This summer marks the second annual UNCW Summer Writers Conference. Scheduled for the weekend of June 20 – 22, the conference offers participants the opportunity to experience workshops, readings, round-table discussions, and optional portfolio evaluations. In addition to core faculty members such as Lavonne Adams, Anna Lena Phillips, and Michael White, the conference features B.F.A. and M.F.A. alum Jason Mott as its keynote speaker. His novel The Returned served as inspiration for ABC’s successful new series Resurrection.

The conference provides workshops in traditional genres such as poetry, nonfiction, and fiction, but also allows participants to engage in more specialized conversations about the literary world. Adams’s round-table discussion focuses on documentary poetry; Phillips addresses working with an editor. David Macinnis Gill, young adult novelist and UNCW associate professor of English education, will lead a discussion about writing for the young adult demographic.

In addition to M.F.A. quality workshops and discussions, participants are drawn to the summer writing conference to experience the cultural tourism and beach environment of Wilmington, according to White, who serves as the current department chair of the creative writing program. White describes average conference participants as people who “write on the side in their daily lives and who are looking for an avenue to allow their writing to take center stage.” The participants’ eagerness to share their stories is what White remembers most about last summer's conference and what he’s looking forward to this summer as well.

Those interested in registering can do so at http://www.uncw.edu/writersconference. Spots are limited.
A. Van Jordan is the author of four poetry collections: *Rise* (Tia Chucha Press, 2001), *M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), *Quantum Lyrics* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), and *The Cineaste* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2013). Jordan has been the recipient of a Whiting Writers’ Award, an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, a Pushcart Prize, a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and a United States Artists Williams Fellowship. Jordan spoke with first-year poet Pernille Smith Larsen about journalistic skills, the connection between film and poetry, and how the two come together in his latest collection.

**PSL:** You have mentioned in other interviews that you became interested in poetry by going to open mic nights and slam poetry events. Do you think your “introduction” to poetry via open mic and slam poetry affected your approach to both writing and reading/performing poetry?

**AVJ:** I think the ability to be around writers who were both serious about their craft and serious about how they presented it did make an impression on me. I don’t really have a performance sensibility, and I don’t really have the skill, either, but I did get a better sense of how audiences and readers experience a poem through their example, for which I’m grateful.

**PSL:** You worked as a journalist for several years, and some of your work can be considered documentary poetry. What journalistic skills/techniques were you able to rely on when doing research and conducting interviews for your poetry?

**AVJ:** I learned to ask the tough question. You want to ask your subject the question that she or he may not want to answer, but you ask it anyway because you know that’s where the story dwells.
PSL: In our workshop, you talked about approaching revision in cycles. Could you elaborate on that?

AVJ: This is another skill I picked up from journalism. When you copy edit, you have to go through it in cycles looking for specific items each time. So, one cycle will be punctuation and grammar; in another cycle, you might be on the search for consistency; in another cycle, you may be looking to improve your figurative language, etc. You can’t do everything in one sitting. You have to learn to savor that process. Revision is my favorite part of the writing process because you watch the poem come to life.

PSL: In your latest collection, The Cineaste, you write about a number of films and filmmakers. You have also included poems with screen directions in your collections. Do you consider film and poetry to be similar art forms? If yes, in which ways are they similar to you?

AVJ: I think of both film and poetry as visual art forms. Period. I think they have the ability to move both narratively and lyrically with equal agility. When I see a film, I think of how the images and lighting and sound all work toward creating a tone and an emotion. I think we do the same thing on the page.

PSL: In The Cineaste, you include notes on all the films you write about in the poems. These notes are included in the back of the collection and often explain your personal connection with the film. Why did you choose to include the notes?

AVJ: I included them because these films are simply my choices, nothing more. It’s not a survey of film. I realize that my connection to the films is the only unifying factor of the collection. People always ask me things after I read from the manuscript like: Did you include Hitchcock? or Have you seen any films by Fassbender? I knew when I did the book that I’d simply make it clear that this was for me.

