Steve Almond

Nonfiction and fiction writer Steve Almond visited UConn in October as the Aetna Writer-in-Residence. He is the author of five books: two short story collections, My Life in Heavy Metal and The Evil B.B. Chow; a non-fiction book, Candyfreak; a novel, Which Brings Me to You, co-written with Julianna Baggott; and most recently, Not That You Asked, an essay collection full of rants, exploits, and obsessions. Almond spent three days on campus, holding tutorials with undergraduate and graduate writers, sharing meals with students, and giving a reading of his work.

The highlight of Almond’s visit was the reading on October 8th at Konover Auditorium. Throughout the evening, the author was amusing and irreverent. During the first portion of the evening, Almond talked about how he felt protective when seeing Kurt Vonnegut, his aging literary role model, speaking at a forum. His next section was racier, and he comically dimmed the lights to set the mood. The piece on his romantic misadventures of youth was called “Hand Job,” and before he started to read, he joked about the importance of a “subtle title.” The third piece was a collection of caustic emails people had sent him, interspersed with his personal replies, in regard to his highly publicized resignation from Boston College after Condoleezza Rice had been invited to speak on campus.

Almond ended the evening with a Q&A session, where he was put on the spot to clarify his philosophy of life in one sentence. His response: “Do no harm, love unreasonably, and rock and roll all night.”

— Reviewed by Creative Writing staff

Fighting Hunger with Words in Waterbury

On April 2, 2009, at UConn-Waterbury, actress Mary Beth Peil joined creative writing faculty and students at a second annual Creative Sustenance Reading to fight hunger.

The event consisted of poetry and dramatic readings by writers from the campus, including Thomas Dulack, Frank Thomas, and Dave Carillo. The headliner, Peil, a Tony award nominee, is a Broadway actress (Sunday in the Park with George, Nine, The King and I) and television star (“Dawson’s Creek”).

“This is a celebration of the creative work of our faculty while benefiting the community,” said William Pizzuto, Director of the Waterbury Campus. Ellen Carillo, Assistant Professor of English and Writing Coordinator, stated, “The Waterbury campus knows these folks as teachers, but they are also very talented writers, poets, and playwrights, and we are excited to showcase their creativity.”

The program is intended to raise awareness of hunger and poverty in the local area. Attendees donated money and food to the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, Inc., a non-profit organization providing 225 meals daily to Waterbury’s residents, Sunday through Friday each week.

— Reviewed by Creative Writing staff
Lynn Z. Bloom and Margaret Gibson stood before the crowd at the UConn Co-op on October 1st with different stories to tell, but similar ways of telling them. Both authors recently released works of nonfiction. Gibson, a finalist for the National Book Award and Professor Emerita at UConn, has published a memoir, *The Prodigal Daughter*. Bloom, a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and Aetna Chair of Writing at UConn, has published a collection of nonfiction essays, *The Seven Deadly Virtues and Other Lively Essays: Coming of Age as a Writer, Teacher, Risk Taker*.

Gibson read from her memoir, which relates the trials of her childhood growing up in the South (in Richmond, Virginia), including her misadventures in parochial schools and her complex relationship with her sister as they were growing up. Bloom’s reading also delved into relationships with family; her essay, however, focused on the relationship she had with her mother, who suffered from depression.

Aspiring authors in the audience were treated to a question and answer session with Gibson and Bloom following the reading. Much of the discussion focused on the challenges of writing nonfiction, especially the risks involved in writing about people the author knows well, such as family members. Bloom explained that for her, writing about family helps her understand both the child she once was and the adult that she is today. Through humorous anecdotes and practical advice, the authors shared their wisdom about the self-discovery that writing enables.

— Reviewed by Rachel Madariaga, Program Intern

Jonas Zdanys: Breathing Life into Poetry

The Lithuanian-American poet, Jonas Zdanys, was quite an extraordinary speaker, with his quiet humor and softly recited verse. He read his original poetry and translations at the Co-op on September 25th. It is difficult for some of us to think in two languages and not collapse in a blabbering heap, but Zdanys has choreographed a dance of words, serving as a bridge between fidgety America and what is assumed to be stolid Lithuania. He said that he had “two worlds resonating” within him, and he was dedicated to both of them. He believes English-speaking readers should be privy to the works of Lithuanian poets, so he dedicates himself to the laborious task of translating.

