

VOL. 8
WINTER 2019

WINTERTIDE

MFA in Writing Newsletter



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN



WINTERTIDE

VOL. 8

WINTER 2019

MFA in Writing Program Newsletter
University of Saskatchewan


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We acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respects to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

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TIDINGS FROM MFA IN WRITING DIRECTOR

DR. JEANETTE LYNES

Warm greetings from the polar vortex!

The MFA in Writing annual newsletter is back, newly branded as WinterTide. I'm very grateful to this year's editorial team: MFA students Tonia Laird, Hope Houston, Kate O'Gorman, and English student intern Delane Just.

Established in 2011, the MFA in Writing now has 36 graduates. Congratulations to the class of 2018: Dylan Rea, Julianna MacLean, Simon Boehm, Vijay Kachru, Geoff Pevlin, Daniel Kim, and Daniel Yetman. I'm so proud of our graduates; you'll read about their activities and accomplishments in this newsletter along with the activities and accomplishments of our current students.

In 2018, we accepted our largest cohort of students thus far: ten students from across Canada and the USA. We continue to be blessed with amazing mentors in the MFA program, several of whom have Saskatchewan Book Award nominations in this year's competition.



University of Saskatchewan MFA in Writing Program Director Dr. Jeanette Lynes

Congratulations to Barbara Langhorst, Dave Margoshes, and Art Slade!

The MFA in Writing has a new home in the Department of English. We're thrilled to be part of this dynamic department and look forward to forging synergies with colleagues and students.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my colleagues for doing a magnificent job of steering the MFA in Writing ship during my sabbatical leave last year. Dr. David Parkinson took on the administration of the program. Dr. Sheri Benning carried out the teaching work. Author Rosemary Nixon came from Calgary to teach the fiction workshop. It was wonderful to have the program left in such caring, capable hands. Dr. Parkinson oversaw, as well, the first MFA in Writing road trip, to the University of Regina's 'Land and the Imagination' conference, an event organized by my colleague, Dr. Sheri Benning, during her post-doctoral fellowship.

Dr. Benning also organized the excellent symposium, 'Place and Process,' held at the University of Saskatchewan in November 2018, featuring authors Connie Gault, Lisa Bird-Wilson, and Guy Vanderhaeghe.

We were thrilled to once again support Writing North, held at the University of Saskatchewan on January 25 and 26, 2019, and proud to partner with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild on this annual event. The MFA in Writing's River Volta Reading Series continues to thrive; thanks to Carolyn Gray and Barbara Bordelejo for coordinating it for the past year.

The super-capable new reading series team is doing a terrific job. Our MFA students are active in the community, volunteering at events and presenting writing workshops – at Saskatoon Public Library, for example.

New MFA in Writing initiatives include *The River Volta Review of Books* – spearheaded by Dr. Benning with the help of MFA in Writing student Allison McFarland – and the Decade Campaign. Next year, 2020, is the tenth birthday of the MFA in Writing at University of Saskatchewan; we opened the application doors in 2010 and we're celebrating ten vibrant years by launching a campaign that's a terrific opportunity for donors and supporters. Many thanks to Diana Tegenkamp, Administrative Assistant from the Department of English, for her help. You'll hear more about *The River Volta Review of Books* and the MFA in Writing Decade Campaign through social media updates and in the 2020 newsletter. Feel free to join the Facebook page, MFA in Writing at the University of Saskatchewan.

My sabbatical leave was busy and productive. I had a great time as a Visiting Fellow at Bard Graduate Center in New York City for two months, and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) for two months.

I attended the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference in Tampa, Florida. During summer 2018, I had the good fortune to teach, with Daniel Scott Tysdal, the Emerging Writers' Workshop at Sage Hill Writing. I presented talks and readings, most recently at Vespers Reading Series in Edinburgh; Words North in Dawson Creek, BC; Word on the Street in Saskatoon; and the autumn writers' festival in Westport, Ontario. My second novel, *The Small Things That End The World* (Coteau Books), published in summer 2018, is shortlisted for three Saskatchewan Book Awards. My poetry appeared in the anthology *Spark: Poetry and Art Inspired by the Novels of Muriel Spark*, edited by Rob A. Mackenzie and Louise Peterkin (Blue Diode Press); the poem was reprinted in the *Scottish Review of Books* (November 10, 2018).

I was also fortunate to have work published in *The Anti-Languorous Project* and the anthology, *Release Any Words Stuck Inside of You*, edited by Geoff Pevlin and Nicole Haldoupis (Applebeard Editions, 2018). Most recently, my non-fiction essay "Mull" was shortlisted for *Event Magazine's* non-fiction contest. My current projects include a collection of personal essays and a novel.



Dr. Lynes with George Saunders at the 2018 AWP Conference in Tampa, FL.

I'm deeply fortunate to work with our talented, brilliant students in the MFA in Writing. And we are equally lucky to have Dr. Sheri Benning on the creative writing faculty again for the 2019-2020 year. I commend the spirit and courage of you all.

Happy WinterTide!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. SHERI BENNING

DELANE JUST

Sheri Benning is a faculty member at the University of Saskatchewan who teaches for the Department of English and the MFA in Writing program. Sheri completed her PhD at the University of Glasgow. She now has three published books of poetry: *Earth After Rain* (Thistledown Press, 2001), *Thin Moon Psalm* (Brick Books, 2007), and, most recently, *The Season's Vagrant Light: New and Selected Poems* (Carcanet Press, 2015).



Professor of Poetry and Creative Non-Fiction,
Dr. Sheri Benning

The Season's Vagrant Light is Sheri's UK debut, featuring new work alongside previously published poems. The poems featured explore landscapes, as well as themes of family and memory.

We spoke to Sheri about her recent publications, her organizing of the Place and Process Symposium, and her experience with the University of Saskatchewan's MFA in Writing program.

What current projects are you working on?

Sheri Benning: I've currently got three writing projects on the go that are at varying stages of completion: a manuscript of poetry consisting of several bioregional long poems;

a collection of essays which use as their touchstone sculptural installations by my sister, visual artist Heather Benning (heatherbenning.ca); and a novel. In different ways, each of these projects is motivated by the attempt to see if the rural landscapes of my natal home, laid to waste by industrial agriculture, might be reinvigorated via artistic interventions that foreground their repressed politics and ecological instability. By charting (and mourning) the revolutionary shift from farm to city, I hope these works will call into question the distance that agribusiness puts between us and the land.

What are your recent publications? Do you have any upcoming publications?

SB: Poems from the new manuscript have appeared (or are forthcoming) in the UK journals, *The Manchester Review*, *The Glasgow Review of Books*, and the *PN Review*, as well as in the following Canadian journals: *Best Canadian Poetry*, *Grain*, *Event Magazine*, *Prairie Fire*, *Riddle Fence*, and *The Fiddlehead*.

Excerpts from the novel have twice been nominated for the CBC Short Story Prize and, most recently, are forthcoming in

Gutter: The Journal of New Scottish Writing, *Grain*, and *The Antigonish Review*.

My essays have also appeared in Canadian and British literary journals. Most recently: in Spring 2018, I was invited to give a talk at Gallery 12-14 in Vienna, and the essay on which the talk was based will be published by *PN Review* in March 2019.

How did you feel about the Place and Process Symposium? What was it like working with writers Guy Vanderhaeghe, Lisa Bird-Wilson, and Connie Gault?

SB: From 2015-2017, I held the Faculty of Arts Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Regina in English and Philosophy. During my fellowship, I organized a symposium entitled *Land and the Imagination (LI)*, held at First Nations University. The symposium brought together leading Canadian Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and visual artists whose work is focused by their engagement with place, specifically Western Canadian rural environments. LI's writing, readings, and discussion panels aimed to initiate a larger conversation on what might constitute socially and environmentally sustainable ways to inhabit rural Canada.

In the spirit of extending the conversation, this year, I organized Place and Process, a conversation with Lisa-Bird Wilson, Guy Vanderhaege, and Connie Gault. In each of these writer's work, "place" is not reducible to setting, or backdrop—a "lesser angel," as Eudora Welty writes—but rather it is the fertile ground from which all other elements of prose emerge. Lisa, Guy, and Connie are extremely generous and talented writers and thinkers. I felt really honoured and lucky to facilitate what turned out to be a really far-ranging and insightful conversation with them.

What is it like to teach at the U of S? How do you feel about the MFA program?

SB: My time teaching in the MFA program has been inspiring. I love how the graduate writing workshop is a kind of lab where we can try things out and work together towards achieving greater resonance with our writing, sharper clarity of purpose.



THE CLASS OF 2019: AT A GLANCE

BARBARA BORDALEJO

Barbara has been an academic for more than twenty years, but now she is taking some time to write a novel which will be her MFA thesis. She enjoys reading and writing science fiction. She has lived in eight countries in two continents.



JACLYN MORKEN



Jaclyn is from Saskatchewan, where she previously received a BA (Hons) in English from the University of Saskatchewan. Now, she is coming to the end of her second year in the MFA in Writing program. She is also serving as a guest editor for *antilang no. 4: Succinct Speculations*.

Jaclyn's work has appeared in the inaugural issues of *antilang magazine*. For her thesis, she's been working on a fantasy novel that explores themes of war and trauma. Fantasy and speculative fiction are the genres she most enjoys writing, so she's been reading as much of them as she can. She just started Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Summer Tree*.

For Jaclyn, working with classmates and professors has been such a fun and rewarding experience; she is so grateful to be in this program alongside such exceptional people, and can't wait to see where everyone goes from here.