PSL: Your collection M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A shines a spotlight on the life of MacNolia Cox, the first African American to reach the final round of the national spelling bee competition. In M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A, most of the poems are written from the point of view of Cox and her husband John Montiere; yet it also contains poems written from the point of view of historical figures such as Asa Philip Randolph, Josephine Baker, and Richard Pryor, none of whom ever met MacNolia Cox. Why did you choose to include poems from these characters’ points of view?

AVJ: When I first conceived of the project, I was writing about the Great Migration, particularly for African Americans during and directly after the Depression. When I came across the story of MacNolia Cox in a column titled “This Place, This Time” in the Akron Beacon Journal newspaper, I wanted to integrate her into this narrative. Well, once I started delving into her story more deeply, I realized her story was an emotional marker of hope both for that era and for that population. The other figures became a way to mark time in the book. I wanted MacNolia Cox to be on the temporal spectrum of black history with all of these other figures. I also thought that some of these figures could represent an era: Asa Phillip Randolph is the ’30s, Richard Pryor is the ’70s, etc. We all know celebrities. We can’t escape them, so I used figures that I knew she would know about at that time—people whom she either would look up to or people who were influencing popular culture. Now, hopefully, MacNolia Cox will do the same for others.
LG: Before you joined the Iowa Nonfiction Writing Program, you were trained as an undergraduate in journalism. Did you ever dream of becoming Christiane Amanpour? What was your journalistic dream for yourself?

HE: I was a terrible news reporter! Seriously, I hated invading other people’s personal lives and conflict makes me nauseous. I was much more comfortable writing features. In college I did a series of magazine internships and felt certain I’d become a magazine editor. I always thought I’d land in New York and eventually be a more bohemian and friendlier version of Anna Wintour.

LG: What are three adjectives that describe yourself?

HE: At a deadline – focused, motivated, exhausted. At a work lull, when you have few assignments – balanced, purposeless, well-rested. When you couldn’t be busier – organized, efficient, absentminded. When your deadline is months away – falsely confident.
LG: Do you write every day?

HE: No. That would make me crazy. I can’t live inside my head that much, and I’m not nearly that disciplined or that driven. Deadlines motivate me. Most of my books are binge-written, meaning that I’ll putter around doing research and interviews and everything else except writing for a week or two, and then I’ll go away for a weekend and write non-stop for three days. In those three days, I’ll produce more pages than I could in two weeks of regular work hours. I need that kind of immersion and removal from my daily responsibilities. It’s the reason why writing colonies foster such fine work. Last September, I did a 10-day residency at Hedgebrook writing retreat for women on Whidbey Island, Washington, and I produced some of the best pages there that I’ve written in years.

LG: You said that anxiety is a key part of your process?

HE: It’s the journalism training. I could criticize myself and say that I have the worst time-management practices that I’ve ever seen in a writer, which may, in fact, be true. I could also say that I was trained to write on-deadline and do my desk work under-the-gun.

LG: How did your agent market *Motherless Daughters*, your bestseller about women who’d lost their mothers at young ages?

HE: My agent was very smart; she sent the book almost exclusively to editors who had lost mothers when they were young. It was the most brilliant agenting move I’ve ever seen. And she’d been in the industry for long enough and was very personable and well-liked, so she knew personal details about many of the editors that she interacted with. Those editors read the proposal and realized, “Yes, there should be a book. Why has nobody written about it before?”

LG: Have you been noticing any strange patterns lately that might work themselves into your writing? What has been newly entering your consciousness?