Zdanys, as a poet himself, understands that the intrinsic beauty of poetry cannot be mathematically computed; one word does not equal another word in translation. He explained how a single language is something that lives on its own. Languages were not created for the purpose of translating; they were etymologically fashioned to self-sustain and put words into people’s mouths that would be understood by people’s ears. Zdanys said that he is “not a taxidermist,” and thus he does not take the animal of Lithuanian poetry and stuff it with the chalky sawdust of translated jargon. He wants to keep it alive, for itself and for the reader.

As for Zdanys’s own poetry, he had an exquisite way of threading together words and creating images that left a glowing hum in the air. There was something ineffably foreign and old-fashioned about Zdanys’s original work. It was an odd sensation to listen to poetry and envision things that I had never witnessed, filled with nostalgia for a time in which I had never lived.

— Reviewed by Sierra Ryan, Creative Writing student
My Nose and Me: A TragedyLite or TragiDelight in 33 Scenes

My Nose and Me: A TragedyLite or TragiDelight in 33 Scenes proved a delight for the crowd that filled the Nafe Katter Theater on November 13th. The staged reading of the verse play by John Surowiecki took the Creative Sustenance Program (usually a reading of poetry or prose) in a new direction. The event gave UConn a chance to showcase one of its successful alumni authors. Surowiecki recently won the Poetry Foundation’s first Pegasus Award for Verse Drama; he has also published books of poetry, including the The Hat City after Men Stopped Wearing Hats.

The play, My Nose and Me, inspired by Gogol’s story, “The Nose,” chronicles the adventures of a cancerous nose. Originally published by Ugly Duckling Presse, the printed version includes illustrations by Terry Rentzepis. The artist’s gray depictions of the characters were projected on a screen behind the stage. The images helped the audience imagine the oddly assorted characters the actors on stage were portraying, such as cancer and the autonomous nose. The short and witty scenes touched on a wide range of human emotions, leaving the audience, at various times, laughing, thoughtful, or somber. The impact of the play was accomplished not only by the writing, but also by the insightful directing of Denise Abercrombie, by the quirky and catchy music written by the playwright’s son, John E. Surowiecki, and by the outstanding ensemble cast, which included local teachers and students hailing from UConn and E.O. Smith High School.

Despite the grim subject of cancer, the play had an undeniable message of hope and optimism. On another uplifting note, the event raised $1000 in funds and food for the Covenant Soup Kitchen of Willimantic—an unparalleled success for Creative Sustenance.

— Reviewed by Rachel Madariaga, Program Intern
Clare Rossini Reads at Avery Point Campus

On October 2nd, Clare Rossini gave a reading of her poetry in the Branford House as part of the Creative Writing Program’s Creative Sustenance series. Members of the audience donated food and money totaling several hundred dollars to benefit the New London Community Meal Center. Judy Mann, the center’s volunteer coordinator, began the event by explaining the importance of donations, which make possible the thousands of meals that are served every year to those in need. She encouraged those in attendance to get involved with community outreach at the center.

The audience was then treated to a poetry reading by Rossini. She currently serves as Director of the Inter-Arts Program and is Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Trinity College. She has written three poetry collections: Selections from the Claudia Poems, Winter Morning with Crow, which won the 1996 Akron Poetry Prize, and Lingo. Her audience was treated to a combination of published and new poems, which covered a range of subjects—from Galileo, to her new puppy, to her father’s grammar lessons, to a beauty parlor run by the goddess Venus. Several poems touched on her experiences living in Connecticut. She spoke of places the audience could appreciate, such as the rose garden at Elizabeth Park in Hartford. The calm style of Rossini’s reading was well suited to the beauty of the poems themselves. After the reading, Rossini answered questions from the audience, such as how to write about family members in a way that honors the feelings of the individuals while also staying truthful.

— Reviewed by Valerie Doughty, Creative Writing student

Doug Anderson & Martín Espada

On November 20, Doug Anderson and Martín Espada read at Gampel Student Center located on UConn’s Greater Hartford campus. The reading was part of UConn’s Creative Sustenance program and benefitted the AIDS Project Hartford. Audience members brought canned goods and made donations to support the organization.

Anderson has written two books of poetry: The Moon Reflected Fire, winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award, and Blues for Unemployed Secret Police, which earned him a grant from the Academy of American Poets. Anderson’s résumé includes film scripts, plays, fiction writing, and criticism. He read from his latest work—a memoir recounting the Vietnam War and the 1960s, entitled Keep Your Head Down. It is set to be released in 2009.

