against masturbation." The series concluded with a bang on November 29th when acting major Zane Roberts gave a poetry performance entitled "Call to the Prettiest Girl at the Party" in which the speaker told his subject that "when you're done talking to that guy" he would still be available.

In the Fall 2010 semester the artists of *Long River Live!* took their work beyond the Stern Lounge to participate in a show at the Mansfield General Store in early November. Andrew Merrill, an ECSU undergraduate organized the show after being inspired by the first *Long River Live!* event he attended at the beginning of the semester. University of Connecticut readers who joined him included D. Michael Jones, Matthew Salyer, Carissa Kerpen, Joe Welch, and Nicole Rubin.

Long River Live! aims to broaden the appreciation of all art forms, to encourage cross-genre collaborations and hybrid art, and to dissolve the borders that often keep artists from communicating with and influencing one another and the world. The fall semester series featured graduate poets Jenny Holley, Jared Demick, and Matthew Salyer, undergraduate poets Joe Welch, Nicole Rubin, Aubrey Haboush, Devin Samuels, Stefan Walczak, Zane Roberts, and Rebecca Putnam, undergraduate fiction writer Tom Connor, as well as undergraduate artist Josh Leibowitz. Every night also included two sets of open mic slots where students performed everything from politics to passion to comedy skits

Long River Tour

BY ALYSSA PALAZZO

During the Fall 2010 semester, the University of Connecticut's Creative Writing Program went on its annual reading tour to visit three Connecticut high schools. On October 26th, Ph.D. candidates D. Michael Jones and Jennifer Holley and undergraduates Joe Welch, Rebecca Putman, and Carissa Kerpen shared their work with the students at Old Saybrook High School. On November 23rd, D. Michael Jones, Tom Connor, and Carissa Kerpen read at Rockville High School, and on November 24th, undergraduates Nicole Rubin, Carissa Kerpen, Rebecca Putman, and Alyssa Palazzo visited E.O. Smith High School. At each school, the readers not only shared

their work, but spoke of their involvement with UConn's Creative Writing Program and the undergraduate literary journal, *Long River Review*. The timing for this discussion was perfect for the high school students, as many of them were considering applying to UConn and working on their college applications.

Carissa Kerpen, the tour's curator, stated that the objective of the Long River Tour is to instill in the students a passion for the arts and to inform them about UConn's Creative Writing Program, which is rich in opportunities for young writers to develop their work.

At Rockville High School, Kerpen spoke of the possibility of a new slam poetry team at UConn, and in response several of the students in Victoria Nordlund's class shared their own slam poetry performances. The pieces were raw in both emotion and subject matter. One student even stepped forward to share her experiences in group therapy. At E.O. Smith, some of the students chose to share their college admission essays. One student wrote about losing an aunt to cancer, while another confessed she was terrified to move on to college without her friends. The open communication between the high school students and the tour artists reflected the exchange of ideas that the Long River Tour intended to foster.

Margaret Gibson Reading/ Creative Sustenance

BY ALYSSA PALAZZO

On a rainy November evening the literary crowd showed up for a healthy dose of creative sustenance at an annual event to help those in need. Benefitting the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic, poet Margaret Gibson, author of nine books of poetry and one prose memoir, read from her latest work, *Second Nature*.

For Gibson, it has become "second nature" to look at the natural world. She also considers art itself to be her "second nature." Her book is an exploration of the death of her mother, her trip to Greece, and her experience of living in the woods in Preston, CT. The book culminates in a tribute to the natural world as a resource for both physical and spiritual well-being.

In her poetry, Gibson transforms the idea of words into "quicksilver syllables, like fish in a lifted net, thrashing." These transformations are sustained throughout her poems, and words become an altogether different form of sustenance for the reader, one that can be consumed, as

Gibson writes, “because we taste ... words and they stick in our throats.” The audience could almost taste Gibson’s writing as she described a bird with wings “brooding Audubon blue” and an overripe tomato like a “bag of blood.”

