A Glance: Professor Michael White as Department Chair

by Isaac Faleschini

UNCW’s creative writing department boasts a “…community of passionate, dedicated writers…” and a faculty that “encourages a rigorous yet supportive environment…” At the helm for the past three years, professor Michael White has steered the ship as the department chair. When being interviewed as incoming chair in 2013, alumni Katy Prince asked White if taking on this role would affect his teaching.

“I don’t worry about the effects on my teaching,” he said. “Teaching will be what helps preserve my sanity and quality of life.”

One of White’s lectures is spoken of as legend throughout the program. He shares his personal revision process through the medium of a multi-draft, color-coded document purportedly relaying a mélange of changes and thought processes.

“Wow, that sounds fascinating,” a professor said. “I want to sit in on that lecture.”

Professor White also exhibits great personal generosity. “He read one of my poems at that reading the other night,” a student said. “And it was awesome!”

These are the kinds of Michael White-isms that pass word to mouth by students and faculty. Such examples of selflessness do not often peek from the doorways of professorial office halls. And yet, in UNCW’s creative writing department, this type of quiet mentorship seems commonplace. It’s a mark of good leadership, good department chairs and good professors who invest in and value their student body.

To encapsulate his tenure as department chair one can look to the words of his peers, namely, professor Rebecca Lee. Her thoughtful and moving insights, given at the end of the year awards ceremony, leave little doubt as to White’s legacy and his commitment to his students and the program.

Lee said, “I don’t think that Mike, even when he’s been snowed in by paperwork, ever forgets that we’re here to recognize and support great writing. When somebody writes a great sentence, Mike is the first one to notice and to try to describe why it’s great, why it gets at what matters the most. His aesthetic is very generous, but also really refined, and that is in the bloodstream of this department.

“I think Mike has been fighting behind the scenes really hard the past three years, especially for graduate student support. This is such a tough battle in the current climate and it’s very hard for any administrators to make much headway. I admire him for his relentlessness in this regard, especially when the fight has seemed most difficult. To see a poet fighting a bureaucracy for money is a very moving sight, and Mike has never lost sight of the importance of student support — materially and intellectually — as our core mission.

“He’s led by example. He broke out of his comfort zone and started writing an eccentric, private book about looking at one painter’s paintings, and taught us all a lot about following one’s obsessions, and taking them seriously long before anybody even knew about the project. The final book was intimate, intelligent and breathtaking. It was eventually nominated for a National Book Award, which we are still celebrating. May we all be that impassioned and brave about our pursuits.”

On his website, Michael White says, “I am a teacher. Talking to students in a classroom is my bliss.” This summer he may step down as department chair, but he’ll be stepping back into the classroom. Welcome back, Professor White, welcome back!
This semester, the editorial team at Chautauqua not only put the finishing touches on our thirteenth issue, Americana, we also began recording for a new radio program, “Chautauqua on the Air.” With the help of Bill Bolduc, a professor in the Department of Communication Studies and his production class, we are putting together fantastic shows that will highlight past contributors, feature author interviews, and expand the reach of Chautauqua, both our journal and the Institution.

As excited as we are about “Chautauqua on the Air,” we’re equally thrilled to release Americana in June. This issue featured some phenomenal poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. Topping the list are our Editors Prize winners. Adam Klinker won the top prize for his story, “St. Lucy’s Day,” about two sons of a Nebraska farmer facing the harsh conditions of a blizzard. Lynn C. Miller’s story, “Words Shimmer,” about the life of Gertrude Stein, took the prize for first runner-up. Finally, second runner-up was Brendan Constantine for his poem “The Execution of Saddam Hussein on American Television 12/30/2006.”

Memorable essays included Tad Bartlett’s “My Time with You,” an eclectic piece told in part through footnotes; as well as Diana Hume George’s “In the House of Habbukkuk,” which focuses on life in an old church; and Brendan O’Meara’s “That Pickoff Play,” a saga of baseball successes and failures.

The work of two faculty members from the creative writing department at UNCW are featured in the 2016 issue. Two poems by Mark Cox (plus an interview with him) and three of Anna Lena Phillips Bell’s poems are in the issue.

And we couldn’t neglect to mention our esteemed Young Voices contributors. This year, we awarded three Young Voices Prizes to writers typically between the ages of 12 and 18. Zoe Magley garnered the top prize for her poem, “Fifty-two and Leaving with a Whisper.” Zoe was also featured back in issue 11, when she was only 12 years old, and her work has taken wide leaps and bounds. Runners-up were Heather Tompkins for her poem, “Marigolds, Day of the Dead,” and Michelle Shen, another former contributor featured in issue 12, for her essay, “Melting Pot.”

In August 2016, we will continue reading for issue 14, Invention & Discovery. Already, we’ve got some pieces we are just itching to share.
Lookout Books found much to celebrate this year, including the publication of its debut novel, a South Arts grant, a Rome Prize, and a cover reveal!

Following the September publication of *Honey from the Lion*, Lookout’s first novel, author Matthew Neill Null took off on a tour of the Carolinas, sponsored in part by a grant from South Arts. As always, Lookout believes in extending the traditional reading tour to include outreach to underserved audiences, including middle- and high-school students and older adults. For Null’s tour, Lookout staff and students planned five educational activities in addition to bookstore readings—including workshops and panels on writing history and the natural world. Null spoke to more than 300 students at the Hawbridge School in Saxapahaw, NC, led them in an outdoor writing exercise and gave a workshop about recording place through sensory detail.

Lookout practicum student Kate McMullen, who helped plan and coordinate the tour with publisher Emily Smith and fellow student Bethany Tap, joined Null at several stops and helped collect grant data and facilitate audience engagement. Smith and editor Beth Staples gave a panel on independent publishing with Null at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill, and several more practicum students—including Megan Ellis, Marissa Flannagan, Shannon McCabe, and Tap—were able to join faculty members at the Southern Independent Booksellers’ Alliance Discovery Show in Raleigh to represent Lookout at the exhibit. Null signed books and also spoke to a packed house on a panel about writing place. Lookout hosted a belated official launch for *Honey from the Lion* as part of Writers’ Week with a reading featuring Null and Pulitzer-winner Edward P. Jones, whom Null cites as a significant influence on his work.