THE CLASS OF 2019

BONNIE HEILMAN



Bonnie lives and works in Saskatoon on Treaty 6 Territory as a daughter, sister, auntie, facilitator, and activist. She runs Kinship Community Development and has been helping to establish The Stand Community Organizing Centre for the past four years. Bonnie adores stories and writing for their power to change worlds—both our inner worlds and the ones we walk in. Her current work is inspired by Maria Campbell's advice for settlers who want to contribute to the reconciliation process to start by learning their own family's history. In response, Bonnie is creating a collection of auto-ethnographic, personal essays that explore how and why her family came to be here—both here on this land and here in the personal, political, and economic circumstances they are navigating as descendants of Germans from Russia, 150 years into the settler-colonial project that is Canada.

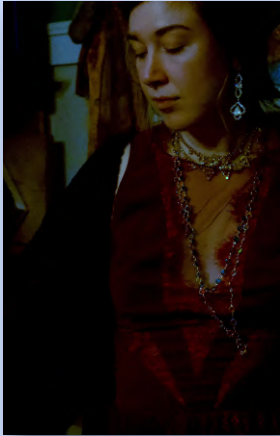
CAROLYN GREY

Carolyn Gray is a published, award-winning playwright, short story, and non-fiction writer. Her MFA thesis is a full-length play about the once-suppressed history of ground-breaking dadaist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and her marriage to the iconic figure of Canadian literature Frederick Philip Grove. Her project mentor was Micheline Chevrier of Imago Theatre, Montreal.



THE CLASS OF 2019

TONI HIATT



Toni Hiatt was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta. In 2009, Toni moved to study both Anthropology and Creative Writing at the University of Victoria. After graduating with a BFA in 2014, Toni took a few years off to work, travel, and ponder, and decided that despite life's many options, she still loved writing enough to chase it all the way to the Master's level and trade in her temperate West coast life for the true winter and blue skies of Saskatoon.

Toni has always been fascinated by animism, mythology, and human relations with the natural world and, as she grew older, how these things intersected with her experience of womanhood. The project she intends to defend for her thesis is one story within a larger body of speculative eco-feminist fiction. It takes place in the 1990s in Oaxaca, Mexico and centers on a young, pregnant protagonist escaping city life and an abusive relationship to the house of a rural curandera (folk healer) and midwife, ultimately exploring the growth, challenges, and wisdom that grow from that relationship.

Toni has been enjoying the challenge of weaving together history and imagination in a way that still strives to write about a place and people—to whom she is an outsider—with respect and accuracy. This project has forced her to grapple with her own position and the many identities she occupies in a globalized world. It has also piqued her interest into her own ancestral traditions of folk medicine, art (in particular, textiles), spirituality, and ways of relating to the land.



THE CLASS OF 2019



ALLISON MCFARLAND

Allison (Allie) McFarland is completing a SSHRC-funded novel focused on the process of recovery from anorexia as part of the second year of her MFA in Writing. She earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees with first-class honours from the University of Calgary (English with a Concentration in Creative Writing and Law and Society).

Her poetry and prose have been published in national and international magazines, most recently in *untethered* and *The Fieldstone Review*. Allie's chapbook, *Marianne's Daughters*, was published by Loft on EIGHTH in 2018.

Allie is a co-founder of The Anti-Languorous Project (The ALP), and co-editor of its two publications: *antilang.* and *soundbite*. This online, open-access literary hub aims to curate good. short. writing. and promote community and connections between emerging and established writers. You can learn more about The ALP at antilang.ca.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE



"Be short. Precise. Imaginative. Creative."
- Doreen Ford Stumborg

THE CLASS OF 2019




TAIDGH LYNCH

Taidgh Lynch is a poet from the South-West of Ireland in his second year of the MFA in Writing program.


He reads submissions for *The Fiddlehead*, and has read his own poetry at the River Volta Reading Series and Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan. His poems have been published by *Boyne Berries*, *The Poetry The .Poetry Bus*, and *Bare Hands Poetry*. He also has dabbled in short stories, which can be found in the magazine *antlang*.

The MFA in Writing program has made it possible for Taidgh to integrate his interests into his writing, freed him up to write, and given him the opportunity to get excellent feedback from writers such as Karen Solie, his mentor last summer.



“Try not to hate everything you write. Some of it is probably okay. Eat some snacks.” - Sarah Ens

#MFAWRITINGADVICE

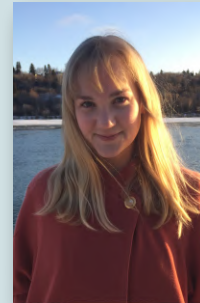


“Dramatise it. If the character is ‘evil,’ then make her do or say evil things. The reader is smart, maybe smarter than you. Once you dramatise it, you will realize that ‘evil’ was never the right word anyway. Your character becomes—or always was—something much more.” - Cameron Muir

MEET THE CLASS OF 2020

SARAH ENS

Sarah Ens is a writer and editor from the geographical centre (longitudinally) of Canada. Her poetry has appeared in *Prairie Fire*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Poetry Is Dead*, and *SAD Mag*. Sarah holds a BFA from the University of British Columbia's Creative Writing program and is a former editorial assistant with Turnstone Press. Currently, Sarah works as a freelance editor and copyeditor on a variety of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry projects.



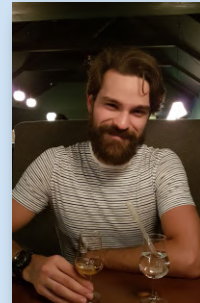
SUSIE HAMMOND

A former teacher, editor, publisher, and arts advocate, Susie Hammond is a Seattle-based Canadian from Winnipeg who's enjoying being back on the Canadian prairies writing poetry. She typically writes from interdisciplinary and intersectional feminist perspectives, focusing on a range of social justice issues. She's especially pleased to be part of this inclusive cohort of MFA candidates. Her recent awards include the University of Saskatchewan Entrance Scholarship and Hantelman Humanities Award, and residencies from The Squaw Valley Community of Writers, The Leighton Artist Colony at The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, and Catalonia's Faber Institute for Arts, Sciences, and Humanities.

MEET THE CLASS OF 2020

JAMESON LAWSON

Jameson Lawson is a twenty-three-year-old writer from southwestern Ontario. A recent graduate of the University of Western Ontario's English and Writing Studies program, he is currently attending the University of Saskatchewan for a Master of Fine Arts in Writing. His work is predominantly in form poetry and horror fiction.



DOREEN FORD STUMBORG

Doreen Ford Stumborg has always felt the need to write, even when the only utensil available was a crayon. As an MFA student, after having only written non-fiction and a small amount of poetry, she found herself plunked in a fiction class and was surprised about how much she enjoys making stuff up. In between the crayon days and the MFA program, life took Doreen in various directions: the best being a stay-at-home mom; finishing a 4-year BA in Psychology from the U of S; working for U of S President MacKinnon; and supporting research groups in the College of Medicine. Doreen was born into a Saskatchewan farm family, near Humboldt, and still maintains that the farm is the best place to live, even though she has been a resident of Saskatoon for many years. Saskatoon is where she and her husband have raised five children, several dogs and the odd cat; emphasis on odd. Besides writing, Doreen's passions include her family—especially grand babies—animals, nature, hiking long distances, travelling, reading, spiritual development, and knitting.

MEET THE CLASS OF 2020

CAMERON MUIR

Cameron Muir is a lifelong resident of Saskatchewan (Yorkton, Estevan, and Saskatoon). A retired lawyer, he now writes things that don't make people cry (as much): contemporary and historical fiction. Cameron is studying and writing on campus with the rest of his family, all students: his wife, Carolyn, and their two sons, Alfons and Lachlan.



HOPE HOUSTON

Hope Houston is an American transplant to the Canadian prairie, hailing most recently from Washington, D.C., but originally from the cornfields of Ohio. Hope writes short literary fiction focused on social justice; however, her thesis project is a juvenile novel that explores death and grief through the allegory of fantasy. In 2013, Hope graduated summa cum laude from Wright State University, where she won the Adam Cline Memorial Scholarship for Fiction Writing. She has since worked in local journalism and government technical writing. In her spare time, Hope waxes philosophical with her loving husband, Daniel; enjoys theme parks, video games, and pinball; and cares for two silly, little cats, Luna and Loretta.



MEET THE CLASS OF 2020

KATE O'GORMAN

Kate O'Gorman began writing fiction in early 2017. Before being accepted into the MFA in Writing program at the U of S, she attended the Sage Hill Writing Experience and was an apprentice in the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild Mentorship Program.

She has also received a USask Hantelman Humanities Scholarship. Kate is an early morning riser, opera enthusiast, and cheesecake devotee. She lives in Saskatoon with her husband and step-daughter.



KATHRYN SHALLEY

Born and raised in Calgary, AB by Australian immigrant parents, Kathryn received her honours BA in English from Mount Royal University, where her thesis project centered on a gender-based analysis of dialogue in young adult fantasy fiction. Her project at USask focuses on menstruation, mental health, and murder, and will be a collection of interconnected short stories—or a novel, or something in between. Kathryn has been a bad waitress, a café dishwasher, a bookstore employee, and an unpaid intern; she is now an editor for Edge Publishing.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE

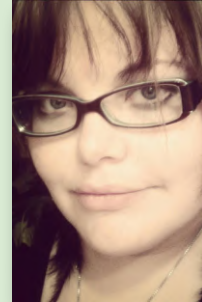


Be open to what others have to teach about craft, and also trust your instincts." - Kate O'Gorman

MEET THE CLASS OF 2020

TONIA LAIRD


Tonia Laird is a Métis writer and a member of CUMFI #165. She has written for AAA video games Dragon Age 2 and Dragon Age: Inquisition, and was the lead writer for the mobile game Everlove: Rose. Tonia's thesis is a character-driven speculative fiction novel following a classic tale of revenge and redemption, while delving into commentary concerning colonialism, classism, and gender- and race-based discrimination.