HE: My daughters don’t want to be written about any more, and my husband has been such a good sport for so many years that he deserves a break. So I’ve been casting my net much further back into my past and writing pieces set in adolescence and my twenties. College years, when I felt most adrift. My first job, in Knoxville, Tennessee. Graduate school. It’s been educational, to put it mildly, to apply my present-day consciousness to some of the decisions I made back then. If I ever pull together a collection of pieces from that time, I should call the collection *It Seemed Like a Good Idea*. ☞
The creative writing department extends its sincerest congratulations to Hannah Dela Cruz Abrams, M.F.A. alum and lecturer in the English department, for her 2013 Whiting Writers’ Award. The award is one of the richest prizes in American literature and is given annually to writers of exceptional talent and promise early in their careers. Abrams received the award for her novella *The Man Who Danced with Dolls*. The novella is the portrait of a family’s legacy—the language of their memories, the secrets of their buried past, and the subway busker whose wordless dancing punctuates their lives. *The Man Who Danced with Dolls* was described by the Whiting Writers’ Award selection committee as “an enchanting, haunting, uncanny tale, bringing to mind the strange and unforgettable stories of Mavis Gallant. The voice is singular, the story a lyric meditation on loss that feels familiar yet wholly original in the telling, each sentence a feat of musicality, each moment in the narrative building a world that lodges in the reader’s memory.”

Congratulations to Hannah, and we wish her many more successes in her career!
A Tribute to Sarah Messer

Third-year poet Katie Jones pays homage to associate professor Sarah Messer’s time with and impact on UNCW’s Department of Creative Writing as Sarah prepares to leave for White Lotus Farms.

I’d prefer to never have to imagine the Department of Creative Writing without Sarah Messer, but we will be forced to do just that when she moves to White Lotus Farms in Ann Arbor, Michigan, this May. Sarah will be deeply missed, but she has left an indelible mark on this department and will continue to influence her students and colleagues from afar.
Because of Sarah, our department is more historically-minded, more surreal, and more thoughtful than it would be had she not been here to inform its culture. We collect ephemera. We cross and combine genres. We know about Ikkyu. We have read *Bluets*. Some of us have had our poetry critiqued by one of her dogs. Thanks to her encouragement, we enter contests and send out our work, often to publications she has recommended with her students’ writing in mind.

According to Michael White, Sarah was the last of 15 creative nonfiction candidates UNCW interviewed at the M.L.A. conference 15 years ago, when Creative Writing was still housed in the English department. Sarah was a 1999 recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry and was a Diane Middlebrook Poetry Fellow at the University of Wisconsin in Madison from 1997 to 1998, so her experience on the academic job market came at an exciting time for her writing career. White explains, “from the moment she walked into the room [for her interview] everyone else was in trouble.” Sarah describes her first years as a faculty member as characterized by the occasionally uncomfortable process in which the Creative Writing department carved out a separate identity from English, moving into its own space in Morton Hall and eventually to its own building. She also describes feeling as if she had known her fellow faculty for her whole life, and despite never having spent much time in the South, her transition into a career at UNCW felt natural.

Sarah is known for her comfort with working in multiple genres, as evidenced not only by her own work but by her popular course on the lyric essay and other non-traditional forms. At the time Sarah joined UNCW’s faculty, she was under contract to write _Red House: Being a Mostly Accurate Account of New England’s Oldest Continuously Lived-in House_ (Penguin Books, 2005), a memoir of her family home.

Not long after arriving at UNCW, Sarah published her first collection of poetry, _Bandit Letters_ (New Issues, 2001). Her next poetry collection, _Dress Made of Mice_, is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press in October 2015. A book of Ikkyu Sojun translations, on which she collaborated with Kidder Smith, will be published by University of Michigan Press. Sarah is also the director of One Pause Poetry, a Michigan-based arts non-profit which puts on a reading series and hosts an MP3 archive of poetry.

Among Sarah’s most valuable contributions to the department is her ability to instill in students the belief that their work is real and deserving of an audience outside the B.F.A. and M.F.A. programs. Sarah talks about thesis projects as books, and practices what she preaches by including in her Book-Length Poetry course practical information about the publication process, contest entries, and myriad ways to approach writing professionally.

