

"I believe myself that a good writer doesn't really need to be told anything except to keep at it." —Chinua Achebe

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Send us your recent publications and accomplishments to be included in the next newsletter.

[>>>Email Julia<<<](#)

Upcoming Events

April 27th: Final Reading in the Welker Room

April 28th: Graduation

Greetings Writers,

I'm here to say farewell. This is my final newsletter, but hopefully not the last you'll be hearing from me. I'm grateful for the opportunity to share our program news with you over the last two years. I'm sure the next Newsletter Fellow will treat you just as well. Best of luck to our graduates and those continuing their writing adventure in the program!

This month, we heard from writers on addiction and recovery at a reading featuring Michael Simms, Sheryl St. Germain, Toi Derricotte, and Kate Daniels.

The Independent Literary Publishing class launched thirteen new chapbooks through thirteen new presses at Chapbook Cheers. Our final Word Circus of the school year took place at White Whale Bookstore where attendees shared pieces on endings and farewells.

Finally, this month we learn about Rachel Roupp's thesis project *Becoming a Mountain*, and we catch up with alumna Sharla Yates.

As the semester winds down, make sure to support our graduates at the final reading

on Saturday, April 27th in the Welker Room!

Signing off,

Julia Eldred

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P.S. We are always open to any newsletter suggestions or story ideas you might have. And as always, don't forget to send your accomplishments. I will forward them on to our new Newsletter Fellow for next year.

Writers on Addiction & Recovery



Toi Derricotte, Kate Daniels, Sheryl St. Germain, and Michael Simms

Along with Autumn House Press and Vox Populi, Chatham hosted a reading on the topic of addiction and recovery. We gathered in the Welker room on April 4th to hear the work of writers speaking from many different perspectives of this issue, from personal to familial to societal.

Christine Stroud, Editor-in-Chief of Autumn House Press, opened the reading with a welcome and gratitude toward the readers for sharing their stories.

Introduced by first-year poet Matthew Vargo, Michael Simms kicked off the reading. He started off with an exciting anecdote of his younger years hanging out with rock stars. His work dove into his own difficulties with addiction and ended on a note about his son, who is also in recovery.

Next up was our very own Program Director Sheryl St. Germain. First-year poet Janette Schafer gave her introduction commenting on how Sheryl's work has been a personal inspiration. Sheryl read from her most recent book of poetry *The Small Door of Your Death*. She focused on the poems that were inspired by the suite of swords in tarot.

After Sheryl, we heard a reading from poet and writer Toi Derricotte. Her introduction

came from incoming Whitford Fellow Vivian Lee Croft. She read pieces about her own history with addiction, giving short anecdotes before each piece.

Finally, introduced by second-year poet Hannah Kinsey, Kate Daniels gave the final reading of the night. Her work focused on her difficulties with her son's road through addiction and her reliance on Al-Anon.

The heartfelt, troubling, and enlightening readings brought us all closer to understanding the pain and beauty woven into stories of addiction and recovery.



The guest readers were introduced by Matthew Vargo, Janette Schafer, Vivian Lee Croft, and Hannah Kinsey.

Trivia Time

Which American author first used the word *wicked* to mean good or cool?

Chapbook Cheers!



Chabooks displayed at Chapbook Cheers

On Friday, April 19th, the Independent Literary Publishing class, led by Professor Christine Stroud, hosted Chapbook Cheers at The Glitter Box Theater. The event was the launch party for thirteen new presses that originated from the class as well as the thirteen new chapbooks that were published.

Tables lined the venue with students representing their presses and selling their chapbooks. The community came together to support the hard work of these students over the semester.

The event began with a reading, kicked off by Christine, who praised the work of the students and the impressive chapbooks that were produced. Writers came--from nearby and some as far as DC and New York--to read from their chapbooks. Students read in place of writers who weren't able to attend. We heard wonderful work from Katherine Ayers, Katie Fallon, Melissa Scholes Young, Sony Ton-Aime, Megan Milks, among others. Alumnae of the program, Melanie R. Hirshberg and Rebecca Blauch, also had chapbooks published.