Martín Espada has been described as the “Pablo Neruda of North American authors.” With sixteen books, Espada has proved to be an accomplished poet, essayist, editor, and translator. His inspiration comes from his Puerto Rican heritage, as well as his work experience and political engagement. The works he read included a humorous recollection of a Thanksgiving with his wife’s family, and an elegy for Sandy Taylor, the late editor and founder of Curbstone Press.

— Reviewed by Creative Writing staff
The Hour Has Arrived

An eager crowd packed the UConn Co-op on the night of November 11 to hear Wally Lamb read from his widely anticipated new book, *The Hour I First Believed*. Some audience members showed up two hours early to get a good seat for the event, which was the inaugural reading for his new book tour.

Born and raised in Eastern Connecticut, Lamb has become something of a hometown hero for those in the Nutmeg State. The UConn alumnus and former faculty member in the English Department has had two books selected for Oprah’s book club and has received numerous awards for his work. The cheers were warm and welcoming when Lamb entered the Co-op, which he called his “favorite bookstore in the world.” He read a section from *The Hour I First Believed*, a 752-page tome that was ten years in the making, inspired by such events as the massacre at Columbine High School in April of 1999, as well as the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. In the novel, Lamb looks into the human psyche and questions of faith.

In the section from which he read, an eight-year-old narrates some not-so-normal difficulties at school. Lamb altered his voice and read quickly, to mimic the way a child would tell a story. Many people in the audience read along from their own copies of the book. His reading felt as intimate as a conversation with an old friend, which is just what Wally Lamb is to the campus.

— Reviewed by Amanda Wisniewski, Program Intern

Much Ado About Nothing

On October 28, students gathered in Konover Auditorium to hear acclaimed young-adult-books author M.T. Anderson speak. Anderson is the author of several books for children and young adults, including *Feed*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2002 and *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*, winner of the National Book Award in 2006. The author read from both books, and the talk that followed highlighted the trials and rewards of writing for a younger audience.

It was an informative night for the audience, but was also, for some, a chance to meet a childhood idol. Books written by Anderson such as *Burger Wuss* and *Feed* debuted when current college students were in middle school. Anderson continues to win acclaim with his most recently published books about Octavian Nothing.

Following the reading, one of audience members asked Anderson to explain how he manages to write so convincingly about younger characters. He told the audience humorous tales of his adventures to gather research. These included walking up and down the streets at popular teenage hangouts listening to the conversation. Though he has at times wondered if he gives the wrong impression, he convinced the audience that observation is one of the best ways to gather inspiration.

After the lecture and reading, attendees lined up in the lobby in order to purchase Anderson’s books and to get them signed by one of the most accomplished young-adult-books authors of the day.

— Reviewed by Rachel Madariaga, Program Intern

A Celebration of Student Writing at Avery Point

On December 11, students enrolled in Jennifer Holley’s Introduction to Creative Writing Class at Avery Point read their work at the Branford House. Family, friends, and members of the community were in attendance. For many participants, this was a debut reading. The overall feeling of presenting work for the first time? Bobby Gaines summed it up as “simultaneously horrifying and productive.” The presented work had been written and revised for the class, giving students the chance to hear how their peer reviews had helped. One student reflected after the reading: “I enjoyed listening to others’ works because I could see how much we’ve grown as writers together. Sharing my work with the class allowed me to get recognized for my hard work and to be in the spotlight for a moment.”

— Reviewed by Jennifer Holley, Program Staff
Aspiring Writers Off to Florence

Studying creative writing and art in Florence: It sounds like dream! And in summer 2009, for the fifth year in a row, UConn students will have the chance to enroll in a course that immerses them in the Tuscan culture, places, and people who have inspired world-class art and literature for five hundred years. In the churches, piazzas, and palaces of the city, students will study visual art with an art historian from the Institute at Palazzo Rucellai, an international site of UConn and one of the most famous Renaissance palaces. Students will also workshop creative nonfiction under the direction of Lynn Bloom, a widely-published author and Distinguished Professor.

The 2009 trip will run from May 14 to June 28. Students will explore the streets, hills, restaurants, and markets in the process of writing about people, places, events, and experiences. The class format (three afternoons per week) will allow long weekends for travel across Italy and elsewhere in Europe. But as Professor Bloom writes, “to stay in Florence itself is to experience an elegant, ever-fascinating small city where everyone walks, sings, bargain-hunts, people-watches, savors gelati and open air markets in an ambience that makes writing inspired and fun.” For further information, check out the Study Abroad Program’s website.