First-year poet Emily Wilson says, “Sarah was the first person to call my project a ‘collection.’ The power and confidence she bestowed upon me with just that word can’t be measured.”

The first M.F.A. thesis Sarah advised was Brad Land’s; his thesis became the acclaimed memoir _Goat_ (Random House, 2004). This auspicious start to Sarah’s thesis advising was no fluke.

Philip Gerard summarizes Sarah’s work with many thesis projects over the years by saying, “It is no exaggeration to say that because of her insights, encouragement, and dedicated hard work on their behalf, many [students] achieved a level of creative work they could never have accomplished without her. She has been a devoted and hard-working mentor who challenges her students to become their best writing selves.”

As I prepare to graduate and make a plan for how to handle my own writing life outside of the M.F.A. environment, I know I will continue to learn and grow thanks to Sarah’s incredibly valuable guidance on my thesis. She has shaped my relationship to poetry—and my thoughts about how poetry integrates into the rest of my life—in truly profound ways, and I will always be grateful to her.

It is interesting to consider the fact that Sarah is also facing an adjustment with a life removed from the M.F.A. community after years spent immersed in the patterns of the academic calendar.

While May will be a major departure for her, Sarah grew up on a small family farm and has already spent extended periods of time at White Lotus. In her more permanent role at White Lotus, she will be living near and working in the White Lotus Farms creamery, where she will work primarily as a cheese maker with additional tasks helping with the farm cart, caring for baby goats, and cooking and canning.
“Sarah Messer’s poetry strikes me as coming from a wild person wearing sixguns (holding blanks) – a wild person with a gift of language and imagination. And then you meet calm Sarah with that ever present grin waiting to get out. So I think of her – in her skin – as all over the place, and where could a writer more profitably be? If only we could replace her after she leaves UNCW. We can’t, but we will always have her writing, thank goodness, and with Sarah: you see, hear, and feel that she’s there in the writing.”

— Clyde Edgerton

The work is extremely physical and detail-oriented. “I’m not thinking in the way that I think about writing and teaching,” Sarah says of her responsibilities at White Lotus Farms. “It’s like being in a little cave. What I’m looking forward to is the simplicity of it. Whenever I’m there I get up really early and I have tons of energy.” When asked how she plans to handle her writing schedule, she explains that she will simply get up even earlier than the farm schedule requires in order to make time to write.

White Lotus is a Buddhist farm, and she will integrate the concepts of right livelihood and mindfulness not only into her farm work but into her writing. Realistically, the demands of each season on the farm will also influence the amount of time she is able to write. Additionally, her work with One Pause, which is deeply tethered to White Lotus Farms, will continue.

In conversation with Sarah, she returns over and over to gratitude: for her experiences with students and colleagues, for the years she ran Writers Week (which prepared her for her work with One Pause), for her work with visiting writers, for the experience of working in a department made up entirely of writers.

In fact, she credits her time at UNCW as the reason she is able to transition to a new life at White Lotus Farms. “Everybody [in the department] is so supportive—it’s such a unique situation here, and I feel like I’ve been really fostered. In a weird way, this place where I’m going is possible because I was at UNCW, because I had the grounding of being here for 14 years.”

At least as much as Sarah will miss the home she has found here, she will be missed in return. This community will always consider her a member.

And as we wait anxiously for Sarah’s next book to be published, we can always comfort ourselves with this important silver lining: a visit to Sarah in Ann Arbor involves a very good chance of meeting some seriously adorable goats.
Rebecca Petruck obtained her M.F.A. from UNCW in 2007. Since then, she has published her debut novel *Steering Toward Normal*—formerly her thesis—with Abrams/Amulet. The young adult novel was selected as a top ten children’s debut by the American Booksellers Association for their New Voices promotion. Petruck spoke with first-year poet Emily Wilson about cattle, childhood bedrooms, and the role of eating bugs in her upcoming project.

EW: To promote *Steering Toward Normal*, you visited many states including North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Ohio. Could you begin by describing your experience on tour?