To help promote Null’s novel well beyond the Carolinas, Lookout staff and students worked diligently throughout the summer and early fall to confirm review attention, securing *Honey from the Lion* coveted spots on several major summer and fall reading lists, including *Kirkus*, *Library Journal* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. They also placed excerpts from the novel in major outlets, including one on the Literary Hub and another online at *American Short Fiction*. Null appeared at 25 locations across the country, including the Boston Book Festival, the Southern Book Festival, Bookmarks and the Virginia Festival for the Book, giving numerous radio and print interviews along the way.
All of the positive attention for the novel culminated in the April announcement of the 2016 Joseph Brodsky Rome Prize, awarded to Null by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Winners receive a fellowship that includes a stipend and yearlong residency in Rome. Past recipients include Ralph Ellison, Cormac McCarthy, Anne Sexton, Junot Díaz, Anthony Doerr, Randall Kenan and Lorrie Moore.

This year also brought the announcement of Lookout’s 2016 title, *We Show What We Have Learned*, a story collection by debut author Clare Beams. The author’s work first came to Lookout’s attention through the pages of its sister magazine, *Ecotone*. As imaginative and compelling as they are emotionally complex, the nine exquisitely unsettling stories in Beams’s book blend the fantastic, the historic and the literary to capture the true strangeness of what it means to be human. The collection’s publication date is October 25, 2016 and Clare will visit UNCW as part of Writers’ Week to launch the book.

Four of the nine stories in the collection take place in schools. “I began to see the common themes and threads that tie these stories together,” Beams said. “Their concern with the shaping of selves has a lot to do with my time in the classroom.”

These are complex characters, and their vulnerabilities are made manifest in all their messy beauty. From the mercurial space between girlhood and adulthood to a matriarch coming to terms with her legacy, these stories show us women grappling with power, prompting Joyce Carol Oates to call Beams “a female/feminist voice for the twenty-first century.”

Lookout announced the title this spring with a successful coordinated cover reveal via Instagram and Facebook—a publicity strategy hatched by students in Emily Smith’s Lookout Practicum. Photos featuring details of the cover art by illustrator Andrea Wan were posted daily for the week leading up to the full reveal on the Lookout + *Ecotone* blog.

To accompany the unveiled cover, Lookout also launched a new author website for Beams, clarebeams.com, designed by student intern Mark Johnson. The Lookout class further spent the semester planning and executing special preview kits to gain the attention of reviewers and booksellers. The kits, which can be seen on Lookout’s Instagram account, include a galley and three small gifts—an air plant in a shell, a tube of locally sourced tea and a tube of bath salts—each corresponding directly to a story in the collection. Beautifully designed tags feature excerpts from accompanying stories. If you’d like to review the book for a media outlet, please write to lookout@uncw.edu.

Stay tuned for all the latest from Lookout Books and *Ecotone* on the new blog, ecotonelookout.org, which is edited by Beth Staples. The blog features original content—guests posts from authors, interviews with industry professionals, top-five lists, articles written by Lookout and Ecotone practicum members and lovely digital broadsides—and serves as a daily news source for both the imprint and magazine.
1. Right to left in front, Kate McMullen, Mark Johnson, and Elle Drumheller pose. Morgan Davis in front and Will Dean in back spy a Jack Russell Terrier in a tutu and makeup working a hula-hoop.

2. UNCW’s own first-year, Graham Irvin, caught on camera at Literary Hub’s First Year Anniversary Party: Palm Court Ballroom, L.A.

3. A quirky treat for those passing by UNCW’s Ecotone + Lookout Books book fair booth or following them on social media.

4. First-year Will Dean gives his impression of Kilroy holding a chalkboard.

5. UNCW’s second-year Kate McMullen: wow, the things we learn at AWP.


AWP in pictures

This year’s Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) convention was hosted by the city of Los Angeles. Faculty and students enjoyed the lectures, book fair, and off-site events.
Teens Out Loud Update
by C.J. Pendergast

Teens Out Loud is an arts program at UNCW’s creative writing department, supported and co-sponsored by Duke University. In 2009, UNCW’s Writers in Action integrated a writing course to be offered to local teens diagnosed with HIV and AIDS. Since then, Teens Out Loud has turned its focus to a unique group referred to as “perinatals.” These individuals contracted the virus through birth. Teens Out Loud is designed to help these individuals find their voice—informing the world about living with HIV, as well as reaching out to and comforting those with similar experiences, helping them understand they are not alone.

This program relies on support from social worker Linda Connor, B.S.W., of Duke Medical Center. These past two semesters, working with these brilliant and creative students along with co-leader, Majsan Boström, our job has been to challenge and enlighten them.

“I think the best thing for me is getting to listen to others’ stories meanwhile sharing mine, realizing how much we are similar,” one student said.

Majsan and I try to fill their creative-writing toolboxes, empowering them with the ability to self-actualize their own stories, which deserve to be told—and, more importantly, to be heard.

Our first meeting was held in the quaint dining room of a Quaker House—Majsan and I spoke with our students about their stories. a 19-year-old, showed an innate toughness saying what she needed to and no more: “I just like to write.” Relaxed, back sloped against the chair, she explained, “It’s something that I enjoy doing.” Her sister, is 21 years-old and has true aspirations for her writing. She spends six days a week working at a notorious food processing factory where she is surrounded by animal carcasses. “I always felt that my life could be a movie,” she said. Amongst the cyclical humming of machines and repugnant scents, she daydreams her stories.

Across the table, tells us how joining track and field has formed inseparable bonds between her and her friends. “I love my teammates,” she said beneath the glowing lights of the Quaker House meeting room. “I love to run.” Majsan and I asked her to consider if she is running from anything in particular.

reflects on his previous job as an undertaker. He contemplates the people that he’s buried. “Of course I believe in ghosts,” he said without a smile. “I’ll write about that, too.”

and both find inspiration through music. writes with her headphones in, translating the vibrations into poems on pieces of loose-leaf paper. with the artist Tupac Shakur, she emulates his style in her own context, replacing words like “to” and “for” with their numerical counterparts (2 and 4). who is also a cancer survivor, explains that she has moved past the point of resenting her condition. “I take everything in life as it comes to me,” she said. “I’m just along for the ride.”