ZACH KEESEY

Zach Keeseey began adulthood on a decidedly uncertain path. Originally from Oregon, in college he couldn't settle on a degree, so he ended up with enough credits for both a BA and a BS in political science. After working aimlessly in various positions in leadership development, shipping, retail, and dining (to name a few), he eventually got his M.Ed and became a teacher. For the past six years, he's taught at the university and K-12 levels. Now, he is working on his MFA in Writing, where he's dabbling with ideas for writing either a fantasy or science fiction novel.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE



"If you're going to write, get a dog; they love you and they can't read."
- Kathryn Shalley

CURRENT STUDENT NEWS BULLETINS

SARAH ENS

In 2018, Sarah Ens won first place in *Room Magazine's* Short Forms Contest. She was also longlisted in *Room Magazine's* 2018 Poetry Contest. Sarah is the treasurer, co-organizer, and haiku-writer of the River Volta Reading Series. Recently, Sarah joined JackPine Press's Board of Directors and is thrilled to be a part of their editorial team.

CAROLYN GRAY

Carolyn Gray was privileged to have a reading of the first draft of her thesis play, *I Love You Like Hell*, by students in the Drama Department, organized by her thesis supervisor, Dr. Dwayne Brenna. Some of these very talented students will be performing at the Greystone Theatre's production of multi-award winning playwright Martin McDonagh's, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, directed by Dwayne Brenna, February 6 - 16th, 2019.

SUSIE HAMMOND

In celebration of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers in 2020, an online anthology of alumni work will be published. One of Susie's poems will appear.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE



"Dialogue is tough to master. Perform it out loud, take an acting class, read scripts, and attend plays to strengthen yours. #WritingAdvice" - Tonia Laird

CURRENT STUDENT NEWS BULLETINS

TONIA LAIRD

Tonia Laird is currently working on her first interactive novel, the sci-fi *Poster Girl*, published on the California-based company, FableLabs, Tales Writer platform.

HOPE HOUSTON

Hope Houston is currently working as the social media coordinator for the MFA in Writing's River Volta Reading Series, as well as a volunteer editor for this very newsletter. Hope has also volunteered with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild at their 2018 annual conference and their 2019 Writing North event. In October 2018, Hope won the Hantelman Humanities Scholarship from the University of Saskatchewan. She has recently submitted work to literary contests across Canada.

KATE O'GORMAN

In the last year, Kate O'Gorman has been busy volunteering at various writerly events, working as co-editor for this MFA newsletter, and reading submissions for *The Fiddlehead*. Her latest short story, "May I Myself Be Not Lost," will be published in the 2019 spring edition of *Qwerty Magazine*, no. 39.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE



"If you want to write fantasy, immerse yourself in fantasy. If you want to write horror, read a lot of horror. But make sure you do so critically. Look at how these authors convey their stories, and use that in your own writing." - Zach Keesey

CURRENT STUDENT NEWS BULLETINS

ZACH KEESEY

Zach Keeseey volunteered at Writing North, where he introduced author and poet, Liz Philips. He also volunteered at the SWG Fall Conference. He is on the River Volta team. He published one piece in the fall of 2018 for the Polar Expressions Publishing short story contest, where his piece received an honourable mention.


TAIDGH LYNCH

Taidgh Lynch will be publishing a poetry collection with JackPine Press titled, *First Lift Here*. The poetry collection started with an interest in Rose Shaw, a nanny who took photographs of farmhands in Northern Ireland in the early 1900s. From there, the collection has evolved to include the Titanic, human zoos, genocide, and extinction.

KATHRYN SHALLEY

Since Christmas, Kathryn Shalley has finished editing a manuscript for Edge Publishing, begun reading submissions for *The Fiddlehead*, and is part of the River Volta team. She also just recently took the bus for the first time since moving to Saskatoon in September, and it turns out that it wasn't as horrifying as her anxiety told her it would be.

#MFAWRITINGADVICE



“Live for rejection. Rejection means effort, attempt. Live to hear ‘no’ because you are (hopefully) one step closer to ‘yes.’”
- Hope Houston

FALL 2018'S WRIT 990 SEMINAR: IN REVIEW

HOPE HOUSTON

The WRIT 990 seminar is a professional development series, organized by the program's director, Dr. Jeanette Lynes. WRIT 990 sessions occur throughout the semester and focus on writing-based learning opportunities that bridge between the University program and Saskatoon's and Saskatchewan's greater literary communities. Topics vary but may include author readings, writing craft symposia, and professional tutorials, such as grant writing.

PLACE AND PROCESS: A SYMPOSIUM

NOVEMBER 22, 2018

The MFA in Writing program welcomed authors Lisa Bird-Wilson, Connie Gault, and Guy Vanderhaeghe for a symposium on how place and setting inform their writing processes. The session was moderated by MFA in Writing professor of poetry and creative non-fiction, Sheri Benning.

Vanderhaeghe read "Loneliness Takes Its Claims" from his 1992 short story collection, *Things As They Are?*. In the panel, Vanderhaeghe described place as a matrix: an amalgamation of history, language, geography, economics, politics, spirituality, and so much more.



An MFA in Writing Department of English Event

Place and Process

A Symposium

November 22
3 - 5 pm
Arts 212

Featuring Guy Vanderhaeghe,
Lisa Bird- Wilson and Connie Gault

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Arts and Science
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

(306) 966-1268 | english.department@usask.ca
artsandscience.usask.ca/english

Photo courtesy of Heather Benning

FALL 2018'S WRIT 990 SEMINAR: IN REVIEW

HOPE HOUSTON

History, Vanderhaeghe explained, is the connection between character and circumstance. He urged attendees whenever they feel stuck in developing setting to immerse themselves in the time of their story through music and movies.

Gault takes a different approach. She explained that she enjoys exploring location through outsider characters. Through them, she can see the landscape through fresh eyes.

Bird-Wilson provided a unique critical lens to the conversation.

Reading from her creative non-fiction essay, "Born Red," Bird-Wilson discussed her desire to explore place from an Indigenous perspective. Her essay chronicled Bird-Wilson's experience as an Indigenous child caught in the Canadian adoption system, attempting to reconcile place and home with colonialism and trauma.

On behalf of the MFA in Writing program, its director, Dr. Jeanette Lynes, would like to extend deep gratitude to Dr. Sheri Benning for her organization and leadership of this engaging symposium.

TUNES TO WRITE TO:

- "While writing, I listen to the confused cries of my cat and personal hero, Balto."
- Sarah Ens
- "I have a random playlist with anything from Missy Elliot to Johnny Cash. If I really need to concentrate I go with video game or movie instrumental soundtracks."
- Tonia Laird
- "The fan in my apartment that never turns off."
- Kathryn Shalley

FALL 2018'S WRIT 990 SEMINAR: IN REVIEW

HOPE HOUSTON

FROM PITCH TO PRESS: EDITORS & PUBLISHERS SHARE TIPS

DECEMBER 5, 2018

Presented by MFA in Writing students Sarah Ens, Allison McFarland, and Kathryn Shalley, this talk encompassed useful things emerging writers need to know about seeking a home for their works.

Ens was the editorial assistant at Turnstone Press, an independent Winnipeg publisher, for over three years, and is the current social media coordinator of Geez Magazine. She discussed her days trudging through the slush pile at Turnstone, offering an interactive sample of how to set your cover letter apart from the pack. Ens centered on community, saying that it is important to show your efforts in the discipline beyond writing, such as through open mics, literary volunteerism, and mentorship.

Shalley began her editing career at Five Rivers Publishing, editing many projects including Joe Mahoney's *A Time and a Place*. Presently, she works at Edge Publishing in Calgary. Shalley discussed the economy of the pitch session and how to use it to your advantage.

AN MFA IN WRITING DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EVENT

FROM PITCH TO PRESS: EDITORS & PUBLISHERS SHARE TIPS

With MFA in Writing Students
Kathryn Shalley, Allison McFarland and Sarah Ens

WED, NOV 28 1 PM
GEOLOGY 265

Kathryn Shalley began her editing career at Five Rivers Publishing, editing many projects including Joe Mahoney's *A Time and a Place*. She was student co-editor of *In My Memories Like That*, a collection by Mount Royal University students and Calgary seniors. Presently, she works at Edge Publishing in Calgary and has recently edited *TransMigrations* by Eddie Louise.

Sarah Ens worked as the editorial assistant at Turnstone Press, an independent Winnipeg publisher, for over three years. She is the social media coordinator for Geez Magazine and has published her own writing in several literary magazines, and continues to do freelance editorial work.

Allison McFarland accumulates books, wool, small appliances, hair (both fake and cat), book titles on post-it-notes, and aliases. She writes novel(la)s because listing forms takes too many words.

EVENTS ARE FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME.

For more information:
306-966-1268 english.department@usask.ca

FALL 2018'S WRIT 990 SEMINAR: IN REVIEW

HOPE HOUSTON

But her message was one ultimately of empathy: editors, assistants, and all workers in the publishing machine are just people, she said. Shalley urged attendees to practice kindness in all communications from cover letter to follow-up.