RP: To research *Steering Toward Normal*, I attended steer competitions at the Minnesota State Fair, the North Carolina State Fair, and the Pennsylvania Farm Show. I interviewed dozens of kids and several of their parents, as well as 4-H staff. Nothing replaces in-person research. It’s easy to think Google searches and a few emails are sufficient to “get the facts,” but the *life* of the story comes from observing the kind of details no one would think to mention. Some of the best scenes of my book were inspired by conversational asides that the person wouldn’t have included in an email, like the dog attack and part of what happens on the “day of tears.”

EW: I’ve always imagined a book tour is the literary equivalent of a musician traveling on the road. Is there any truth to this romanticism? Did you have any Mick Jagger moments yourself?

RP: *STN* was chosen by the American Booksellers Association as an Indies Introduce New Voices selection, so Abrams sent me to Seattle for the conference. The “meet and greet” reception, which I envisioned as a cocktail party, was actually a massive author signing. The room was lined with about 30 authors and stacks of our books. Then 500 booksellers swarmed in, lining up for signed...
advanced reader copies. Many of the attendees had already read advance copies of *STN* and had so many kind things to say about the book. It was amazing to meet readers and surreal to be there with authors like Patrick Ness, E. Lockhart, Andrew Smith, and John Corey Whaley. I totally fan-girled!

(This was pretty cool, too: http://www.vanityfair.com/vf-hollywood/teen-movie-comeback-ya-books?mbid=social_twitter.)

While the Seattle trip was lovely, it isn’t the norm. I, like most of my friends with debuts, will not go on a publisher-sponsored tour. Most in-person book promotions must be planned by ourselves, with support from our publishers’ publicity departments. I’m organizing area readings and school visits and will attend the American Library Association summer conference on my own dime. I’ve also teamed up with two Carolina middle grade authors to pitch panels for professional conferences and other book events. More and more, book promotion falls to the author rather than the publisher. Fortunately, there are a lot of great resources for advice, not to mention the support of other writers.

**EW:** Continuing to speak about place, you’ve lived in many regions of the country: the Midwest, New England, the South. As a Southern writer, I’m always interested in place’s role in the creative process. Were any specific places important in the writing of *Steering Toward Normal*?

**RP:** To me, how one is connected—or not—to one’s place says a great deal about character. Because I moved around a lot as a kid and teen, one of the ways I coped with the transitions was to make discoveries of place as soon as possible—a refuge for myself, an unexpected place to share, and a local “hotspot.” (One in middle school was a section of giant concrete pipes inexplicably positioned in the middle of the woods.)

My mom also gave me and my sister the amazing gift of decorating our rooms every time we moved. No matter where we were or how long we were going to be there, one of the first orders of business in my mom’s eyes was to make us a place we loved. One year I had a sky blue room with unicorns painted around the top with a stencil Mom made from one of my drawings. Another year I had black and white checked wallpaper with fuzzy red accents. My Victorian period was a Laura Ashley explosion. Mom taught me the comfort that comes with settling in and the value of taking the time to do it.

So when Wayne arrives, Diggy’s reactions to the invasion of his place speak a lot to how he is feeling about Wayne in general. The progression of their relationship is marked at various stages by moments like Diggy finally clearing the room where he works on his model rockets so Wayne can move from sleeping on the sofa to a bed of his own.

**EW:** We meet Diggy, *STN*’s protagonist, during his 8th grade year. Were you always interested in writing young adult literature? What can older readers learn from younger characters?

**RP:** Children’s literature has experienced something like the California Gold Rush during the last 20 years. While the adult market has remained flat, children’s sales grow every year, and we’ve seen traditionally “adult” writers like David Baldacci, John Grisham, James Patterson, and numerous others jump into the fray, some more successfully than others. Additionally, half of the children’s books sold are being read by adults.