Each of our students has experienced countless visits to the doctor and the nauseating medications that follow. They endure these issues as though commonplace, moving on and going about their lives. “Truthfully, it can be good therapy,” one student told us. “I don’t have many opportunities to speak my mind and educate others on my illness, but you guys [Teens Out Loud] are awesome! You make the experience comfortable and I definitely want to see the finished product when we are done.”

Majsan and I are continuing Teens Out Loud next year. We anticipate the return of our students and the evolution of their writing. While this year’s main focus was on voice and identifying one’s story, we hope to guide these projects into more finalized drafts, whether it be screenplays, a memoir outline, a short story or a collection of poems. Their writing is honest, compelling, engaging and dispels the stigma that surrounds HIV/AIDS. They are not defined by this disease, merely an aspect of their condition, and are, instead, students, passionate movie-goers, music-lovers, athletes and workers: ordinary people with extraordinary stories.
Young Writers Workshop Update

by Isabelle Shepherd

Each summer since 2002, 45 high school students gather at the University of North Carolina Wilmington for the annual Young Writers Workshop (YWW). The workshop is organized and operated by UNCW’s creative writing department, and camp participants have the opportunity to study with published, working writers—faculty members and graduate students in the department’s Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. In past years craft talks have been given by the likes of Mark Cox, Michael White, Phil Furia, Nina de Gramont, Rebecca Petruck and Jason Mott. Graduate students in the program work as counselors. They stay with the YWW participants in the residence halls and serve as writing teachers, workshop leaders, mentors and chaperones. The counselors are available throughout the day for unstructured interaction from assisting with writing projects to mentorship.

The five-day camp immerses young writers in the intense, daily study of their craft. Students participate in six hours of creative writing exercises, craft lectures, writing workshops and readings. The week offers a valuable and exciting experience for young writers. They meet other writers, follow their creative interests in a safe, non-judgmental environment and receive instruction in all genres—poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Students also have time to explore the UNCW campus, visit the bookstore and library, and get to know other young writers. Because of their connection to the camp, many end up applying to UNCW’s B.F.A. program in creative writing!

For many of these students, they’re the only writer in their school. Young Writers Week is the first chance for them to see themselves as a part of a large writing community, feeling connected to other people who are as passionate about writing and reading as they are. They become each other’s biggest fans and most trusted critics, and many of them continue to correspond once they leave camp, even if they live far apart.

As a camp counselor, I have seen the passion these high school students have for writing, and it is invigorating. The YWW campers pour themselves into their work; during free writes none are seen with a still pen. They’re unabashed in their dedication, and experiencing this enthusiasm often freshens counselors’ perspectives: “Oh yeah, I almost forgot just how much fun writing is.”

Young Writers Week is a space of hope and collaboration for everyone involved. The applications arrive steadily, and I know all of our counselors are excited to meet the next generation of enthusiastic writers.

“As a camp counselor, I have seen the passion these high school students have for writing, and it is invigorating.”
Philip Gerard’s

The Dark of the Island

by Isaac Faleschini

Philip Gerard earned his M.F.A. in creative writing in 1981 and almost immediately joined the faculty at Arizona State University as a visiting assistant professor and later as Writer in Residence. He has won numerous awards at UNCW: the Faculty Scholarship Award, the College of Arts & Science Teaching Award, the Chancellor’s Medal for Excellence in Teaching, the Graduate Mentor Award, the Board of Trustees Teaching Award and a Distinguished Teaching Professorship. The Philip Gerard Fellowship, endowed by benefactor Charles F. Green III to honor Gerard’s work in establishing and directing the M.F.A. program at UNCW, is awarded annually to an MFA student on the basis of literary merit. He is co-editor with his wife, Jill Gerard, of Chautauqua, the literary journal of the Chautauqua Institution, and serves on the faculty of Goucher College’s summer residency M.F.A. program in creative nonfiction. A few of his publications include: Hatteras Light, Desert Kill, Cape Fear Rising, Down The Wild Cape Fear and the collection The Patron Saint of Dreams.

IF: Your new book The Dark of the Island is a sequel to your novel Hatteras Light?

PG: It builds on it. When I first had the idea I had thought of it being three books—a nice round number. And I knew that the second one would have the bones of the plot that’s in The Dark of the Island; it would all happen during WWII.

Then the years went by and I did other things, other projects, got distracted. But I always had the file. Occasionally, I’d take the file out and make some notes in it. At one point my wife, Jill, who always liked Hatteras Light, kept on saying, “Where’s that second book? Come on.” So I wrote it and gave the manuscript to her for Christmas.

It was a lot of fun to do. I love a book that has a good strong plot to it. I love reading them and writing them…and since I knew what the heart of the action of the book would be, the real trick was figuring out how to get there without getting there too soon and having nothing left, or giving
it away too soon, or in some way waiting too long and have the reader walk away. All the usual things one has to do when you suss out a novel.

**IF:** So, is there a third book lurking out there somewhere?

**PG:** Yes. I kind of know what it’s going to be. There’s an African American family—the first book starts with Chief Lord who was an African American life-saver. And there were such on the island back in the day. It was a place [Hatteras Island] where it didn’t much matter where you came from or who you were. Once you were there, and pitched a tent and had shown a certain strength of character, people accepted you. So all kinds of miscreants and shipwreck people showed up there and were folded right into the community. And in fact, the guy from the first book, who survives the U-boat attack, winds up in the second book in a very small role near the very end.

So the third book I have in mind would be about the Lord family. Some of them actually figure prominently in *The Dark of the Island*. It was a family in my fictional Hatteras Island that thrived on the Island but also was taken advantage of by some of the other families. And there is a little rivalry going on there, and I want to explore that.

**IF:** How long was it between the two drafts?

**PG:** *Hatteras Light*? Oh, jeez. When was that, when did that come out? That must have been, 1986. Scrivener’s published it and then it was reissued by Blair, so it’s been in print ever since its release.