Following the reading, attendees browsed and purchased chapbooks while mingling and indulging in food and drink. The event was a perfect way to close out the semester and these projects. Some students look forward to pursuing their presses beyond the class. Keep your eyes peeled!

Final Spring 2019 Word Circus



Sheryl St. Germain

Whitford Fellow Trevor Dawson hosted his final Word Circus at White Whale Bookstore on Friday, April 12th. For second-year students, this was the last Word Circus of their MFA journey.

Instead of the traditional Word Circus format of four featured readers followed by an open mic, Trevor and Dmitra Inteuse-Gideon asked writers to arrive prepared with pieces on the topic of farewells and endings. Trevor called it a lightning round.

We heard musings, poetry, anecdotes, and fiction. Second-year nonfiction student Sam Smith read a poem lamenting the loss of her favorite Nalgene water bottle. First-year Kira Kitchen read a flash fiction piece about a car accident. Shawna Kent, second-year nonfiction student, read from a personal essay.

The final reader of the night was Program Director Sheryl St. Germain. The event was her last Word Circus as Program Director. She read a poem addressing her former students, and highlighting moments of her teaching career. We are all sad to see her go!

Prompt Party

Like the short story "Bullet in the Brain" by Tobias Wolff, write a piece that stretches out a moment or an instance.

Into the Light

In conjunction with Chatham's Out of the Darkness Campus Walk to Fight Suicide, the

Chatham MFA program and *The Fourth River* sponsored a creative writing contest in honor of Stuart H. Hunt, a fiction writer and alumnus who lost his life to suicide in January.

The winners of the contest were "13 Coins," by Anna Eidolon, "From the Frying Pan into the Place between a Rock and the Devil," by Sheila Kelly, and "A Poem in Six Acts," by Janette Schafer.

On April 13th, faculty, students, and alumni came together as The Ramblin' Rimbauds team to participate in Out of the Darkness. They walked in the memory of Stuart Hunt, whose favorite poet was Rimbaud.

Following the walk, there was a reading of the writing contest finalists.



The Ramblin' Rimbauds

Project Feature: *Becoming a Mountain*

Rachel Roupp, graduating poetry student, recently finished work on her thesis, a poetry collection titled *Becoming a Mountain*.

The collection of poems combines to create a narrative about her experiences growing up in the wildness and poverty of Tioga County, PA and the effects of violence on her family and herself. She said, "The biggest thread is my journey to process and heal from an abusive relationship, specifically dealing with the ramifications of sexual violence."

Through the thesis, it becomes clear that trauma isn't something that can be gotten over, like climbing a mountain, but something that one must accept, like a mountain that indiscriminately grows trees and provides shelter for animals.

Rachel's goal for *Becoming a Mountain* is to represent the complicated emotional journey of recovery. She divided the thesis into two sections. The first encompasses pain and denial, while the second confronts trauma head-on and calls it by name. Additionally, she wanted to depict her home county in a nuanced way. She said, "The landscape is so stunning and in some ways harsh. The people are the same. They

come from mountain stone and live hard lives, leaving them bound by poverty, family, and limited access to education.”

When asked about her inspiration, Rachel said, “I keep writing because I can’t seem to shut up about the abuse I was subjected to. I was so fixated on it that it overtook my work, and my new obsession with recovery has taken precedence. I want to show the non-linear honesty of moving forward, I feel I owe that to other survivors because I have so craved the words of someone else to make me feel less alone.”

Rachel plans to develop her thesis into a full collection of poetry. She foresees a third section about how sexual trauma influences connections with others and shapes the world going forward even as it becomes easier to carry.

Featured Alum: Sharla Yates



Year: 2016

Genre: Children's Writing

Program: Full-residency; Publishing Concentration

Favorite Author: “Diana Wynne Jones and a crew of others.”

Favorite Books: “The last book I read was *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds, which was, at that moment in time, my favorite.”

Favorite Quotes: “A relaxed mind is a creative mind” —Yogi tea bag

Sharla Yates is a writer and poet living in Pittsburgh. Someone once described her writing as, “cinematic,” which struck her as useful as she finds herself being led more by imagery than plot. She’s the Director of Education at [Creative Nonfiction Foundation](#).