McFarland pens novels and novellas, and is the founder of *The Anti-Languorous Project*, based in Saskatoon.

Known as *anti-lang*, the project is free to read and seeks "Good. Short. Writing." In the session, McFarland broke down rejection letters. While many are form letters, McFarland emphasized the achievement of receiving a rejection letter with tangible feedback, noting that, in such cases, the editor sees something they like and wants to see you, as a writer, grow. She urged participants to be open to that in their journeys as writers.

TUNES TO WRITE TO:

- "Either the shattering bellows of my husband's snoring (I tend to write at night) or the soothing journey of a Hayao Miyazaki film soundtrack. There is no in between."
- Hope Houston
- "I typically listen to either post-rock (lot of Mogwai and pg.lost lately) or retrowave music. Something loud, typically fast paced, but no words."
- Zach Keesey
- "Often the beauty of silence is best for my writing; I also love classical symphony and instrumental music (cello, guitar, violin, and piano), and smooth jazz."
- Doreen Ford Stumborg
- "Composer and pianist Alexis Ffrench."
- Kate O'Gorman

FALL 2018'S WRIT 990 SEMINAR: IN REVIEW


HOPE HOUSTON

THE PLOT THICKENS: STORY-BRANCHING AS TOLD BY A VIDEO GAME WRITER DECEMBER 5, 2018

AN MFA IN WRITING DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH EVENT

**THE PLOT THICKENS:
STORY-BRANCHING AS TOLD
BY A VIDEO GAME WRITER**

With MFA in Writing Student Tonia Laird



**WED, DEC 5
3 PM
ARTS 214**

Tonia Laird has worked as an animator, a storyboard artist, and a video game writer. Her writing credits include Silicon Sister's mobile game *Everlove: Rose*, and Bioware's AAA games *Dragon Age 2* and *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. She is currently working on the interactive novel, *Poster Girl*, her own IP, for FableLabs game studio in California.

EVENT IS FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME.

College of Arts and Sciences
306-966-1268 english.department@usask.ca

Presented by MFA in Writing student Tonia Laird, this session focused on how video game story writers use and structure narrative branches. Narrative branches provide players with in-game choice and, according to Laird, a deeper sense of immersion in the game's story and characters.

Tonia Laird has worked as an animator, a storyboard artist, and a video game writer. Her writing credits include Silicon Sister's mobile game, *Everlove: Rose*, and Bioware's AAA games, *Dragon Age 2* and *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. She is currently working on the interactive novel,

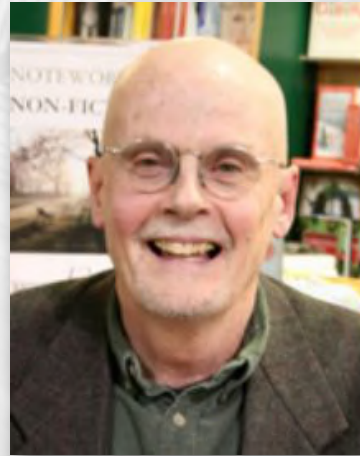
Poster Girl, her own intellectual property, for FableLabs Game Studio in California.

During the session, Laird broke down the history of narrative branching, citing 1980s Choose Your Own Adventure books as its origins in her life and tracing it then from early computer games, such as *Oregon Trail*, to today's AAA console hits, like *Dragon Age*. She provided an overview of how writers formulate characters, plot, and dialogue in this structure, and then answered the audience's eager questions on the state of video games today.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

David Carpenter has published more than fifteen books of literature in a range of genres, focusing primarily on nature and his native western Canada. The most recently released, *The Literary History of Saskatchewan*, is a collection of essays written by him and others. He lives in Saskatoon. He has served on the faculty of the English Department at the University of Saskatchewan since 1975 and acts as a mentor to students in the MFA in Writing program.



In conjunction with their study of *The Education of Augie Merasty*, a memoir by Augie Merasty about his residential school experience, written with Carpenter, Carpenter gave a guest presentation on writing non-fiction to Dr. Sheri Benning's Creative Non-fiction class on January 21, 2019. With Carpenter's permission, what follows is a transcription from Susie Hammond's notes of the Q&A session that ensued, primarily about the process of co-creating Merasty's memoir.

DAVID CARPENTER ON *THE EDUCATION OF AUGIE MERASTY*

MFA student question:

How did this book [*The Education of Augie Merasty*] come to be? What challenges did it pose? What was your role? What did the project teach you?

DC:

One day, I got a call from the University of Saskatchewan English Department putting me in touch with Augie Merasty. When I was in grad school, we read Canadian

history then as an enterprise from a white, corporate point of view as found in the Hudson Bay Company archives.

We read accounting reports of beaver skins and sacks of flour. No professor would have dreamed of going to an Indigenous elder. My role in the book was as Augie's ally. I enabled Augie's story.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

The project taught me how to subordinate my own narrative voice and focus on Augie's voice to tell the story.

The first drafts appeared in letters. I came to know Augie as both a hopeless drunk and an observant, courageous man.

He was courageous to out himself as a victim of sexual violence. In coming forward about his residential school experience, he acted against the laws of his own people, and the anti-victim Indigenous culture. As well, it took courage for Augie to revisit those awful memories to tell his story.

The drafts didn't come regularly. Sometimes there were no drafts and excuses instead. Augie could revert to a sort of rhetoric involving exaggeration. So his calamities were a challenge. For instance, he claimed once that "a bear ate his manuscript."

Some drafts were written when he was in unstable states and were later revisited when he was stable. As editor, I decided the most "representative" version was the latter choice.

MFA student question:

Where did you mostly work on the manuscript?

DC:

The Stegner House residency and St Peter's Abbey residency.

HE INVITED ME TO SEND HIM
THE MANUSCRIPT AND TEN
DAYS LATER I GOT A CALL WITH A
MANUSCRIPT OFFER. THE BOOK
CAME OUT IN 2015.

MFA student question:

What did the publishing part of the process involve?

DC:

It was rejected by one good publisher. Then at a function at the University of Regina, I met Bruce Walsh, the publisher of University of Regina Press. He invited me to send him the manuscript and ten days later I got a call with a manuscript offer. The book came out in 2015.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

MFA student question:
What difference did the book make in Augie's life?

DC:
When the book came out, Augie realized people were suddenly showing him respect. It brought his family together, and his community, because they now realized what had broken him, what had made him drink to forget.

THE TEMPTATION IN A
SITUATION LIKE THIS IS TO
TAKE THE STORY AND TELL IT IN
YOUR OWN VOICE.

Just before a book presentation in Prince Albert, Arlene Merasty, his daughter, asked me, "How do you speak about a terrible father?" "Just tell a good story," I said. So she told the story about a gathering in the city where it was just about time to sit down for dinner, when Augie announced, "It's time to visit my trap line."

And he left. Arlene said she believed "trap line" was Augie's euphemism for the bar. She was disappointed but everyone went ahead and ate without him. After dinner Augie returned, with a pole across his shoulders and six rabbits dangling from it. His trap line was on the local golf course. To Arlene, this story was the ultimate Augie.

Sheri Benning:
In the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, Augie's voice is the perfect one to tell his story. His voice becomes a face for that experience. Can you tell us about the arrangement of the details? How did you begin to suss out a plot or a narrative timeline? And how did you position yourself?

DC:
The temptation in a situation like this is to take the story and tell it in your own voice. This would have been easier. Some of the stories had gaps in them; some had no endings. But at some point I noticed that several times he gets revenge on some of his keepers. This sounded like an ending to me, or at least a climax.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

In re-engaging with the fragments and the complete stories, I decided that I could arrange things chronologically. And Augie's account of the kindly caregivers helped me structure the manuscript starting with Augie as a 5 year-old boy. It also helped me to engage with his moral compass and his attempt at a level of objectivity.

The good and caring people engaged with Augie, primarily, when he was between age 5 and 7, so this made for a good beginning. So the moral structure was in place and then most of the cruelty followed. His difficulties arose when he'd been there for several years. It's reminiscent of the *David Copperfield* approach.

MFA student question:
How did you guard yourself from taking over the story?

DC:
By not investing all my creative energies in it, and by remembering that it was Augie who suffered for this story.

MFA student question:
With all the frustrations were you tempted to quit?

DC:
Yes, but in 2013 I had nothing to work on, I was between books, and after 12 years of futility, I finally got excited about Augie's story. The final edit was in 2014.

MFA student question:
Did it surprise you that he had many positive things to say about most of his keepers?

DC:
Yes. The first things to arrive at my desk were the nightmares. If I remember correctly, the third letter contained some stories of kindly, nourishing keepers.

MFA student question:
Regarding the relationship between a biographer and a subject, how do you negotiate the trust required when it's your reputation on the line, to be sure you're not being conned.

DC:
I saw a great urgency to get the story out. Intuitively I knew there was value to the story. I was astonished by this openness, by the personal detail and honesty. You can trust a person like Augie when his version of the story is so detailed, so authentic.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

MFA student question:

Did you do much independent research into Residential Schools?

DC:

I went to some of the Saskatoon hearings to fill in the gaps. The first letter came in 2001. There were murmurs then about the Residential Schools. Preliminary hearings began in 1995. The last school closed in 1996. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing ran 2014-2016.

MFA student question:

How often did you meet in person with him?

DC:

In the early days, we spoke on the phone. We went drinking once. That was a mistake. In the later days, his humour emerged and the best of him came out.