Here’s the thing though. You write a novel, particularly a novel, and because you’ve invented it…it never goes away. In your mind, it exists in the present tense. You never go, that was the book I wrote. It’s every bit alive in your imagination as it was the day you wrote it.

In fact, one of the things I did while I was writing the draft of this new book was—I wrote about this in a reader’s guide essay. I had a hard time getting the story out. A lot of years had gone by. I realized I was missing that crucial voice I had in the first book. I don’t know where it came from but I really liked it, and it was the thing that propelled me through discovering what the plot of that book would be. So I went back and re-read [Hatteras Light] to get the voice in my head, the cadence of speech. And as I wrote [The Dark of the Island] I’d read a lot of [Hatteras Light] out loud, particularly the dialogue.

Ultimately there should be a kind of music to language. If you write prose without music in it then all you have is noise. You want to have a certain kind of rhythm, a certain kind of musicality to it, and the way that people talk…hearing it is like hearing a particular musical score, or a great song by a songwriter you admire. You start to feel the flow of it and get into that. Once I had that language to tell the book in all the rest of it was a lot easier to do. I kind of fell into it then, and it was just living there.

I’m sure you know exactly what I mean.

**IF:** Not exactly. [Laughs] Not yet.

**PG:** Well you will. I love publishing books and I love talking about them…but really the feeling of sitting at the desk and inventing a scene, getting your characters to talk and realizing—that feels so real to me, I’m right there! You share that with your reader in a way, but in another way you can never quite share the intensity of the experience that happens when you’re doing it.

I think that’s the addictive part of writing for me. That’s the part that’s more important than money or fame or book of the month club or *New York Times* bestseller. If all that other stuff happens, that’s great. But fundamentally, I tell any student writer, if you’re writing just for accolades but not for that feeling over and over…there’s a satisfaction whether there’s anybody there to witness it or not. And that’s what fuels you. If you don’t have that, then everything else will run out. If you have that, then all the accolades don’t matter, but it’s great if it happens; it’s extra.

Anytime you depend on someone else to validate what you’re doing or how come you enjoy it, you’re giving them all the power to take that away any time they want.
IF: I read about *The Dark of the Island*, some of the history and research you did to create your characters. One story in particular really stood out to me. The one with the soldier who comes home and changes his uniform in the bathroom at the train station, or something like that. Can you tell that history again?

PG: It’s one of the four island boys that goes to war. They all make a pact to meet up together again and that’s sort of the beginning of the trouble. The anecdote that I attribute to one of them is actually a story from an interview I did for another book called *Secret Soldiers*. This man, he had been so completely traumatized by [WWII]—he spent the worst year in Europe, almost from D-Day until the surrender of Germany, and then a month or two afterwards. And that’s one part people never think about—the afterwards. That’s when all the Russian prisoners were set free, and that’s when all the Nazis were busy leaving the ranks, and all these armed deserters were all over the countryside and these guys were helping round them up. It was a really chaotic time. Well, he came home from all that, and I think it was in Philadelphia, he came out of the bus station there, went to the bathroom, changed into his civilian clothes, brought out his uniform, folded it neatly, tucked it under a bench and walked away. He never looked back. It was almost like he had to take the war off his back in a very literal way.

That’s the opposite of the guys who brought back tons of souvenirs and tell all the war stories. But this guy didn’t. He wanted this out of his conscience, out of his mind, out of his world. And that’s how I felt about the character I was creating in the novel. It’s one of those moments when you think a person’s life perfectly encapsulates a psychic and emotional reality with a very simple gesture. I was left thinking: I wish I’d invented that, but instead I just stole it.

IF: Now, if I’m not mistaken, you’re going to be teaching a research history class in the fall?

PG: It’s going to be about writing history. All genre writing gets a bad rap in my view. There’s good and bad. Some people write great vampire stories and there’s people that write schlock. And in terms of historical novels, that’s always been kind of a ghetto—“Oh, you write historical novels.” But really, anybody who is writing about something that happened more than a year or two ago is writing historical fiction. In fact, I had argued that the day after 9/11 every novelist in America was writing historically because you had to figure out what to do with it: leave it out or put it in, account for it or not, something.

I think what I want writers to do is begin to recognize, among other things, that history informs us, and we are the future of the history we are writing about, whatever particular history that is. And so, that gives you a tremendous heft. You’re like a comet trailing this big wake behind you and that wake is all of history, public and private. I want to get students to try and access that, find the particular pockets of history that they want to explore that are relevant to some creative project that they want to do, and then be able to write about that in a compelling way.

And the thing is—in this day and age when every politician in America seems to be lying worse than the next, and facts are in dispute, and people tweet something and everyone treats it like it’s real—I think it’s really important for writers to present an actual view of the world. This is actually how things work; this is how nature behaves; this is what actually happened on a given day in history, not all that stuff you’ve been hearing. It wasn’t Muslims cheering the World Trade Center coming down. This is what happened. And to know that, to write out of an accurate sense of the past that brought us to this moment, whatever the moment is…we’re going to be looking very hard at that.
Clyde Edgerton's Legacy Continues
by Jillian Weiss

Last October distinguished author and UNCW professor Clyde Edgerton was honored with the Thomas Wolfe Prize and Lecture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and this coming October he will be inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame, where he will share a wall with writers such as Joseph Mitchell and Maya Angelou.

To speak with me, Edgerton wears clothes embellished with streaks of paint (he had just finished a morning of painting) and talks more of the awards’ previous recipients than of his own impressive pile of books. “The main thing is to look at the names of the other writers and believe that somebody thinks you fall in a category that puts you beside them,” he says. “That’s what feels good about it.”

The Thomas Wolfe Prize and Lecture was established in 1999 in honor of the famous Chapel Hill alumni to recognize contemporary writers with a distinguished body of work. Every fall, around Wolfe’s October 3 birthday the honored writer receives prize money, a medal and delivers a lecture on campus that is free and open to the public. Edgerton joins the ranks of previous recipients such as Pat Conroy, Lee Smith and Ron Rash. Edgerton’s October lecture included a long list of people to thank, three readings from three different books and a song.