One of the themes in Gibson’s work is that of teaching and learning. Her poem “In the Poet’s House” stems from her experience of living in what she described as a “Greek house that teaches.” “Lessons” is a poem that teaches patience in the hope that the reader will learn that “character is not measured by depth, but by the ascent it makes, moment by moment from that depth.” However, the ultimate lesson that Gibson wanted her readers to take away is that the earth is inside us; to find it, one simply needs to open one’s mouth wide and look within.

When asked about her books, Gibson explained that each one builds off the previous. As a poet she has a constant desire to know more, and thus, she keeps asking questions and listening for answers.

MFA PANEL

BY KATELYN WILSON

So, you’re interested in creative writing. You dabbled with it while earning your undergrad degree and you’ve thought about possibly going to grad school for it. Now what? You attend the yearly MFA/Ph.D. panel sponsored by the Creative Writing Program. So, what advice did the scholars have?

Darcie Dennigan, an Assistant Professor in Residence at the University of Connecticut who received her MFA from Michigan, shared her thoughts on choosing a creative writing program. She said that although it’s a good idea to read the writing of the current faculty when looking for a school, it’s not wise to let that be the determining factor in choosing a grad school. A good writer isn’t always a good teacher, and besides, a professor you dream of studying with might leave for another job.

What type of experience are you hoping to gain during your time at grad school? Michael Jones, a Ph.D. candidate in English who holds an MFA in creative writing from Emerson College, explained that he wanted to be in the northeast and experience a different setting than he was used to. He described Emerson as a “genuinely city school.” On the other hand, he pointed out that living in the city is expensive, classes at a school like Emerson are large, and the overall atmosphere can be quite competitive.

The type of relationship you want to have with your teachers is another important factor when choosing the right school. Amber West, a Ph.D.

candidate in English at the University of Connecticut, who got her MFA from NYU, had teachers that were big-name poets, but that meant that they were often flying around to do readings and give talks, so they weren’t always available. However, Ellen Litman, the Co-director of the Creative Writing Program at UConn who received her MFA from Syracuse University, had a very close relationship with her fellow students and teachers.

You may be wondering what the difference is between an MFA and a creative writing Ph.D. The degrees vary based on the school you are attending, but in most cases the MFA concentrates on developing your writing, while the Ph.D. also involves critical theory and substantial academic work.

If, after hearing this, you still want to apply to a creative writing program, then what should you focus on while preparing your application? The panelists agreed that the writing sample is the most important part of the application process. Rebecca Morgan Frank, who holds an MFA from Emerson College and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Creative Writing from the University of Cincinnati, pointed out that it’s important to submit something that will stay in the minds of the readers. Often the admissions boards choose the people who are taking chances with their writing, not those whose works are the most polished. It’s these “interesting failures,” Darcie Dennigan pointed out, which often attract the attention of the faculty.

Even though the members of the panel had differing opinions on many things, they did (for the most part) agree on two things. One: it’s a good idea to take some time off between finishing your undergrad degree and pursuing an advanced degree in creative writing, to give yourself time to grow as a writer. Two: that the school, type of degree, and best timing are different for each individual.

Connie Voisine

BY KATELYN WILSON

On October 26th, Connie Voisine took the stage at the Konover Auditorium as the Fall Aetna Writer-In-Residence. Voisine is the author of two collections of poetry, *Rare High Meadow of Which I Might Dream* and *Cathedral of the North*. *Rare High Meadow of Which I Might Dream* was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, and *Cathedral of the North* was the winner of the AWP Award in Poetry. As the Writer-In-Residence, Voisine spent two days on campus conducting tutorials with undergraduate and graduate students, giving a reading, and sharing meals with students.

Voisine read from her published works and from a new collection she's been working on. Two of the themes that featured in many of the poems she chose to read were those of Mexico and the desert. She explained that she lives in Las Cruces, near the border with Mexico, and that her poetry is often influenced by where she lives and the history of the region. One of the poems that demonstrated this was titled "Tonight the Moon is Mexican."

One of Voisine's most unique poems was titled "Ambidextrous" and was about immigrant nannies and their relationship with the mothers of the children they care for. Voisine decided to use the metaphor of a right and left hand, with each hand representing either the mother or the nanny. The metaphor showed how different the two individuals were, but also conveyed the idea that the mother and nanny worked together to run the household.