MFA student question:

What went into verifying dates and names?

DC:

His daughters filled them in, but we never solved when he was born. And in one case I was left with three accounts of one attack, or were there three attacks?

In Augie's absence, I decided that it was three approaches to the same assault. It seemed to me that at least the nub of the story was accurate. When Augie read it, there were no objections.

MFA student question:

What sort of licence is there with memoir?

DC:

My advice is go with your own instincts. And get advice about defamation and libel.

University of Regina Press brought in a lawyer. There was some danger of lawsuits from families if I allowed every name to survive. On the one hand the urge was, "Out these bastards!" On the other hand, there's the view that as champion of this book, one ought to forget purity and fight for the larger principals. Fight for the book's survival. In the end, some of the names were changed. That didn't mean that the perpetrators weren't publicly known. At the hearings, there was legal testimony.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

MFA student question:

In the ending, Augie's going hunting. When you got that story, did you know that would be the ending?

DC:

The drawing came later in 2006 along with that hunting/ice-fishing recollection. And I hadn't cracked the code of the stories' order until then. So it fit into the sequence of stories like a coda. I made that choice when I was sure of my chronological structure on the third read-through.

By the way, in creative nonfiction, a discussion often occurs between the writer and publisher about the structure. But in this case, there were no such discussions between Bruce and me.

Sheri Benning:

What was the spark for *A Hunter's Confession*?

DC:

In my youth, the way boys got to know their dads was they went hunting. I came to despise how white men hunt, with vehicles and technology, like trail cameras and bear-baiting.

I found out that with human encroachment on animal habitat, sport hunting all over the world is on the way out.

IN MY YOUTH, THE WAY BOYS GOT TO KNOW THEIR DADS WAS THEY WENT HUNTING. I CAME TO DESPISE HOW WHITE MEN HUNT, WITH VEHICLES AND TECHNOLOGY, LIKE TRAIL CAMERAS AND BEAR-BAITING.

But there are some exceptions to that. For example, one demographic on the increase is women who hunt. I asked an 80-year-old female hunter about the phenomenon. She replied, "Now that women have entered the job market, I guess they can do whatever they damn well please."

IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND MENTOR, DAVID CARPENTER

SUSIE HAMMOND

MFA student question:

In Augie's story, did you need to edit out much graphic detail?

DC:

Yes, about Brother Lepeigne. I wanted full stories about these encounters but I omitted some of the torture details.

MFA student question:

Did you have any concerns about censoring?

DC:

I wanted the stories to work on their own without sensationalizing.

As far as censoring is concerned, no, I felt I was editing him. My loyalty was to the story.

The publisher advocated for sending the manuscript in advance to those in Augie's family who wanted to see it. I was sceptical about doing that at first. But his family had concerns. I considered Augie a hero because of what he went through. And so I asked his family, "Did you ever think of your father as heroic?" They were OK with its publication then.



THE SECRETS OF GRANT WRITING UNVEILED

KATE O'GORMAN



On Friday, January 25th, Carle Steel, Literary Arts Consultant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, offered a presentation on grant writing to students in the MFA in Writing Program. While Steel focused her “how to” tips around The Independent Artists program – a program which supports artists in three different categories: professional

development, project research or production/presentation of creative work – she advised that the guidelines remain true when applying for all grants featured on the Arts Board website. Steel’s top tips for a successful grant application include:

1. Think of the application process as an opportunity to clearly map out and plan your writing project goals. This is an invaluable and necessary step of the creative process that will advance your work, no matter what the juridical outcome.
2. Show the jury what you’re capable of as a professional artist by including evidence of polished, completed work and support your proposal with work in progress. If the work in progress is rough, explain why, highlighting how the grant, if awarded, will advance your career as an artist. Ensure all images and videos are of quality resolution, and online links are live.
3. Situate yourself in your own practice. Show the jury that you are aware of where you are in your artistic practice in relation to the discipline and among your peers.
4. Consider your why. Have a clear understanding of why you are applying for this grant, why you should be the one to receive it, and why you are applying for support at this time in your artistic journey.

THE SECRETS OF GRANT WRITING UNVEILED

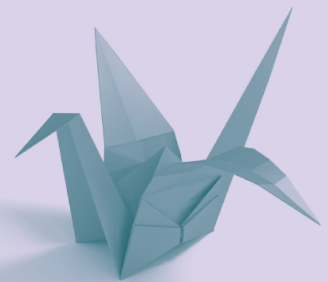
KATE O'GORMAN

5. Set achievable goals and timelines.
6. Understand that “project” in funding terms refers to time – as in, you are requesting funding for a specific allotment of time to achieve specific outcomes in your work.
7. Be honest about your budget needs and don't take it personally if you are awarded only a portion of what you ask for. There is only so much to go around, and juries want to see as many artists as possible benefit from it.
8. Don't get discouraged and apply again.

A passionate supporter of writers, Steel generously invited all interested applicants to speak with her directly about eligibility and/or the funding process. Carle Steel can be contacted at csteel@saskartsboard.ca or toll-free at 1-800-667-7526. For additional information about the Independent Artists Program and other funding opportunities, visit www.saskartsboard.ca

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

- “I am currently reading *Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World* by Pénélope Bagieu. It is a graphic novel about the lives of 29 different influential women throughout history.”
- Zach Keesey
- “*Desolation Island*, the fifth in the Aubrey/Maturin series by Patrick O'Brian. This series is my literary comfort food. I have a feeling that Aubrey is going to get into trouble (he did the last couple times I read this book). He will be taken advantage of by unscrupulous men who wish to mine for 'silver' on his land (if only Aubrey could put up a bit of seed money). Get away, Jack! Go to sea!”
- Cameron Muir



WRITING NORTH: CABIN FEVER

KATE O'GORMAN



In late January, Saskatoon is blanketed in frost and snow. Brave souls, bundled in down-filled parkas, dash from building to building before losing all feeling in their feet. Passersby, masked in scarves and toques, berate themselves for ignoring Mother's long-suffering appeal for thermal-underwear. And when a lone mitten is found frozen to the sidewalk, one weeps for the poor

schmuck whose frost-bitten fingers are undoubtedly paying the price.

The temptation is to turtle. Take a cue from the bears and lay dormant. Wait out the frozen apocalypse indoors until the wind-chill breaks in April.

Yet, in the midst of these wintertime woes comes Writing North, a two-day writer's festival so enriching that even the most stalwart of hibernators will brave the elements to attend. Such was the case on January 25th and 26th.

Nearly one hundred writers and readers, introverts and extraverts, book-lovers and arts-supporters from across the city, province and country, took heart in this year's festival theme – *Cabin Fever: Breaking Down Walls* – and came together to warm themselves in the glow of all things literary.

According to Yolanda Hansen, Program Manager for the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild – a co-sponsor of the

WRITING NORTH: CABIN FEVER

KATE O'GORMAN

festival, alongside the University of Saskatchewan – this year's theme was about escapism and “challenged writers to go to places – literal or otherwise – they've never been before.”

The lounge at St. Andrew's College on the U of S campus was abuzz with creative energy as attendees welcomed this year's keynote speakers: Elizabeth Philips, Sarah Gartshore, Laurie D. Graham, Michael Helm, and Jacqueline Baker.

Elizabeth Philips, current Writer in Residence at the Saskatoon Public Library and author of *Torch River*, *The Afterlife of Birds*, and four collections of poetry, offered invaluable tips on the art of revision.

Playwright, director, actor and teacher, Sarah Gartshore, travelled from Sudbury, Ontario to talk about her work with marginalized populations. Understanding theatre as a forum for story-sharing and truth-telling, Gartshore gave festival attendees a glimpse into how the stage can become a space for healing.

Award nominated poet and publisher of *Brick* magazine, Laurie D. Graham is author of *Rove* and *Settler Education*.



Elizabeth Phillips presents her poetry workshop.

Her workshop on “Breaching Form: Strategies to Combat Poetic Claustrophobia” offered seasoned and neophyte writers creative license to push the boundaries of convention and explore new approaches to poetry.

Originally from Saskatchewan and an alumnus of the U of S, Michael Helm has been a finalist for the Giller Prize, the Trillium Award and

WRITING NORTH: CABIN FEVER

KATE O'GORMAN



Alice Kuipers moderates the Writing North panel discussion.

the Rogers Writer's Trust Fiction Prize. His novels include *After James*, *Cities of Refuge*, *The Projectionist*, and *In the Place of Last Things*. Emerging fiction writers hungrily gobbled nuggets of gold from the seasoned author as he elucidated on the craft of writing.

Finally, the festival ended as strongly as it began with author Jacqueline Baker, who delved into the art of character development. Baker is author of *A Hard Witching & Other Stories*, *The Horseman's Graves*, and *The Broken Hours*.

As the event neared its conclusion, nothing in the weather had changed. Outside, marshmallow-sized snowflakes fell against the window panes. Attendees shook hands with the authors, traded notes and well-wishes with colleagues, and enjoyed one final cup of coffee before heading back into the cold. Yet, despite the unchanged prairie-winter climate, festival-goers left for home more radiant than they'd arrived. Set aflame by the writerly muse, warmed with creativity, fortified for the work ahead, Saskatchewan writers blazed-forth undamped, pens at the ready.