Now Edgerton looks forward to his induction into The North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. The Hall was established in 1996 by Sam Ragan as part of the North Carolina Writers’ Network and is located at the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities in Southern Pines, North Carolina. The Weymouth Center has served as a gathering place for authors since the 1920s and ’30s when inhabited by the author James Boyd and his wife Katharine and has provided a retreat for literary greats such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner.

“I have watched over the years as friend after friend was nominated and entered the hall and I looked from a distance through the trees and I could see a light in the hall. I was hoping there could be a chance—and sure enough, it happened,” Edgerton remarked. “I was honored.”

Edgerton remembers being informed of his first big literary award, the Lyndhurst Fellowship, which had been previously bestowed upon Cormac McCarthy. “That really knocked my socks off,” he said. He recalls other writers, collecting “like school kids,” trying to get up the nerve to speak to McCarthy at one Lyndhurst fellowship recipients’ gathering. “My moment in history,” as Edgerton called it, subsisted of standing in a croquet court, chugging beers, gathering the nerve to walk over to McCarthy.

It would seem that Edgerton marks his success not only with publications and awards, but by those who have stood beside him. “I remember the Lyndhurst because of me and Cormac [McCarthy],” he said. “That award gave me confidence because of the people who were winning that award.”

To close our conversation, this laughing, singing, painting and writing artist leans back in his lounge chair and gathers a serious tone. After years of writing, said Edgerton, “Having known what it’s like to send out stories for four years and get 202 rejections, you are happy that you kept going.”
RG: Why make your place in Maine? What drew you there?

BR: A couple of things. Nature, cost of living, also a job, at least at first. When we were first married, 1990, Juliet and I made a list of places we’d love to live and Maine was at the top along with Montana. We spent a honeymoon year in Montana, and the job at U Maine Farmington came up. Seemed perfect, I was hired. I left after a few years for Ohio State, having been lured away by twice the pay and half the load, also a grad program. Juliet was headed to the Art Institute of Chicago for her M.F.A. in painting anyway, so off we went to two states that were on the list of places we never wanted to live. But we kept our house here and after a few years, when Elysia was born, I looked at her and said, “I DON’T WANT YOU TO BE FROM OHIO.” And so I quit my tenured position on the graduate faculty and came home to no prospects. But it all worked out. And here we still are. Another reason for rural Maine is that life is inexpensive. Our house cost $48,000, 1991. It’s probably shot up in value to $58,000 by now!

RG: You talked a lot about your time in New York City. I’m sure in many ways, it’s now a different city. Can you tell us what it was like being an artist there at the time of free Spalding Gray monologues and cheap rent? Or, you like telling stories: can you tell us a favorite story from that time?

BR: I was actually depressed quite a bit of the time in New York. I was broke and not famous. Then again, I lived in a spectacular loft in SoHo and then another in the Meat District (we called it MeatHo—where the Meat meets the Meat—there were a lot of hookers and sex clubs there, but that all ended with AIDS in 1983 or so). The other day I was down there staying at the Gansevoort Hotel and looked off the roof from the pool area and realized I was looking at the roof of my old building—675 Hudson Street. Holy shit! I was basically in the parking lot we used to use for free because it was too terrifying for normal people at night. I was playing in bands and building kitchens and bathrooms for fringe people in their lofts and had gotten pretty happy.

Here’s a story: my wife was buying paint at Sherwin Williams the other day and the gray we wanted was called Spalding Gray. I told my UNCW class the story of seeing Spalding Gray developing monologues at the performing garage—one dollar a performance, two weeks of dress rehearsal. I would go every night ‘till opening night, when the price went up to like twenty bucks, which was like a month’s pay.

RG: You’re a musician, but a more famous writer. During your reading you mentioned you like to watch YouTube videos of Neil Young. Can you talk about how you fit music into your life right now? Does it inspire your writing? If so, how?

BR: I had fun playing music, I made money, I worked the crowds. It’s so awful how our culture evaluates art and artists: money. And even worse if we artists start to assimilate into that attitude. But really, success has nothing to do with money. Success has to do with making the art, and that’s the only definition of success as far as I’m concerned, that and compassion. I mean look at those Republican failures running for the oval office right now. Really, you should have to be able to sing for that position, or dance, or anything but be a prick lawyer or businessman... Success is doing what you really want to do day in and day out, and letting the chips fall where they may. I love Neil Young. And lots of others. I watch videos late at night, and I draw. I can’t write with music on. But before a reading, I put on something like “Moanin’” by Charles Mingus loud as it will go and listen to all nine minutes as presently as I can, and bang, step out on stage, and I’m like that baritone sax and all the madness contained in that song, wow.
RG: Can you tell us what it was like working with HBO? What artistic compromises did you have to make transferring a novel to a television show?

BR: It was fun and interesting, also remunerative. Kind of like taking a super-advanced and high-stakes M.F.A. in screenwriting. I wanted to be contemptuous of the many producers and writers I worked with, but the fact is, they were all fucking brilliant, unbelievable grasp of narrative, and story and character (and most instructively, of structure). I didn’t make any artistic compromises—just worked on a new piece of art in a medium new to me. My book is still there, untouched by my brush with Premium Cable, as they call it.

RG: After thirty-some years, you’re not teaching full-time anymore. And you’ve found your place in Maine. What’s next for you? What are you working on? What type of projects are you excited about?

BR: 25 years. I left my last gig, as Jenks Chair of Contemporary Letters at the College of the Holy Cross, in April of 2009, and have managed to make my way since. I commuted down there from Maine, having found my place here because of teaching—see question one!—What’s next for me is what I’ve always done, which is write. I just finished a new novel. My book of stories *The Girl of the Lake* is coming out next year, hooray. With Algonquin again. I’m working on a book about birds. I’m working on a play. Several screenplays. I’m excited about all of it. I’m also excited about working on my house, and having friends, and being in the woods a lot, also time with my daughter and wife, and reading a lot and watching movies, lots of movies. I love teaching, but I love not teaching more.