I think part of the reason for this, and part of why I’ve been drawn to children’s literature, is that the category is all about story. Middle grade and teen readers have no compunction putting a book down if it doesn’t grab their interest pretty quickly. Also, because there is so much growth in the category, authors have been given room to take greater risks, writing seemingly bizarre or edgy or thoroughly silly stories that might not have left their desk drawers in other markets. (See Andrew Smith’s *Grasshopper Jungle* for an example.)

For me personally, I’m drawn to middle grade because those kids are on the cusp. They are making that transition from the fairly insular world of their families to realizing they are part of the larger world, too, and deciding what kind of people they want to be in it. It’s tumultuous,
embarrassing, frightening, exhilarating, inspiring, embarrassing—uh, did I say that twice?

Middle grade years are also when decisions begin to have more impact with greater repercussions. Good role models are vital, and books have always been a source of positive role models for me.

**EW:** I couldn’t agree more that good books can serve as wonderful role models. In your novel’s first chapter, readers learn that Diggy is always momentarily anxious when the new steer of the spring arrives. This reads as a wonderful metaphor for adolescence: being both anticipatory and nervous for certain moments to occur, trying not to become attached to something or someone in a period of constant transition. In what other ways have you found that the process of raising cows speaks to growing up?

**RP:** Steers are only and ever beef cattle, so the thing about raising them is there is always an end date. Several of the competitors I interviewed talked very seriously about the importance of not getting attached, even though it was perfectly clear from the way they handled their steers that they were very attached. So why would they do this really hard thing that breaks their hearts?

In early drafts of *STN*, I saved the steers. I took them home and let them putter out in a field all day. It was a competitor who read an early draft and said that was nice and all, but it was kind of a Cinderella ending and would never happen. These kids actually did it for real—led their steers to the packer’s truck knowing that was it—and I didn’t even want to pretend in fiction. Approaching a situation like this year after year and learning how to cope with the heartbreak is what has prepared Diggy to cope with his current difficult situation. He doesn’t realize it, of course, and there are times when he wants to give up, but raising steers has taught him how to keep his heart open, despite the inevitable pain, and that ends up being the gift he shares with and that saves his family. I think that’s part of what growing up is: learning to keep our hearts open in an imperfect world.

**EW:** *STN*, or, at least, an earlier version, served as your M.F.A. thesis. Could you describe the transformation the manuscript underwent from your graduation to its acceptance at Abrams/Amulet?

**RP:** Prior to my defense in December 2006, I rewrote the entire manuscript in six weeks, deleting three other POVs, removing two characters entirely, and aging up another from a major to minor role. After graduating, I shoved it into a drawer feeling I never wanted to see those pages again! I wrote a new novel—a retelling of Beauty and the Beast—then years later a chance conversation with an author at a conference inspired me to read the story again.

Because the department doesn’t have a children’s writing track, I had tried to make it a “serious” kind of book (whatever that means). So one whole revision was to make *STN* more kid-oriented. This doesn’t in any way mean to “dumb it down.” I thought of it more as point and focus. What was my main point, and what scenes gave focus to it? I also attended numerous writing conferences for the professional critiques by agents and editors. Ultimately, I’d guess more
than half the manuscript that was my thesis was cut away, with new pages emphasizing Diggy’s internal journey (but still with lots of cool stuff happening).

By the time my editor marked up the manuscript, it really was pretty clean. But, he asked me one seemingly simple question about Diggy’s friends that sparked an entire B-story that had been missing and was sorely needed. In children’s writing, length is an issue (despite tomes like Twilight and Harry Potter), so when I mentioned I might be adding five to ten thousand words to the story, my editor nearly had a heart attack and said he’d maybe be okay with five. But when I submitted the revision plus sixteen thousand words, my editor didn’t flinch because STN really was improved with the addition of Crystal and Jason. They echo Diggy and Wayne’s journey and carry the theme beautifully.