WRITING NORTH: CABIN FEVER

KATE O'GORMAN

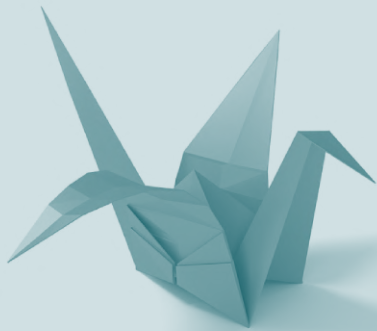
As Hansen recounts, “the presenters led audiences through a great festival. From practical insights into the craft of writing, to funny anecdotes about how our lives show up in our writing, we are really pleased with Writing North 2019 and look forward celebrating the 10th annual Writing North festival in 2020.”



Sarah Gartshore workshops with conference attendees.

Writing North is presented annually by the University of Saskatchewan’s MFA in Writing Program, Department of English, College of Arts and Science, and the Saskatchewan Writers’ Guild, with support from the Canada Council for the Arts, SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



- “I am currently reading *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* by Elizabeth Smart.”
- Sarah Ens
- “*Homo Deus* by Yuval Noah Harari.”
- Tonia Laird
- “*The American Way of Death Revisited* by Jessica Mitford. Cheerful, I know.”
- Hope Houston

WRITING NORTH PANEL

KATE O'GORMAN

On the evening of Friday, January 25th, in front of a cozy fireplace at St. Andrew's College, Writing North 2019 kicked off with a panel of celebrated authors. Skillfully moderated by author Alice Kuipers in a question and answer format, the panel featured Jacqueline Baker, Laurie D. Graham, Michael Helm and Elizabeth Philips (Sarah Gartshore in absentia). The following is an excerpt.

AK: Because the theme of this weekend is Cabin Fever: *Breaking Down Walls*, which piece of writing of yours, published or unpublished, has taken you somewhere you have never been?

LG: [My] book, *Settler Education*, was certainly a project in trying to go places I'd never been before. [The book] centers around the "Frog Lake Massacre", an incidence of violence in 1885, an event that was the last excuse for the government to lay claim to the prairies. [Writing this book] was a huge learning process for me.

JB: I think going somewhere you've never been in your writing is part of the gig. Every time I write something I'm walking around in someone else's shoes. The most challenge piece for me was when I was writing my most recent book, *The Broken Hours*, because it required me to wander around in the shoes of H.P. Lovecraft, a New England, semi-racist, horror writer. That required a lot of research.



Laurie D. Graham and Michael Helm respond to panel questions.

MH: My third book, *Cities of Refuge*, is set mostly in Toronto, but there was a period when I thought I was going to have to go to Central America. I had a contact in Guatemala who was a social justice worker, so I spent some time there working with her. I was there in the aftermath of the genocide [that occurred] during the civil war. What I saw there and what I brought back from that research – in the book, only takes up three or four pages – but it completely changed my understanding. As a writer, you don't necessarily have to go to Guatemala, but you do have to get outside that circumscribe day, you know?

WRITING NORTH PANEL

KATE O'GORMAN



Jacqueline Baker sits on the Writing North panel discussion.

The people you meet when you [get outside] doesn't just change your sense of the world, it also changes what a literary response to the world is.

EP: *The Afterlife of Birds*, definitely took me somewhere new. First of all, I'm a poet so, it took me a while to start moving [my characters] through time and space. I had to move into a different genre and into a different gender. But, I hope every piece of writing is an act of

discovery. I don't know where I'm going when I start out, I just fumble along until I find it.

AK: Is it difficult moving between being a writer and being a professional editor?

JB: It's much more fun editing another person's work. But it's true, it's really hard to turn that voice off when you return to your own writing.

MH: In my first draft I don't usually do a lot of revision. I'm just trying to get it right. But yes, I often hear this chorus of angry people telling me not to do something.

LG: Oh, where do I start? It might be a wee bit easier for me to switch back and forth. I find myself in that editing zone and I'm using similar parts of my brain to write. So, yeah, that editor sits on your shoulder and tells you terrible things, but I think I've gotten better at ignoring it. I find it a lot easier to edit the work of others, as Jacquie was saying. I can see everything that's wrong with a manuscript I didn't write. I cannot see, for the life of me, what's going on in my own work. I really value the editor's voice. It's essential.

WRITING NORTH PANEL

KATE O'GORMAN

AK: Can you talk about the use of dreams in fiction. What do they mean for you and how do they break down walls?

MH: I was just talking about this in class this week. The old idea is that you should avoid dreams in fiction. But, in fact, [dreams] are part of our experience and are connected to that same imaginative force that makes books and art.

AK: Do you shape your characters, or do the characters shape you?

JB: A little bit of both. I think, as writers, part of our job in creating a good story, especially when we're talking about the genre of the novel rather than the short story, is to find things to throw in the path of our characters. Then we have to discover, or decide, how they're going to react to those things. That helps to shape the story. I think if we aren't putting things in the path of our characters, then we're probably going to struggle with creating movement.

EP: I think it's a bit of both. I don't know where this stuff comes from. It's a mystery. It comes up from your subconscious. So that informs your characters. But there's a conscious element too. You don't want your character to make all the decisions.



Alice Kuipers asks the panel a question.

AK: When is your story yours and when does it become someone else's?

JB: I really wrestled with that when writing *The Broken Hours*. Taking a historical figure and trying to stay as close as possible to the facts of their life, as far as you know them, but then still fictionalizing this other tale that you want that [historical figure] to be a part of – that really sat uneasily with me for a long time. I did wrestle with the ethics of that. Ultimately, I guess I decided that as long as I was staying as true as possible to the man I discovered in the letters he wrote, I could give myself a little creative license.

WRITING NORTH PANEL

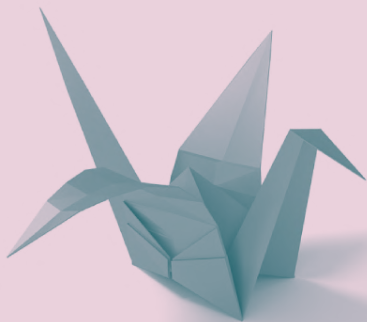
KATE O'GORMAN

LG: Writing *Settler Education* was an education, in that it was a way for me to understand how to fulfill the settler's end of the bargain when it comes to writing about the colonial treatment of Indigenous people. To write about Big Bear and Poundmaker, Riel and Wandering Spirit... there's an "I" in this book and there had to be, because my first prerogative was to make sure I was writing with a full understanding of who I was and what I had a right to write about.

That was a really difficult process, because there is very little in the way of a guide – at least there was when I was writing [this book]. In fact, this book is starting to feel a bit like a relic to me, which I was hoping for. It's a couple years old now. I wrote it when Stephen Harper was in power, it came out after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report, and so there are aspects to it that feel dated to me now. I would do my research differently now. I continue to develop.

Writing North is presented annually by the University of Saskatchewan's MFA in Writing Program, Department of English, College of Arts and Science, and the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, with support from the Canada Council for the Arts, SaskCulture and Saskatchewan Lotteries.

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



- "*When We Were Birds* by Maria Mutch."
- Kathryn Shalley
- "Besides program requirements, I am reading works by Suzanne North, Connie Gault, Elizabeth Vargas, and Chris Tiegreen."
- Doreen Ford Stumborg
- "*Milkman* by Anna Burns."
- Kate O'Gorman

WRITING NORTH

WORDS OF WISDOM

ELIZABETH PHILIPS

“In the revisioning process, you have to look at your work as if you haven’t written it. Getting out of your own way is so important.”

SARAH GARTSHORE

“It’s important that we as writers work with integrity, particularly when we work alongside marginalized communities.”

LAURIE D. GRAHAM

“In poetry, it all comes down to the core image. The rest can be pared away.”

MICHAEL HELM

“To be a good fiction writer, you have to be the best reader you’ve ever met.”

JACQUELINE BAKER

“When developing character in short fiction, it’s crucial for us, as writers, to be economical in the details we choose. Unless that detail contributes to the meaningful creation of our character, get rid of it.”

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON

The MFA in Writing's River Volta Reading Series opened for its sixth season on January 15, and this year, there are a whole lotta cooks in this kitchen!

Volta is a student-run, community-based reading series held monthly throughout the semester at d'Lish by Tish Cafè, and it is passed down generationally from one writing cohort to the next. Last year's Volta organizers were Barbara Bordalejo and Carolyn Gray. Traditionally, two organizers have run the series over the years, starting with its founders, Chelsea Forbes and Sara-Jane Goutnez, in 2013.

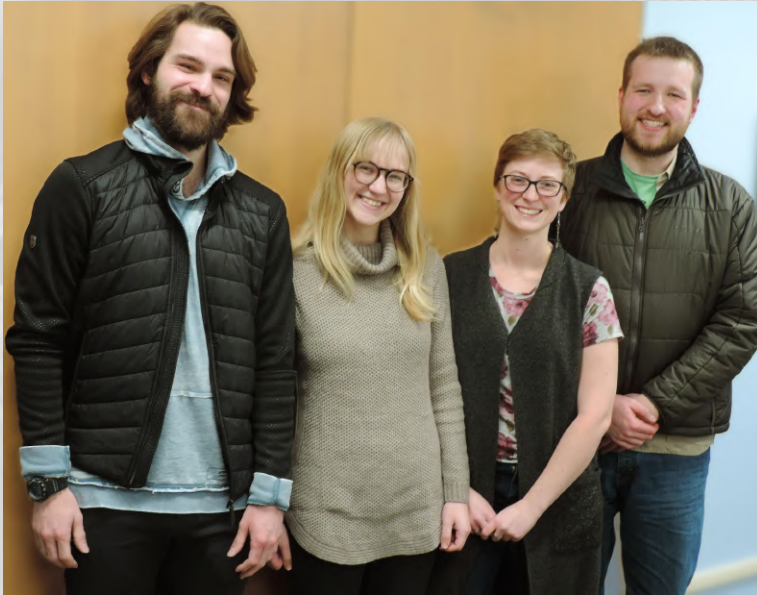
However, this year, Volta welcomes five (yes, FIVE) organizers to its ranks: poet Sarah Ens, fiction writer Hope Houston, fiction writer Zach Keesey, poet Jameson Lawson, and fiction writer Kathryn Shalley.