"What’s next for me is what I’ve always done, which is write."
Phillips Bell’s Poetry Tribute

Anna Lena Phillips Bell teaches courses on editing, publishing, book arts and creative research in the creative writing department at UNCW, where she is editor of Ecotone, the literary magazine that seeks to reimagine place, and Lookout Books. She makes books and other objects under the imprint To Do in the New Year including A Pocket Book of Forms, a fine-press guide to poetic forms, and Forces of Attention, a series of printed objects designed to help people mediate their interactions with screened devices. She also calls Appalachian square dances in Piedmont North Carolina and beyond.

Phillips Bell has experienced an exceptional year. Culminating a myriad of publications, “Sprout Wings and Fly” and “Girl at the State Line” in District Lit; “The Royal Typewriter Company Delivers by Parachute, 1927” in Southern Poetry Review; “three charms for ash trees,” “Emerald,” “Overwinter,” and “Water and Ore” in Colorado Review; “Endearment” in Spiral Orb; and a recent feature in Wilma magazine. Phillips Bell also received a 2015-16 North Carolina Arts Council Artist Fellowship for poetry—more than 260 artists from across the state submitted applications for the 18 fellowship awards.

UNCW’s creative writing department is also pleased to announce Phillip Bell’s recent manuscript, Ornament, has been selected by Geoffrey Brock as the winner of the 2016 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry. Poems from the collection appear or are forthcoming in the Southern Review, 32 Poems, Michigan Quarterly Review, the Hopkins Review, Birmingham Poetry Review and others. Ornament will be published by the University of North Texas Press in spring 2017!

CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

Congratulations to the recipients of the departmental awards

Lavonne Adams Award: Laura Price Steele
Given to a graduating M.F.A. student who, throughout his or her enrollment in the program, has shown an all-around dedication to the MFA program, his or her work, and the creative writing community, and has contributed to the academic and social health of the program, as well as the writing community at large.

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

Philip Furia Award: Jonathan Russell Clark
Given to a graduating M.F.A. student who has shown superior knowledge of the historic development of his or her literary genre.

Margaret Shannon Morton Fellowship: Will Dean
Given to an M.F.A. student at the end of the first year for outstanding creative achievement.
Congratulations to the following M.F.A. students whose works have been submitted in the AWP Intro Journals Competition:

**Austin Allen, “Morning,” poetry**

**Cathe Shubert, “Portrait of a Beach Babe,” poetry**

**Elizabeth Davis, “Downed Tree,” poetry**

**Morgan Davis, “You & Me & John & Yokoh,” fiction**

**Katie O’Reilly, “The Interview,” creative nonfiction**

The M.F.A. program was well-represented in the 2016 NC State Poetry Contest, judged by former Writers Week keynote Yusuf Komunyakaa:

Honorables Mention: **Christina Clark**, “First Date With Wolf”

**Finalists:**

**Eli Sahm, “after the wine bar with my hand”**

**Isabelle Shepherd, “Doe Season in Braxton County, West Virginia”**

**Emily Paige Wilson, “The Old Country”**

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**Jason Bradford’s** poem, “Alter/native,” is in the current issue (28) of jubilat. His piece “Just Another Poem About Breathing” is forthcoming in the *North American Review*. His poem, “Dear Portrait of What I Think is an Owl,” was a finalist in Cutthroat’s Joy Harjo poetry contest.

His poem, “Approaching Limits at Carolina Beach,” first published in issue three of Rogue Agent, was nominated to Best of the Net. “The Day I Was Healed” was accepted for publication at Iron Horse Literary Review. His poem “LOL, not LOL” will appear in Gulf Coast. His ekphrastic poem, “After a Photo of a Dead Horse by Vivian Maier” appears in Dialouge: Vol. III, Issue II—the issue that Dialouge dedicated in memory of Jason. And the Kenyon Review posted a beautiful tribute to Jason and his poetry; read it at kenyonreview.org/2016/01/in-memoriam-jason-bradford.

**Christina Clark’s** poem “The Train You Never Took to Harlingen, Texas” was accepted for publication in CALYX.

**Jonathan Russell Clark** has been named contributing editor at the Northwest Review of Books for which he reviewed Umberto Eco’s Numero Zero. He has a piece on new and selected poems from B.H. Fairchild at The Millions: “The Failed Mechanics of Masculinity: On B.H. Fairchild’s ‘The Blue Buick.’” He has an essay on Literary Hub’s lithub.com/a-readers-manifesto-for-2016, and another essay on Read It Forward: readitforward.com/ bookmarks-as-tombstones, as well as an interview with O& S & 1s: www.0s-1s.com/the-art-of-commerce-xvi.

He reviewed poetry for LitHub with “Where is Wistawa Szymborska’s Teeming Crowd?” He has a review of fiction-guide writer Roy Peter Clark in the New Republic. And last but spectacularly not least, he has a review in the New York Times Sunday Book Review of Danish author Helle Helle’s latest novel. Read it at nytimes.com/2016/01/24/books/review/this-should-be-written-in-the-present-tense-by-helle-helle.html.

**Elizabeth Davis** has two poems, “A mother receives one of her son’s outgrown clothes from DSS” and “On Foster Care,” accepted for publication with Crosswinds Poetry Journal; they are being considered for the Crosswinds annual poetry contest.

**Pernille Larsen** interviewed Coldplay frontrunner Chris Martin in Los Angeles for the Danish newspaper Berlingske (for which she works as a freelance writer/music journalist). In addition, Larsen has received a Sterling Watson M.F.A. Fellowship to attend the 12th annual Eckerd College Writers’ Conference: Writers in Paradise (with former visiting writer Aimee Nezhukumatathil!) in St. Petersburg, FL. She is attending a residency at Vermont Studio Center in July. Her poem, “St. Kaylee’s First Time,” was a finalist for the Slippery Elm Prize.

**Martha Lundin’s** essay “Pulse” debuted in the Winter 2015/16 online issue of Ninth Letter.


**Michael Ramos** has an essay, “A long but incomplete list of some of the things you can’t (don’t) talk about,” appearing in the fall 2016 issue of Fourth Genre.