During the Q&A Voisine was asked which poem she's written is her favorite, and she responded that she honestly doesn't have a favorite. She went on to elaborate that once it's finished, she isn't particularly fond of any of her writing. Voisine was then asked how she knows when a poem is finished, and she responded that she knew it was done when she couldn't do much more to improve it.

Michelle Wildgen

BY KATELYN WILSON

Michelle Wildgen took the podium at the UConn Co-Op on Thursday, October 14th as this semester's Writers Who Edit, Editors Who Write reader, and was introduced by Professor Litman as a "*Tin House* intern who refused to leave." Wildgen began by reading an excerpt from her novel *But Not for Long*, and later explained that she chose the excerpt because she "loves reading the voice of a woman who's kind of pure evil." Wildgen's reading emphasized each of her character's personalities, and Mrs. Bryant, the "pure evil" woman, was distinctly humorous: a woman who is not afraid of speaking her mind, no matter how inconvenient.

After the reading, Wildgen discussed how she began working at *Tin House* as an intern. Wildgen explained that as a student, talking to a teacher and keeping up with your contacts is important, since it could potentially lead you to an internship or job. She explained that as an intern she "made herself useful," always looking for the next thing to do, even though her responsibilities largely consisted of tasks such as making copies, getting mail, and then commenting on manuscripts and occasionally helping to run the office.

As an editor, Wildgen described the thrill of finding "a voice they haven't heard before." She also stated that *Tin House* is "more likely to publish something people will respond to" than the most technically brilliant piece. When it came to questions about submissions, she suggested reading the magazine or works that the publisher puts out. Demonstrating you have knowledge of the publisher's work shows that you are submitting to them for a reason. Wildgen also stated that she wants the characters she is reading about to be "whole," because that is the most important aspect of the story. According to Wildgen, "the job of an editor is to get you to pause and look at [a work] and get it to be the best you can."

As a writer, Wildgen has published two novels, *You Are Not You* and *But Not for Long*. During the Q&A, Wildgen was asked whether her books were published by *Tin House*, and she stated that although she had written one anthology for them, she wanted to prove that she could get published on her own. Wildgen also explained that she doesn't think that she's a *Tin House* writer. As an editor she knows the type of work they look for, and she doesn't believe that her own writing fits into their guidelines.

Who Are You and What Do You Think You're Doing?

We are the UConn Creative Writing Program, and we excite students' imaginations. We believe in the power of expression; we invite students to hone the crafts of poetry, fiction, essay, and drama. We believe in creative reading as part of writing, and we offer writing workshops from beginning through advanced levels. We also offer a dynamic series of author events and mentorship by professors who are themselves writing, publishing literary artists. Our Concentration in Creative Writing is open to all undergraduate students regardless of major, and we are home to a selective, dedicated group of graduate student writer-scholars. If you've enjoyed reading about our events in this newsletter, then we may be the place for you.

Program Staff 2010-11

Director: Professor V. Penelope Pelizzon

Associate Director: Professor Ellen Litman

Assistant Directors: Zara Rix and D. Michael Jones

Undergraduate Interns: Dina Addoriso, Maggie Collins, Tara Cordner, Carissa Kerpen, Alyssa Palazzo, Anna Victoria, Katelyn Wilson

Administrative Expert: Lori Corsini-Nelson

Thanks to you!

Interns: Katelyn Wilson, Alyssa Palazzo, Carissa Kerpen, Dina Addoriso, Tara Cordner, Anna Victoria, Maggie Collins | *Designer:* Dana Haddad | Lori Corsini-Nelson and Zara Rix | *English Department Staff:* Doreen Bell, Inda Watrous, and Robin Worley | Suzy Staubach and the staff of the UConn Co-op | *Long River Live! emcees:* D. Michael Jones and Anna Victoria | *Aetna Chair of Writing* Lynn Bloom | *Director of the Design Center* Edwin Yegir | Laila Khan and Freshman English staff | *English Department Head* Wayne Franklin | *Daily Campus reporters and photographers* | Thea Montañez and the Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. | *The UConn Foundation* | *The family of David and Emily Collins* | *The Hackman family* | *Ardian Gill and the family of Glorianna Gill* | And our heartfelt thanks to Dean Jeremy Teitelbaum for his support

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