The quintuple decided to divide the duties of running the series. The behind-the-scenes team consists mostly of Sarah, Hope, and Kathryn. Sarah handles the series' financials and provides the cutest cat hats to collect the generous donations of our listeners. Kathryn is coordinator-extraordinaire, scouting Saskatoon's vibrant literary community for available participants. Hope is Volta's hype-lady, promoting the series across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON



From the left, Jameson Lawson, Sarah Ens, Kathryn Shalley, and Zach Keeseey run this year's Volta. (Not pictured: Hope Houston)

The faces of this year's Volta are Jameson and Zach. Together, the pair work to script and host the night's reading. Meanwhile, Zach is Volta's resident tech guru, and Jameson shines in his galactic suit, as he runs each night's open mic.

The group agreed they wanted to take this year's Volta to new heights. They started with monthly themes.

"Theming each Volta night felt like a good idea to me because it helped offer a coherent experience for those who attended, as well as a way to promote the readings to more targeted groups of people," explained Shalley.

Additionally, Ens believes themes promote literary representation.

"I saw themes as a way to ensure that a variety of genres would be represented (i.e. graphic novels and genre fiction). In organizing these events, it has definitely sparked questions like, 'what exactly defines genre fiction?' and 'how might we tap into other creative disciplines and communities like the graphic novel world?' and 'how can we get a projector into d'Lish?" she said.

Their first was #GenreFictionJanuary. January's reading featured mystery writer J.C. Paulson and fantasy writer Regine Haensel.

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON

The group wanted to expand the series' breadth of work, pushing beyond the bounds of literary works and into popular fiction.

"People often dismiss genre fiction, graphic novels, and popular as somehow less worthy or less literary than literary fiction," said

Shalley. "Personally, I feel that all fiction is valuable because stories are how we represent and transmit culture, and if that story happens to be popular or strikes a chord with people, then isn't it worthwhile regardless of what form it takes?"

Keesey agrees with his co-organizer.

"I disagree with that [dismissive sentiment], too, only because I have read genre fiction, particularly in the realm of science fiction, that deals with amazingly deep, philosophical notions of what it means to be human," said Keesey.



Regine Haensel reads at Volta's #GenreFictionJanuary.

"Also, I think that by incorporating genre fiction we can bring more people into our program."

Ens shares in her co-organizers' idea.

"Tolkien, Christie, King, Atwood—it's absurd to assert that the works of any of these authors are in some way second-rate," Ens noted. "Not to mention, we have many fabulous genre writers in right here in Saskatchewan and were thrilled to feature two of them."

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON

February's theme was graphic novels, a challenge to the series' form and function. February's Volta featured Saskatchewan-based artists, Jeff Burton and Elaine Will.

"The biggest challenge was figuring out how to display the graphic novels, since they are a visual medium. However, we were able to partner with the U of S English department to get the equipment we need," explained Keesey.

Beyond technical difficulties, Keesey thought expanding Volta's use of the literary canon was significant here, too.

"Similar to genre fiction, I feel that graphic novels get written off as not having any literary merit because they are seen to be equivalent to children's comics," he said. "That's changing though. Just last year, a graphic novel,



J.C. Paulson reads at Volta's #GenreFictionJanuary.

Sabrina, was nominated for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction."

Shalley agrees: "Comics and graphic novels in particular have been infantilized by high culture—read: dominant culture—as it places a colonizing value upon 'proper' language and belittles creators who do not subscribe to this method of literary creation. The literary world should not seek to be exclusionary to those who create outside the norm or write solely for the sake of a good story."

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON



MFA in Writing student Cameron Muir reads at the January open mic.

Shalley concluded: "Stories tell us about our world, no matter what shape they come in."

Overall, the group hopes that this year's Volta will expand the literary community of Saskatoon as a whole.

"My hope is that River Volta continues to

inspire, challenge, and entertain those in attendance," said Shalley. "Writing, in many ways, requires community—once we can't stand the solitude of actually working on our stories any longer—and Volta helps to provide a moment of relief each month where we can gather and regain our energies."

"It would be great if we could encourage more student writers from the U of S and the public school system to come out and read their work," said Keesey, who also happens to be a K-12 teacher.

Yet, none of this could have been achieved without the guidance and mentorship of Volta's last organizers, Barbara and Carolyn. The pair agreed that their tenure with Volta was both personally and professionally significant.

For Gray, organizing the open mic at each Volta led to a greater sense of togetherness between her and her program mates at the MFA in Writing.

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON

"But my favourite part might have been the way my classmates came out, read at the open mic, and helped me set up and clean up, or just give a bit of moral support!" Gray said. "I also was particularly pleased to get to know some MFA in Writing grads, and commiserate about their work. It gave us all a chance to really connect as an MFA in Writing community."

However, the pair noted this togetherness reached beyond the program or university.

"Being an out-of-towner, the Volta was a crash course in reaching out, meeting, and engaging with a whole lot of new people," said Gray. "If not for the Volta, no doubt I would have been home with my nose in my books or typing on the computer. The Volta gives seasoned authors the opportunity to share their art with a new audience, and I was always so impressed they made the effort to come out into the night and share."



Zach Keesey (left) and Jameson Lawson (right) introduce authors Regine Haensel and J.C. Paulson.

Bordalejo shared Gray's experience as a newbie to Saskatoon.

"River Volta was a great experience for me. I had been a bit concerned because I didn't know the local writers and was not sure how to go about contacting them, but fortunately, the Saskatchewan's writers guild has great resources for this," she said. "Of course, meeting people was wonderful. I was thrilled to have Lisa Bird-Wilson and Tenille Campbell

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES RISES FOR ITS SIXTH YEAR

HOPE HOUSTON

read for us, and Glen Sorestad is such a kind and gentle soul. He gave Carolyn and I copies of his book (which he didn't have to do)."

Ultimately, Bordalejo and Gray agree: Volta brings the MFA program into the fold of Saskatoon's literary community.

"I...connected with authors I very well might have missed altogether, being so busy with classwork. The Volta is the literary community in action, giving back to students with their art. Sharing and connecting make a community," said Gray.

Bordalejo added: "To feel you are contributing to the city's cultural life, even if it is in a very small way, also was wonderful. Many people who are not involved with the program or the university attend every month."

Both are eager to see the future of Volta. Particularly, Gray finds the expanded staff to be a positive.

"I think a team effort is the way to go. We have a lot of work to do in this program, and equally sharing the all Volta tasks keeps everyone invigorated, with maximum pay off," she said.

Bordalejo encouraged the new organizers to "have fun and enjoy the opportunity to meet members of the writing community."

The MFA in Writing program would like to extend its deepest gratitude to Barbara and Carolyn for their impeccable management of the River Volta Reading Series, as well as for their time and effort in building an inclusive, supportive, and nourishing literary space and community in the heart of Saskatoon. Thank you!

Volta will take place on Tuesdays at 7:00 PM during the 2019 Winter and Fall semesters at d'Lish by Tish Cafe. Check out our Facebook for more information and our calendar of events!

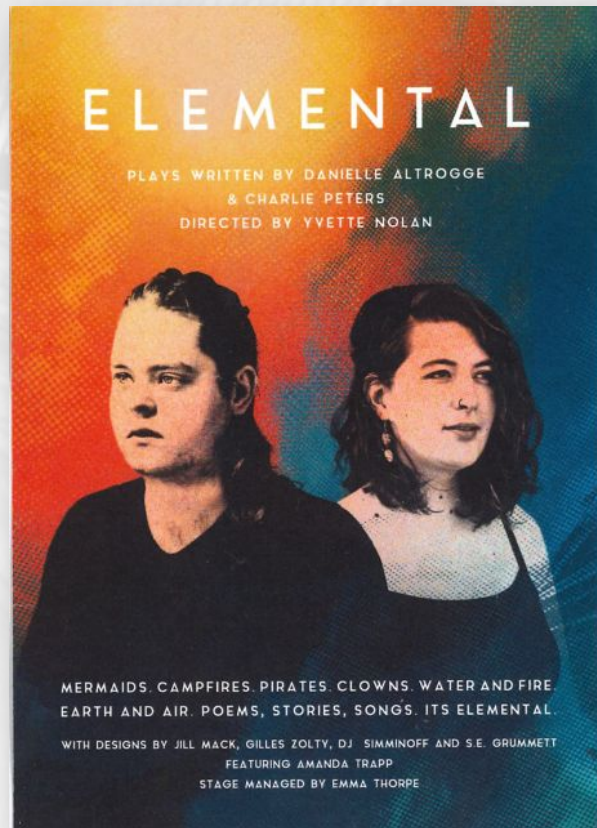
FROM PAGE TO STAGE: *ELEMENTAL*

DELANE JUST

MFA in Writing graduate Danielle Altrogge's thesis came to life on the stage as *Elemental*. *Elemental* featured plays written by Danielle Altrogge and Charlie Peters and was directed by Yvette Nolan. The shows took place over the month of February 2019. *Elemental* uses poetry, visuals, puppetry, and monologues to explore gender, sexuality, and healing.