— Reviewed by Creative Writing Staff

Writing Legend Comes to Campus

On November 3, when Maya Angelou stepped onto the stage at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts, the sold-out crowd welcomed the poet with a standing ovation. Angelou began the night by serenading the audience. Her voice, soft and powerful, billowed over the hushed crowd.

Throughout the evening, Angelou balanced every solemn moment with a humorous one. She meshed poignant stories of her childhood with funny anecdotes, such as the time she went to a vegetarian diner and came out with a poem that professed her love for meat.

The prevailing theme for the night, however, was that of inspiration. She spoke of everyone’s ability to overcome hardships, sharing a story of the death of her mother’s boyfriend. She drew upon the story told in her best-selling autobiography, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. The boyfriend had raped Angelou and was sent to jail. Upon his release, he was kicked to death.

“I thought my voice had killed a man,” said Angelou. Following the traumatic childhood experience, she stopped speaking for six years.

Yet Angelou’s mother still told her that she would one day grow up and teach the world. Her mother’s words foreshadowed precisely the direction Angelou’s life would take.

Angelou went on to speak of being asked to write a poem for the United Nations’ 50th anniversary. Years earlier, Angelou had watched Eleanor Roosevelt walk up the steps into the UN building. Angelou had cried then, saying that if only she weren’t unmarried and pregnant, she could be like Eleanor Roosevelt, too. “So imagine being invited back there, years later,” said Angelou with a smile.

She then read from the poem that she wrote for the UN, entitled “A Brave and Startling Truth.” When the last line of the poem slipped from Angelou’s lips, the crowd erupted into cheers, once again rising to their feet to bid her farewell the same way they had greeted her: with a standing ovation.

— Reviewed by Crystal Maldonado, Program Intern
Writers Who Edit, Editors Who Write

Thanks to generous funding from The Beatrice Fox Auerbach Foundation Fund at The Hartford Fund for Public Giving, the Creative Writing Program was able to host two events in the “Writers Who Edit, Editors Who Write” series.

Jill Bialosky spoke at the UConn Co-op on November 6, 2008. She is Executive Editor and Vice President at W.W. Norton & Company in New York. She is also the author of two novels, House Under Snow and The Life Room, and three books of poetry: The End of Desire, Subterranean, and Intruder. Bialosky read from her latest work. She also discussed the challenges of making a life as a writer and editor and provided useful advice about manuscript submissions and the benefits of interning with a publisher.

The series continued on March 26, 2009, with a visit from Meghan O’Rourke. The packed audience at the Co-op eagerly awaited the talk by the trendy and brilliant writer. O’Rourke began her editing career at the New Yorker in 1997. In 2002, she became culture editor for Slate, and since 2005, she has served as a poetry editor at the Paris Review. O’Rourke first read from her book of poems, Halflife, published to great acclaim in 2008. Following her reading, O’Rourke discussed her life as both a poet and an editor.

O’Rourke’s creativity, friendliness, and professionalism left the audience entertained and interested. O’Rourke advised students to realize that their futures are limitless. She stressed that doing all the things one loves is possible.

— Reviewed by Samantha Buzzelli, Program Intern

Student Writers Exercise Their Talents

College students have busy schedules. Between classes, internships, labs, and sometimes even full-time jobs, there isn’t always an opportunity to sit down and hone one’s creative writing skills. Students outside the English major especially may have trouble fitting a creative writing class into their semester plans.

For these students and any others who are interested, there’s “Let It Go.” Begun in 2006, “Let It Go” is a student-run organization that bills itself as a “gym for creative writers.” “Let It Go” meets once a week, bringing students from all backgrounds and majors together to share their interest and enthusiasm for creative writing. And, like any good gym, “Let It Go” encourages its members to really stretch their muscles. According to Duncan Campbell, the club’s current president, members meet to “discuss events that the Creative Writing Program puts on, share our pieces with each other, and generally exercise our creativity.”

Campbell said that in addition to giving writers a chance to workshop pieces, the club also tries to give members a wide variety of writing exercises. By encouraging risk-taking and experimentation, “Let It Go” can help members generate completely new and unexpected ideas for their writing.