(I hope this kind of answers your question? :) )

**EW:** It definitely does! Finally, can you offer any insights to readers about your next project?

**RP:** *STN* was picked up during our second round of submissions. In the interim, I wrote a project purposefully different. A lot of the feedback we received about *STN* was that it was “quiet” and “literary.” So I wrote a straight-up middle grade adventure I thought would be much easier to sell.

Later, when we pitched *Lightbringers Detective Agency* to my editor, he passed because it was so different from *STN*. Which makes sense, of course, but caught me off guard at the time. The novel I’m working on now will hopefully be a bridge book, with a nice blend of the depth of *STN* and the fun of *LDA*.

The latest work-in-progress is inspired by a *National Geographic* article about the nutritional value of eating insects. Since then, entomophagy has been spotlighted in other media outlets and become something of a niche foodie trend. The idea of insects as an everyday part of our regular foodstuffs fascinates me. I was well into work on the project before I realized I was again writing a novel with a major element centered on food production! *Steering Toward Normal* features beef cattle. The work-in-progress features a class presentation gone wrong when the main character’s mom brings in insects for snacks. The “problem,” of course, is that I’ll have to eat insects to ensure veracity in the new project. I hope my next book involves chocolate! 🍫

“First-time author Petruck’s account of country life is never dull as she depicts the strong work ethic of cattlemen and women, along with the universal conflicts between siblings.”

— Publishers Weekly

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**Lavonne Adams Award:** Ana Alvarez
To a graduating MFA 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:** Drew Krepp
To honor the outstanding leadership and pioneering work of Dr. Robert H. Byington in establishing the Creative Writing Program, to a second-year MFA 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 MFA program.

**Margaret Shannon Morton Fellowship:** Ryan Kaune
To an MFA student at the end of the first year, for outstanding creative achievement.
Bridget Apfeld’s “Baby Teeth” appeared in issue 7.4 of Prick of the Spindle.

Jason Bradford had two poems appear in Jellyfish Magazine and had a poem accepted by Four Chambers.

Jonathan Clark had an essay and a book review in The Millions.

Garrard Conley’s “The Boy Erased: A Story of ‘Ex-Gay’ Therapy” was published in The Bilerico.

Elizabeth Davis received an honorable mention in the Nazim Hikmet Poetry Festival. Her noted poems will be published in the festival book.


Katharine Johnsen was awarded a Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prize for her poems “Visitation,” “Subscription,” and “Anticipation.” Her poems “The Obituaries” and “Birthday” appeared in the March 2014 edition of the Tampa Review Online. Her poem “Consolation” was accepted by Painted Bride Quarterly. She also had poems accepted by Ninth Letter and Birmingham Poetry Review.

Drew Krepp’s debut novel, The Salt Marsh King, will be released in June 2014 by Bancroft Press.

Catherine Miller’s short story “Tomorrow I’ll Miss You” was accepted at Young Adult Review Network.

Jamie Lynn Miller had work appear in the April issue of Salt.

Katie Prince had her poem “There is a world in which the big dipper is the freckles on my arm” published in Smoking Glue Gun.

Rachel Richardson published her nonfiction piece “Love Story” in issue 5.2 of Gigantic Sequins.

Catherine Shubert presented on silence and gender at the 2014 Southeastern Women’s Studies Association conference.


Kirby Snell’s “Last Portraits,” a series of five sonnets, appeared online in Unsplendid. Her poems “Geography Lesson” and “Island Funeral” were accepted for Volume 19 No. 2 of Crab Orchard Review.

Carson Vaughan was featured in a contributor spotlight on Midwestern Gothic.


Joe Worthen’s piece “Johnny Rebel’s Splash Canyon” appeared in Straight Teeth Zine.
Hannah Dela Cruz Abrams (M.F.A. ’07) had a flash fiction piece appear in issue 8 of Sliver of Stone Magazine and an interview with Will Woolfitt about The Man Who Danced with Dolls in Speaking of Marvels.

Anne Barnhill (M.F.A. ’01) had work appear in the March and April issues of Salt.