Plays at Studio 914 (914 20th Street West, Saskatoon)
www.livefive.ca | 306-653-5191

www.embracetheatre.co



WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY CHARACTER?

"It's super difficult to select one favourite literary character, but I have a lot of love for Wuthering Heights' Cathy Linton (not to be confused with her mother, Cathy Earnshaw)." - Sarah Ens



TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

MEAGHAN HACKINEN

Meaghan Hackinen has continued to pursue her obsession with cycling, racking up more than 22,500 kilometres in 17 countries over the course of 2018. Highlights included cycling 734 kilometres in 24 hours to smash the women's course record at the World 24 Hour Time Trials in Borrego Springs, CA; pedalling 7,500 kilometres from North Cape, Norway, to Tarifa, Spain; becoming the first person to complete an Everesting of Knox Mountain in Kelowna, BC; attending Bike!Bike!, an annual conference for community bike shops and cooperatives, in Los Angeles, CA; and presenting at two Cycling Speaker Series events, hosted by Saskatoon's Bike Doctor.

Meaghan's MFA in Writing thesis project, a travel-memoir entitled *South Away: The Pacific Coast on Two Wheels*, has been acquired by NeWest Press for publication in October, 2019. Her recent work can be found in *Antilang*, *Blank Spaces* (forthcoming), *Canadian Cycling*, *The Feathertale Review*, *Pedal Magazine*, and *untethered*. Meaghan intends to spend the summer of 2019 training in Switzerland and writing about her two-wheeled adventures.

JENNIFER WYMORE

Jennifer Wymore is currently writing in a remote, off-grid location amidst the beautiful Boreal Forest in Northern Alberta. When she isn't writing, she can be found cross country skiing or doing yoga before the sun sets. North of 55, she's loving the beautiful winter weather and her life amid nature.

TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

DYLAN RAE

Dylan Rae is preparing his (thesis) novel for publication. He is also working on a book that combines photographs and poetry. This summer Dylan will again conduct boat tours on Lake Huron.

COURTNEY LØBERG

Courtney Løberg's graphic novel, *My Favourite Girl that I Never See*, is expected out in May 2019, published by Chizine Publications.



WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY CHARACTER?

"If it's not Anne Shirley, then it's definitely Fanny Flagg's Idgie Threadgoode, in *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*."

- Kate O'Gorman



TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

DEE HS



dee hs is currently serving as Poetry Editor for *Grain Magazine*. She has published with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and as Food Columnist for *Grainews*, a weekly publication read by thousands of western Canadian farmers and ranchers. Her essay, "Cooking for James," appeared in the Fall 2018 issue of the American publication *Creative Nonfiction*.

Another of dee's essays, "Wiebo's Way", won *Prairie Fire's* 2018 Creative Nonfiction Writing Contest, and will appear in the Summer 2019 issue. Both essays are from her recently completed collection, "Bread & Water." The manuscript is currently under consideration for publication.

dee's second poetry manuscript, "Abundance", is under consideration for publication. Poems from this collection appeared in 2018 in *The Antigonish Review*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *untethered* and *The Society*, and one poem was a shortlisted finalist in *Room's* annual poetry contest. Also from this manuscript, dee's long poem, "Jeanne Dark comes of age on the prairies" will be published as a chapbook in Spring 2019 by Espresso Chapbooks.

She has work forthcoming in *Resistance: A Poetic Response to Sexual Assault* (Coteau Books, Sue Goyette, ed., 2019). In 2018, dee edited two books, which have since been published: *Every Day We Disappear* by Angela Long (Radiant Press, 2018) and *The Evolution of the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan* by Amy Jo Ehman (Friesen's Press, 2018).

TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

LEAH MACLEAN-EVANS

After a year of freelancing as a social media and SEO content writer, Leah MacLean-Evans recently accepted a position writing educational material for air navigation service providers at NAV CANADA. She continues to proofread for *Grain* and has joined the editorial board of *Canthius*. In 2018, her poem "Name Me After a Fish" won the League of Canadian Poets' National Broadsheet Contest.

Leah spent the month of November in a writing residency at the Arteles Creative Center in Finland, and was honoured by Tree Reading Series as a Hot Ottawa Voice. Keep up with her online at @PenAndDragon or at macleanevans.co.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY CHARACTER?

"Henry Tilney of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, if only for being salty enough to say, 'The person, be it lady or gentleman, who has not pleasure in a good novel must be intolerably stupid.'"

- Kathryn Shalley

"Todd Hewitt, the protagonist from the book series *The Knife of Never Letting Go*. His morality and humanity, even in the face of the overwhelming toxicity of a violent and sociopathic society, makes him a character I can root for, despite his character flaws."

- Tonia Laird

TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

KATHERINE LAWRENCE

Katherine Lawrence graduated from the program in the fall of 2017 and immediately began work as the writer-in-residence at Saskatoon Public Library. The residency ran for nine months. Her short play, *Exit*, was co-produced by Hardly Art Theatre and On the Boards Staging Company in association with Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre at the Shortcuts Festival, Saskatoon, September, 2017. Another short play, *Divided Highway*, was produced by Write in the Kisser Productions for the Saskatoon Fringe Festival, 2018. Most recently, Katherine's new poetry manuscript, *Homebodies*, won the 2018 John V. Hicks long manuscript award.

SIMON BOEHM

Simon Boehm defended his MFA thesis July of 2018 and graduated the following October. During his time in the MFA program, Simon hosted a horror writing workshop at Frances Morrison Library in March 2018. Simon copyedited for issue 4.2 of *untethered*, is a preliminary reader for *Grain* magazine, and will be copyediting for issue 4 of *antlang* magazine. Recently, Simon has moved to Toronto to work as a Sales and Marketing Coordinator at ESL bookstore and distributor English Central. He also started his own blog at cymaen.com where he has recorded the first two episodes of his literary podcast, Eater of Words.



TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

BONNIE HEILMAN

Bonnie Heilman published an article, "Decarbonized, Democratized, Decolonized," in *Briarpatch Magazine*, January/February 2019.

GEOFF PEVLIN

Since finishing the MFA in Writing program, Geoff Pevlin has had his poetry and short fiction published in *Riddle Fence*, *untethered*, *The Newfoundland Quarterly*, and *antilang*; was a runner-up in the Writer's Alliance of Newfoundland's 2018 Postcard Fiction contest; and has work forthcoming in *The Fiddlehead* and *Galleon*.

Geoff attended the Sage Hill Writing Experience in May 2018 and co-founded a publishing company in late 2017—Applebeard Editions (applebeardeditions.ca)—which released an anthology of Canadian short prose in June 2018 with more titles slated for 2019.

You can follow him @GeoffPevlin, or you can check out his visual art; read his blog about creativity, writing, reading, and psychology; and sign up for his free newsletter at geoffpevlin.com.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY CHARACTER?

"Anne of Green Gables; she was so spunky, effusive and imaginative!" - Doreen Ford Stumborg



TIDINGS FROM OUR GRADUATES

NICOLE HALDOUPIS

Nicole co-founded the small press Applebeard Editions with Geoff Pevlin in 2018, and together they co-edited and published their first anthology, *Release Any Words Stuck Inside of You: An untethered Collection of Shorts* in June of 2018. Nicole also co-edits for *untethered* out of Toronto with Stephanie McKechnie and edits for the Saskatchewan literary magazine *Grain*.

Last year, Nicole published flash fiction and prose poetry from her thesis in *Bad Nudes* (flash fiction "Four Flutes"), *antilang* (prose poems "Somewhere Near Danforth" and "We All Fall Down"; and flash fiction "Janie's Cat"), and *The Feathertale Review* (flash fiction "Black Hole"). She was also a featured reader at the Art Bar Poetry Series in Toronto in January 2019.

Currently, she doing a mentorship with John Barton, past editor of *Arc* (1990-2003) and *The Malahat Review* (2004-2018), this week in Regina (and is very excited about it!).



ABOUT THE EDITORS

HOPE HOUSTON

Hope Houston was thrilled to join the newsletter's editorial team as the Managing Editor and to work with Dr. Lynes. Joining the MFA in Writing program has been a privilege and blessing, making writing full-time a reality for the first time in Hope's life. She would like to thank her fellow editors and Dr. Lynes for their hard work and support, as colleagues and friends.

DELANE JUST

Delane Just is an English Honours undergraduate student at the University of Saskatchewan. She interned with Jeanette Lynes and Joanne Leow in 2019. She also volunteers for the University of Saskatchewan Undergraduate Research Journal and works for the Writing Help Center. Delane loves writing, especially magical realism short stories and poetry. She hopes to one day write a full novel and attend a graduate-level creative writing program like this one. Delane feels absolutely privileged to have worked on this newsletter with Jeanette Lynes and the rest of the newsletter editorial team.

KATE O'GORMAN

Kate O'Gorman is excited to be part of this talented editorial team. Good writing doesn't happen in a vacuum and Kate is grateful for all she has learned from her writing peers, her co-editors and to Dr. Jeanette Lynes for her tireless encouragement and support.

TONIA LAIRD

Tonia Laird is part of the MFA in Writing program's class of 2020. She has worked as an animator, a magazine designer, a storyboard artist, and a video game writer. Although she enjoys reading all kinds of writing, speculative fiction is her one true love. She thanks Dr. Lynes for the opportunity to design this newsletter, and is eternally grateful for all the hard work of her fellow editors.