“‘Let It Go’ is open to all students in the community and attracts a lot of students that would otherwise not become involved in the department,” said Campbell.

Campbell said that fun meetings and an encouraging atmosphere really help build a sense of community, and that members often form strong bonds during their time in the club. While many members do go on to take creative writing classes, for some, “Let It Go” is the chief opportunity to develop their abilities and share their talents. For even the busiest of students, “Let It Go” provides a time when writers can simply be writers.

— Reviewed by Brenna Harvey, Program Intern
46th Annual Wallace Stevens Poetry Program

Award-winning poet, educator, and translator, Heather McHugh, was UConn’s featured guest for the 46th Annual Wallace Stevens Poetry Program. Her most recent book is Eyeshot, which was shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize. McHugh has won awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. She currently serves as the Millman Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at the University of Washington in Seattle.

On April 2, the Stevens program, held in the Dodd Center, began with readings from the 2008-2009 Wallace Stevens Poetry Prize Winners, Sean Forbes, Lori Carriere, and Nicole Rubin. McHugh was then introduced by Professor Sharon Bryan, who characterized McHugh’s work as electrifying. McHugh then took the stage, and immediately had the audience laughing due to her high energy and sense of humor. Between reading her individual poems, she spoke with great admiration for Stevens (who she affectionately called “Wally”). She spoke of her connection to Stevens, as they both share the philosophical interest in the relationship between the literal eye and the poetic eye.

The following day, McHugh read at Hartford’s Classical Magnet School, where she presented the students with copies of one of her books. The students responded well to her personality as well as her work. She assuaged the students’ fears of poetry, saying that they shouldn’t worry about understanding everything. “Poetry, in its attempts at containing language, very clearly and succinctly makes language uncontainable.”

— Reviewed by Samantha Buzzelli, Program Intern

A Psychological World Unveiled

On Tuesday March 17th, UConn celebrated its annual Aetna Creative Nonfiction event in the Kovner Auditorium. The night started with a celebration of the winners of the Aetna Creative Nonfiction Awards. Undergraduate Michael Schrage and graduate English student Zara Rix read excerpts from their winning pieces.

After hearing from UConn’s fresh talent, the audience enthusiastically welcomed its guest, Lauren Slater. Slater received her PhD in psychology from Boston University.

A distinguished writer, she has won numerous awards, including a 2004 National Endowment for the Arts Award and a Knight Science Journalism Fellowship at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has written six books and numerous articles, and is currently at work on a project about what it means to love animals. For the Aetna event, Slater read a chapter from her most recent and controversial book, Opening Skinner’s Box.

Slater’s book has received criticism from many scholars and professionals in the field of psychology. The work raises questions of the blurry lines between fiction, creative nonfiction, and academic writing. The chapter she read, “Being Sane in Insane Places,” focuses on a psychological experiment conducted by David Rosenhan in the 1970s. Rosenhan strived to disprove the necessity and validity of the guidelines in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Through her reenactment of Rosenhan’s original experiment, Slater created a witty, funny, and enjoyable read for her fans. Slater humbly admitted that “there’s a lot we don’t know about psychology…there’s a lot we don’t know about humanity.”

— Reviewed by Samantha Buzzelli, Program Intern
The 2009 winners of the University of Connecticut’s Collins Literary Prizes are Jennifer Orlando, a senior from Southbury, CT, and Emily Lyon, a returning student from Willington, CT. Each year, the prestigious Collins Literary Prizes are awarded to the two best works of literature written by UConn undergraduates. The prizes are given in memory of Edward R. and Frances S. Collins, and winners are given cash awards and published in UConn’s award-winning literary magazine, the Long River Review. Collins Literary Prizes are awarded annually as part of the English Department’s numerous writing awards.

Poetry winner, Jennifer Orlando, is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. She is an active member of both the literary and musical communities in Storrs. Though she enjoys all literary genres and styles, Orlando declares, “Poetry is my thing.” She works as poetry editor for the Long River Review, and enjoys sharing her writing in workshops and at open mic nights. She says that in active literary communities, “it’s inspiring to give, share, and take back. You find support that way, and you wind up writing more.” Orlando is also a trained singer and has been a violinist since childhood. These days, she is drawn to experimental electronic music. She can be heard as a DJ on UConn’s WHUS radio show “Strawberry Cheesecake.”