**Beth Roddy** was accepted to the Tin House Summer Workshop: tinhouse.com/writers-workshop/program.

**Cathe Shubert** is the winner of the 2016 Phyllis Smart Young Poetry Prize. Her work will be published in the next issue of The Madison Review, and she receives a $1,000 cash prize.

**Jacqueline Thomas’s** poem “For Edna” appears in Wildness, and “Without Shadows” appears in concis.

**Stephanie Trott** received a place at the Cuttyhunk Island Writers’ Residency and attended in June. She has also been admitted to the Disquiet International Literacy Program in Lisbon, Portugal and was a semi-finalist for their fellowship for writers of Luso-American descent.

**Emily Paige Wilson** had poems “Intonation” and “for a Prague Orloj: Prague Astronomical Clock” appear in PANK, The Boiler Journal and Horse Less Review: “Lineage” is up in the latest The Adroit Journal. Her poem “My Great-Grandmother’s Ghost is a Kleptomaniac” appears in the spring 2016 edition of The Raleigh Review, “Registry Room” appears in the Fall/Winter 2015 edition of Hayden’s Ferry Review, “I forget the Czech for ‘stamp’ in the post office and start making up words instead” and “Women in Széchenyi Bathhouse” appear on Vinyl Poetry, “Declension” was accepted for publication by Redivider, “Baking Lessons,” “Burning the Witches,” and “Reasons to Travel to Another Country” were accepted for publication in Sunday Lit, Horse Less Review published, “The Ghost and the Thief Share Breakfast,” “The Ghost and the Thief Share Lunch,” and “The Ghost and the Thief Share Dinner.” Finally, she was a semi-finalist for the Mid-American Review’s James Wright poetry award.

Renee Sloan Spencer won the North Carolina Bar Association’s ‘Media and the Law’ Award for her work covering legal issues as a staff writer for The State Port Pilot newspaper in Southport. She received the award at the North Carolina Press Association’s annual awards ceremony in February. Spencer also won six awards in the North Carolina Press Association’s 2015 News, Editorial and Photojournalism Contest, including first place for video production, second and third places for arts and entertainment reporting, second place for sports feature writing, second place for beat feature reporting, and third place for feature writing.

Xhenet Aliu sold her second novel, Brass, to Random House. Set in the mid-90s in Waterbury, CT, the novel explores the affair between a young American girl and a recent Albanian immigrant. Referencing the collapse of Albania at the time, the second narrative takes place 17 years later and focuses on the daughter who’s born of the relationship.

Peter Biello interviewed New Hampshire Poet Laureate Alice Fogel and Sidney Hall Jr. about their new anthology of New Hampshire poets. Peter is the host of All Things Considered at New Hampshire Public Radio. He has served as a producer/announcer/host of Weekend Edition Saturday at Vermont Public Radio and as a reporter/host of Morning Edition at WHQR in Wilmington, NC.

Eric Cipriani has a piece of short fiction, “And The Lives Carried On Screaming,” at Booth Journal. Read it at booth.butter.edu/2016/02/05/and-the-lives-carried-on-screaming.

Kate Cumiskey announces that her first novel, Ana, has been accepted for publication in 2016 by Silent e Publishing, a small house in Jacksonville, FL. Kate is also working to finish Surfers’ Rules: the Mike Martin Story (also preliminarily accepted by Silent e), with Mike Martin, creator of the Association of Surfing Professionals and head judge on the world tour for 30 years.

Samantha Deal was a finalist in nonfiction for her piece “Heroic Messenger / The Weight Between Your Shoulders” Tupelo Quarterly Tough Prize Open Prize contest.

Hannah Dela Cruz Abrams received a Pushcart Prize nomination for her piece, “Between Dog and Wolf: the Time Between (Essay as Ideolocator).” She also has three new poems up at Toad the Journal: toadthejournal.com/issue-53/hannah-abrams.

Alexa Doran has a poem “Save the Aphrodisiac (a version in which you fight back)” which appeared in Fall 2015 issue of CALYX.

Dina Greenberg shares with us the good news that her short story “Breach,” a stand-alone section of her thesis, the novel Normina’s Chance, was accepted for publication by the online literary journal Gemini Magazine and will appear in their next issue. She has also been invited—along with 14 other area female writers, many from our own creative writing department faculty!—to respond to a piece of artwork in the upcoming exhibition at the Cameron Art Museum entitled “She Tells a Story;” she is responding to Elisabeth Chant’s “Guinevere” and “Women on the Path” with a flash-fiction piece entitled “Guinevere Tries A New Kind of In-vitro.”

Christine Hennessey is the fellowship recipient of a two-week residency at Vermont Studio Center in July.

Lucy Huber has an essay about wedding dress shopping in BUST Magazine titled, “I Said ‘I Guess, Whatever’ to the Dress.”

Laura Hunsberger visited the expecting mother-giraffe at the Greenville Zoo. To listen to the story, or to see the (squeee!) giraffe cam, visit: southcarolinapublicradio.org/post/making-additions-modern-day-ark#stream/0.

Drew Krepp’s essay “Lost in Sight of Land” appears in the current issue of Story Quarterly, and was awarded second runner-up for their nonfiction prize.

Veronica Lupinacci has two pieces of art-response writing in The Ekphrastic Review: “Clay Walls” and “Portrait of a Little Girl, Painted by Elizabeth Chant.”

Josh MacIvor-Andersen shares with us the incredible news that he has “signed a contract with the wonderful independent literary press Outpost19 for two books, the first my own story of trees and transcendence, and the second an anthology of arboreal nonfiction.”

Kathryn Miller has an essay on The Rumpus, “Without Boundaries or Beginnings or Ends.”


Kyle Mustain has an essay about school shootings, “The Opposite of Suicide,” the publication of which resulted in termination of his employment as a substitute teacher, and went ‘micro-viral,’ as it was passed around via social networking among people who grew up in or are currently living in central Illinois. Literary journal The Writing Disorder was kind enough to ask him to write a follow-up to the essay for the one-year anniversary, “The Opposite of Suicide, II.”

Jason Newport received a second nomination for a 2017 Pushcart Prize for his short story “On Letting Go” in the latest issue of Potomac Review. (Jason’s previously announced satirical short fiction “Protect and Serve,” published in Vine Leaves, was also nominated.)
Adam Petry announces the release of his website, westernbiology.com. He is working on a piece about folk musician Willie Watson. Adam works as a wildlife biologist and lives in Colorado.