Samantha Deal (M.F.A. ’13) was accepted to the Ph.D. program in English and Creative Writing at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

Regina DiPerna (M.F.A. ’13) was nominated for a Pushcart by The Cincinnati Review for her poem “Death, Naked.” Her collection A Map of Veins was chosen as a semi-finalist in Perugia Press’s poetry prize. She also had three poems appear in the new issue of The Boiler Journal.

Jason Frye’s (M.F.A. ’05) work appeared in the March and April issues of Salt.


Ben Hoffman (M.F.A. ’13) received a positive review for his chapbook Together, Apart in The Masters Review, written by Sadye Teiser (M.F.A. ’13).


John Mortara’s (M.F.A. ’13) video poem was published on Shabby Dollhouse.

Dana Sachs (M.F.A. ’00) had work appear in the March and April issues of Salt.

Renee Sloan (B.F.A. ’12) won three awards from the North Carolina Press Association. Sloan received the honors for her work with The Brunswick Beacon, a weekly newspaper in Shalotte, and The State Port Pilot, a weekly newspaper in Southport. She brought home first place in profile feature writing for her story “Oyler among first women to serve in U.S. Marine Corps” and second place for online breaking news. She also took home a second place award for arts and entertainment reporting. Sloan is a staff writer for The State Port Pilot.

Erin Sroka (M.F.A. ’10) won a MacDowell Colony Residency Fellowship.

Chrysa Staiano (B.F.A. ’07) has been granted a Fulbright Scholarship to teach English at a high school or university in Hungary from fall 2014 through spring 2015.

Barbara Sullivan (M.F.A. ’11) had work appear in the April issue of Salt.

Anna Sutton (M.F.A. ’13) had a poem appear on Sundog Lit, two poems in Pinch Journal, and one forthcoming in Superstition Review. Her poetry manuscript was a finalist for Crab Orchard Review’s Series in Poetry Open Competition, and she has accepted a position at John F. Blair Publisher.

Kate Sweeney’s (M.F.A. ’09) American Afterlife was released in March by University of Georgia Press.

Eric Tran (M.F.A. ’13) had a flash creative nonfiction piece appear in Monkey Bicycle.

Kate Tully (M.F.A. ’03) accepted a one year teaching appointment at Truro College in Cornwall, England.

Eric Vithalani (M.F.A. ’07) had a flash fiction piece appear in issue 8 of Sliver of Stone Magazine.

Wendy Brenner’s essay “About A Girl” (from Oxford American’s Book of Great Music Writing) was reprinted on the Oxford American’s website in December to coincide with the release of their annual music issue. Her essay “Paradise” appeared in Guernica’s Special Issue: The American South.

Clyde Edgerton’s work appeared in the January, February, March, and April issues of Salt.

Phil Furia hosts the daily segment “The Great American Songbook” on WHQR from 1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. and during the Morning Edition on Fridays at 6 a.m.

Philip Gerard’s series “The Civil War: Life in North Carolina” is being featured in installments in Our State and will continue to be released monthly through May 2015. The series can be read at www.ourstate.com/civil-war. He is a regular commentator on WHOR. His broadcasts run every other Thursday at 7:35 a.m., 8:50 a.m., and 5:45 p.m. and can be heard at www.whqr.org/people/philip-gerard.

David Gessner’s ultimate Frisbee essay, “Ultimate Glory,” was named one of the top 13 pieces of sports writing for 2013 by USA Today.

Virginia Holman took the cover photo of the January issue of Salt, in addition to publishing work in the January, February, March, and April issues.

Sarah Messer’s had two poems appear in eleven eleven and Burnside Review.

Anna Lena Phillips has poems forthcoming in 111O and Redux.

Robert Anthony Siegel wrote about the conundrum of employment for writers in the new issue of Ploughshares. He also published a piece in Tin House and an interview with the Chinese novelist Yan Lianke in Bookforum.

Michael White’s poem “Bioluminescence” appeared in the January issue of Salt.