Fiction winner, Emily Lyon, has spent her whole life using words to build relationships. Lyons is currently pursuing a BFA in printmaking after graduating with a dual degree in philosophy and linguistics in 2002. Lyon is a self-declared “military brat.” Because she moved so often as a child, she learned the value of mail early in life. Though her circle of friends frequently changed, she maintained a sense of community by sending mail. As a teen, she became an enthusiastic member of the ‘90s underground ‘zine movement, in which she and her fellow writers self-published their work. Lyon has since learned to use writing not only as a way to reach people, but also to understand them. In her stories, she often writes about relationships, and tries to understand her characters’ motives and beliefs. She says, “When you understand people, then you’re able to care more about them.”

— Reviewed by Brenna Harvey, Program Intern

Undergraduate Writers Win Prestigious Awards

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— Reviewed by Brenna Harvey, Program Intern

2008-2009 Creative Writing Award Winners

The Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest
First Prize ($1000): Sean Forbes
Second Prize ($500): Lori Carriere
Third Prize ($300): Nicole Rubin
Honorable Mentions: Elizabeth Larkin and Jennifer Orlando

The Jennie Hackman Memorial Award for Short Fiction
First Prize ($1000): Valerie Doughty
Second Prize ($500): Miranda DePoi
Third Prize ($200): Daniel Gregory

The Aetna Graduate Creative Works-in-Progress Grant
First Prize ($1000): Gordon Fraser

The Long River Graduate Writing Award
First Prize ($250): Gordon Fraser
Honorable Mention: Suzanne Ondrus

The Aetna Creative Nonfiction Awards
Graduate ($500): Zara Rix
Undergraduate ($500): Michael Schrage

The Long River Art Award
First Prize ($200): Sarah McKay

The Gloriana Gill Art Awards
Photography ($900): Madeline Mackey Bey
Painting ($900): Paulina Perlwitz

The Aetna Graduate Creative Works-in-Progress Grant
First Prize ($1000): Gordon Fraser

The Long River Graduate Writing Award
First Prize ($250): Gordon Fraser
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Undergraduate ($500): Michael Schrage

The Long River Art Award
First Prize ($200): Sarah McKay

The Gloriana Gill Art Awards
Photography ($900): Madeline Mackey Bey
Painting ($900): Paulina Perlwitz

Edward R. and Frances S. Collins Literary Prizes
Fiction ($1400): Emily Lyon
Honorable mentions: Joseph Welch and Daniel Gregory

Poetry ($1400): Jennifer Orlando
Honorable mentions: Elizabeth Larkin, Abdul Choudhry, and Michael Seal

The Long River Graduate Writing Award
First Prize ($250): Gordon Fraser
Honorable Mention: Suzanne Ondrus

The Gloriana Gill Art Awards
Photography ($900): Madeline Mackey Bey
Painting ($900): Paulina Perlwitz
A Different Kind of Journey

Poetic Journeys is a program that allows UConn's Creative Writing Program and Design Center to beautifully coincide; it has been in existence since 2000. In this unique series, the graphic artist is given a poem by a writer from the UConn community. Designers transform the poem into a piece of word art that is displayed in various places on campus, including shuttle buses and the library elevators. The program gives poets and artists a wonderful opportunity to share their work with a wider audience.

The release reception was held on April 28. Poets were on hand to read their work and designers talked about their own creative decisions, as the posters were projected on a screen behind the podium. One of the most impressive pieces was Amber West's "Jellyfish, Mandalay Bay," accompanied by the design of Jay Quercia. In the poem, the ebb and flow of a jellyfish in a tank is the primary image the audience is drawn to, and this is exactly the focus in the graphic design of the poem. With flowing letters, Quercia captured what jellyfish in a tank would look like both in front of the glass and behind it.

— Reviewed by Marisa Gumpert, Creative Writing student

Creative Writing Journals In Print and Online

This Spring saw the release of two literary magazines. The Writers Guild at Avery Point launched their new online journal, Barque. At the inaugural reading in the Branford House, students presented their work to a large and enthusiastic crowd.

On April 30, the release of the Long River Review, UConn's award-winning literary magazine, was celebrated at the UConn Co-op. The LRR is run completely by undergraduate members of UConn's writing and artistic community. This project is the cornerstone of the small magazine publishing class offered by the English Department every spring. Each year, the class collaborates with the Design Center, led by Edvin Yegir. With a brand new website, the LRR staff set out to broaden their presence on campus and in the literary community. The website, www.longriverreview.com, now features blog posts by members of the class and the results of the flash fiction contests. The website also allowed the magazine to accept on-line submissions this year, which not only increased the number of submissions but also helped the environment.