Rachel Richardson was the finalist in fiction for her piece “We the Dogs” in the Tupelo Quarterly TQ9 Prose Open Prize contest.

Anna Sutton received three nominations for a Pushcart Prize: one for the poem “A Family of Mice” that appeared in The American Literary Review, one for the poem “Two Whooping Cranes Shot Dead in Hopkins County” that appeared in the Southeast Review last spring, and one for her poem “Friday Mass” from The Boiler. Her poem “Good Health” appears in Tupelo Quarterly.

Gabriella Tallmadge received a Pushcart Prize nomination for her poem “The Animal Afterword” from Passages North.

Matt Tullis shares with us this publication news: “In late December, my essay ‘The Ghosts I Run With,’” was published by SB Nation, and was included in Best of SB Nation Longform 2015.” His story, “The Gyms of Holmes County,” was published by SB Nation.

Jessica Thummel her short story, “Bridge to Hadley,” was published by Amazon’s literary journal Day One.

Eric Tran his poem, “The First X-Ray” (Dialogist Vol. II, issue III), has been selected by guest judge Bruce Bond for inclusion in the 2015 Best of the Net Anthology. In addition, Eric’s poem, “My Mother Asks How I Was Gay Before Sleeping with a Man” (VoicemailPoems) was also chosen for inclusion in the anthology.

Carson Vaughan embarked on an epic cross-country journey in a restored travel trailer (read about “Elsie” at localcolorxc.com and at ApartmentTherapy). He has been working from the road, which means finding and pitching stories everywhere he lands. After the first week, Carson connected with a travel editor at USA TODAY, with whom he’s now hashing out details for an entire series of travel articles! Read his first—about an evening with “the notoriously bawdy novelist/poet Jim Harrison in small-town Patagonia, AZ.” He adds to it a short piece on Sedona’s metaphysical side in Travel Age West Magazine, and an article, “A Line in the Sand,” in American Cowboy. And, recently featured in HGTV’s “Tiny House Hunters” for his epic cross-country journey in a travel trailer—he has a piece in The New Yorker titled “My Cousin, the Cowboy Poet.”

Jon Wallin made his Wilmington theater debut as narrator in “The Rocky Horror Show” in November with City Stage Co. and rejoined them for “Big Fish - The Musical” in Nov./Dec. He performed with Cape Fear Theatre Arts, LLC dba City Stage in their production of “Memphis” at Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts Dec. 30—Jan. 17.

Ethan Warren is the writer/director/producer of the 2016 movie “West of Her.” An enigmatic story about two strangers who travel across America laying the mysterious Tromsø tiles, West of Her is a film for anyone who’s ever longed for adventure, romance and a life of meaning. Read more at westofherfilm.com.

Sam White, former professional and creative writing student of Philip Gerard, has been working in the sport-fishing industry, freelancing and running his own communications company. He recently accepted the position of senior editor at Marlin Magazine.

Issues of Wilmington’s Salt Magazine feature a wealth of creative writing folks. Regular columnists include faculty members Clyde Edgerton and Virginia Holman, and M.F.A. alums Jason Frye ’05 and Dana Sachs ’00, among others.
Anna Lena Phillips Bell published “The Royal Typewriter Company Delivers by Parachute, 1927,” in *Southern Poetry Review*, “three charms for ash trees,” “Emerald,” “Overwinter,” and “Water and Ore” in *Colorado Review*, and “Endearment” in *Spiral Orb*, and she was also featured recently in *Wilma* magazine. Her manuscript *Ornament* was selected by Geoffrey Brock as the winner of the 2016 Vassar Miller Prize in poetry. Poems from the collection appear or are forthcoming in the *Southern Review*, *32 Poems*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the *Hopkins Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review* and other places. *Ornament* will be published by the University of North Texas Press in spring 2017.

Wendy Brenner’s essay “A Year of Yoga” appears in the January issue of *Our State* magazine: ourstate.com/wilmington-yoga-center, as well as her essay about the Washington Duke Inn. Her appreciation of Clyde Edgerton’s induction into the NC Literary Hall of Fame, as well as his taxidermied chicken, appears in the North Carolina Writers’ Network newsletter. Her poem “The Bed” is featured, among others, in Cameron Art Museum’s “She Tells A Story” exhibit, which runs through September.


Clyde Edgerton has been inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame, joining the ranks of Maya Angelou and Thomas Wolfe. In addition, a stage adaptation of his novel *Walking Across Egypt* was presented by TheatreNOW as a dinner show in Wilmington, NC April 1-30, 2016.

Phil Furia’s latest book, *The American Songbook*, has been recently released and received a warm review in the March 18 issue of *Times Literary Supplement*. He also hosts the daily segment “The Great American Songbook” on WHQR 1:30- 2 p.m., and the *Morning Edition* on Fridays at 6 a.m.

Philip Gerard announces the release of his latest novel, *The Dark of the Island* (a sequel of sorts to *Hatteras Light*), and is a regular commentator on WHQR—listen to his broadcast segments every other Thursday at 7:35 a.m., 8:50 a.m., or 5:45 p.m. or online in the WHQR Thursday Commentaries at www.whqr.org/people/philip-gerard. He announced the release of his CD *American Anthem*: 15 original songs arranged with the collaboration of Jeff Reid and performed with the backing of a cadre of very talented musicians: Jim Ellis, Dargan Frierson, Catesby Jones, Patrick Leahman, Rick Olsen, Jeff Reid and Deb Ross.

David Gessner’s *All the Wild That Remains* was chosen by *Kirkus Reviews* as one of their best nonfiction books of 2015 and as one of their best books about significant figures in the arts and humanities. Other recent honors include: an Amazon Best Nonfiction Book of 2015, *Christian Science Monitor’s* Top Ten Nonfiction Book of the Year, Southwest Book of the Year, and a Smithsonian Best History Book of the year. In addition, he hosted “Call of the Wild,” a National Geographic Explorer TV episode.