Sharla’s MFA journey began at Louisiana State University rather than Chatham. For a myriad of reasons, she left her poetry program there and returned home to Oregon. There, she taught composition and creative writing courses both at community colleges and online. Among other pursuits, she also began writing a middle grade fantasy novel. Eventually, her family moved to Pittsburgh.

Sharla discovered that Chatham offered a Children's Writing MFA. It seemed like a good opportunity to use her LSU credits while getting a handle on her novel project. She said, “I was *very* nervous about taking on more school debt. I regret the debt, but

not the experience. If that sounds complicated then I'm explaining it right.”

Her favorite memories at Chatham include conversations she had with her classmates and instructors. She said, “Some of my closest friends today are from Chatham.”

After graduating from the program, Sharla spent months seeking consistent employment. She feared she may have made a mistake in going back to school. During that time, she restarted on her thesis while working as a part-time instructor. She said, “Now that I think back on it, I envy how much time I had to write!”

Six months later, her poetry chapbook was published, and, soon after, she landed her job at Creative Nonfiction. She uses her creative writing, online instruction, and curriculum assessment experience every day. She said, “I am very enthusiastic about CNF's educational programming and the community we're building. I encourage all writers to check out what we're doing in Garfield!”

As for advice for students currently in the program, Sharla said, “Be in equal measure conscientious of others in the program and hard at work at being the best writer *you* can be. Show up for the work. Celebrate others' wins. Be grateful.”

Sharla’s chapbook *What I Would Say if We Were To Drown Tonight* went to second print and is available at [Stranded Oak Press](#).

Noteworthy

Check here each month to stay up-to-date on the publications and triumphs of members of the Chatham community. Congrats to my fellow writers! ~ Julia

- **Marc Nieson (Faculty):** *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* will be publishing prose poem "Variations on a Horizon (Autumn 2018)" next Autumn to coincide with the 1st anniversary of Tree of Life shootings.
- **Katherine Ayres (Faculty):** Chapbook *Posties* published by *Loss Letter Press*.
- **Rachel Roupp (Student):**
 - Poem "My First Stepdad was a Hunter" forthcoming from *Rust + Moth*.
 - Poem "When I'm Asked Why I Do Not Want a Son" forthcoming from *Ghost City Review*.
- **RK Taylor (Student):**
 - Poem “Dichotomous Solutions” published in *Metonym*.
 - Recipient of Chatham's Graduate Creative Excellence Award.
- **Janette Schafer (Student):**
 - Poems "Amnesty" and "Porcupine Mountains" published in *Madness Muse Press*.
 - Placed 3rd in the 2019 Into the Light: Stuart H. Hunt Memorial Award contest for "A Poem in Six Acts."
 - Chief Editor of recently published *The Dreamers Anthology: Writing Inspired by the Lives of Martin Luther King Jr and Anne Frank*. Launch party to be

announced.

- **Cedric Rudolph (Alum):** Editor of recently published *The Dreamers Anthology: Writing Inspired by the Lives of Martin Luther King Jr and Anne Frank.*
- **Melanie R. Hirshberg (Alum):** Chapbook *Empty Spaces* published by *Lonely Trawler Press.*
- **Rebecca Blauch (Alum):** Chapbook *Engulfed* published by *Empress.*
- **Athena Wintruba (Alum):** Chapbook *excerpts from mmkay* published by *The Lucky Cat.*
- **Valerie Lute (Alum):**
 - Essay "The Idea of Birds" published in *Contrary Magazine.* Short story
 - "Disjoined by Neptune's Might" published by *Liquid Imagination.*
- **Beth Gilstrap (Alum):** Stories "Becky" and "Bone Words" published in *Best Microfiction 2019.*

Share your publications!

Trivia Time Answer

The Oxford English Dictionary credits the earliest usage of *wicked* to mean good or cool to F. Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *This Side of Paradise.*

Bonus fact: He is also thought to have used the word *t-shirt* for the first time.

Wicked!



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