— Reviewed by Creative Writing staff

Wright in Residence

On February 10, the UConn Creative Writing Program hosted a reading by poet C.D. Wright, the Spring Aetna Writer-in-Residence. Begun in 2003 with a grant from Aetna, the Writer-in-Residence program brings an internationally renowned author to UConn each semester.

Wright read a medley of poems, mostly from her newest collection, Rising, Falling, Hovering, published in 2008 and inspired by the most difficult and pressing issues of modern America. She also delved into a wide variety of older work, including One Big Self: Prisoners of Louisiana. She also read from a new series of shorter poems, which she compared to writing country music. “I hate country,” Wright, who grew up in Arkansas, said, “but it’s my culture, so I’m allowed to hate it.”

During a question and answer session, Wright said she was unable to pinpoint the main source of inspiration for her poetry. “Inspiration is for amateurs,” she said. “You get a few gifts, but in poetry, much of it is free willed.”

Wright has published 12 books of poetry and prose. Her literary honors include the MacArthur Fellowship and Lannan Literary Award. She was named Poet Laureate of Rhode Island in 1994, a five-year post, and she currently teaches at Brown University in Providence.

— Reviewed by Michelle Firestone, Creative Writing student
Long River Reading Tour

In the Fall, the Creative Writing Program’s Long River Reading Tour visited three high schools. On each visit, three or four of UConn’s creative writing students presented their original work.

The goal of the tour is to demonstrate to high school students that there is an exciting literary world for them to explore in college. The visiting readers serve as creative writing role models, providing the high school students with an open and honest creative space that encourages the imagination.

The first reading took place on September 26th at E. O. Smith High School. Undergraduates Michael Pontacoloni, Brian Brennan, and Dan Gregory, as well as UConn alumnus Sean Brennan, each read from his original work.

The next destination was Glastonbury High School on October 10th. Undergraduate Kenzi Wilbur joined Pontacoloni, Brennan, and Gregory in readings for two poetry classes. The readings’ impact on the high school students became clear when several students volunteered to read their own writing.

The last reading took place at Woodstock Academy on October 31st. Brian and Sean Brennan read again, this time accompanied by undergraduate Reed Immer. Speaking to a small American Literature class, they won over the students with their animated and imaginative spoken word performances.

The reading tour was successful, showing how high school audiences’ enthusiasm for poetry can be tapped when inspiring collegiate writers share their works.

Though the Long River Reading Tour of Fall 2008 has concluded, the collaborative relationship between UConn and Connecticut high schools will continue in semesters to come.

— Reviewed by Annie Brooks, Program Intern

Long River Reading Series

The Long River Reading Series concluded yet another successful year. The Series is a bi-weekly literary reading that showcases the work of undergraduate and graduate UConn writers. It is apparent to all involved that the literary scene at UConn is rapidly expanding.

Undergraduate Sierra B. Ryan and Adjunct Professor of English Jason Labbe kicked off the fall semester on September 8. The night was well balanced with Ryan’s descriptive prose and Labbe’s award-winning poetry. Back from a semester in London, PhD student, Jennifer Holley, read selections of her poetry on September 22. Accompanying her were three undergraduate students who had studied with her; Joe Welch, Liz Bologna, and Sarah Maltese read work influenced by their time in London. On October 6, Matthew Harding, an active participant in UConn’s Creative Writing Program, read alongside undergraduate Daniel Gregory. On October 20, the very different styles of graduate student Suzanne Ondrus and undergraduate Jeffrey Benvenuti complemented each other beautifully. Graduate student Abbye Meyer and undergraduate Lauren Silber drew in a crowd with their prose on November 3. On November 17, UConn alum Denise Abercrombie and her husband Jon Anderson read selections from their poetry, on themes ranging from female empowerment to the United States’ involvement in foreign affairs.

The spring semester included readings by Gordon Fraser and Jennifer Orlando. The final reading on April 13 included undergraduate Michael Schrage and graduate student Amber West, who combined her reading of poetry with a puppet show, with help from Kirsten Kamermeyer and actor Sam Traylor.

— Reviewed by Annie Brooks, Sean Forbes, and Marisa Gumpert

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