

BFA Newsletter

Director's Note

by Patricia O'Donnell

Greetings to BFA alums, current students, faculty and friends! The BFA Program had an active year, with an extra reading this spring by our own alum Jacques Rancourt in addition to the roster of six visiting writers. A large group of students and faculty went to the AWP convention in Washington, DC, where a group of us visited their representatives in Congress to make our feelings known. The Writers Guild continues to be an active and growing group, with activities including an all-nighter to write a play, which was later performed on campus. Our alums continue to be active in various fields; check out the list of publications and accomplishments at the end of the newsletter. Please send any news you have to me at podonnell@maine.edu. The Program remains strong by adapting to changes. For one of those changes see below. Be well, all of you, and stay in touch.

Program News

Grethen Legler is excited (and a little terrified) to tell you all that she has been granted a temporary leave from UMF to pursue graduate study at Harvard Divinity School, where she has been accepted to study toward a Master's degree in Divinity. She says, "It all feels a bit unreal, but I say with confidence that I've been headed in this direction for some time, and I am extremely grateful to UMF for allowing me this opportunity. Pursuing an MDiv at Harvard puts me in the midst of an exciting community of scholars and seekers, where I hope to explore the intersections of religion with other areas of interest including the environment, gender, narrative, cognitive science, happiness studies, and more. After earning the MDiv, my desire and intention is to return to UMF and apply what I've learned to teaching and resource-building on campus and in the larger community. My partner Ruth and I intend to sell our house/farm and move to Cambridge for the duration of my study there, but will keep in regular contact with friends in this area and spend as much time as we can at our camp on Locke Pond in Chesterville. Ruth is excited about the myriad possibilities in the Boston area in terms of her musical career, so there are benefits for us both. If you'd like to know more about what we're up to, I'd be pleased to talk with you about it, maybe over coffee! UMF will be launching a search for a Visiting Assistant Professor in nonfiction to replace me. Thanks for being such terrific students. I will miss you. Meanwhile, if I am to serve as a useful example of how one might live one's life, the lesson could be: Listen to what your heart is telling you. It's never too late do follow its advice."

Students and Faculty enjoying time at AWP in Washington, DC, Spring 2017



Faculty News

Patricia O'Donnell

Waiting to Begin, Patricia O'Donnell's memoir, was published in August of 2016 by Bottom Dog Books, and her short story collection, *Gods for Sale*, won the 2016 Serena McDonald Kennedy Fiction Award. It will be published in the spring of 2017 by Snake Nation Press. She had the following short pieces appear recently: "Deep Blue," flash fiction in *100 Word Story*, "The Moon and the Ravine," short fiction in *Read Short Fiction*, and "The Smell of Lilacs" in *Gravel*.

Gretchen Legler

Returned this fall from a year-long sabbatical leave, during which she finished a collection of essays about living in rural Maine. Many of the essays have been published in magazines and journals, most recently "Tracks" in the Feb/March issue of *Orion Magazine*. Gretchen attended the 2017 AWP conference in D.C., presenting as part of the panel "Best Behavior : Writers Negotiating Cultural Differences." During the summer of 2016 Gretchen taught a memoir writing class at Maine Media College in Rockland, ME. In Fall 2016 offered for the first time at UMF a course in The Audio Essay.

Jeff Thomson

Published his newest book of poetry and prose--*The Belfast Notebooks*--with Salmon Poetry. This book engages his time in as a Fulbright Scholar in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as well as other locales around Europe, and explores history, violence, community, and the weight of the past, as it tries to come to terms with the way these forces impact and define our contemporary world. These poems also like a good pint, just saying.

Nathaniel Minton

In Spring 2017 Teal taught his popular class on Stanley Kubrick, which studies the conversion of novels into film. He continues to co-facilitate UMF's Longfellow Young Writer's Program with Shana Youngdahl.

Shana Youngdahl

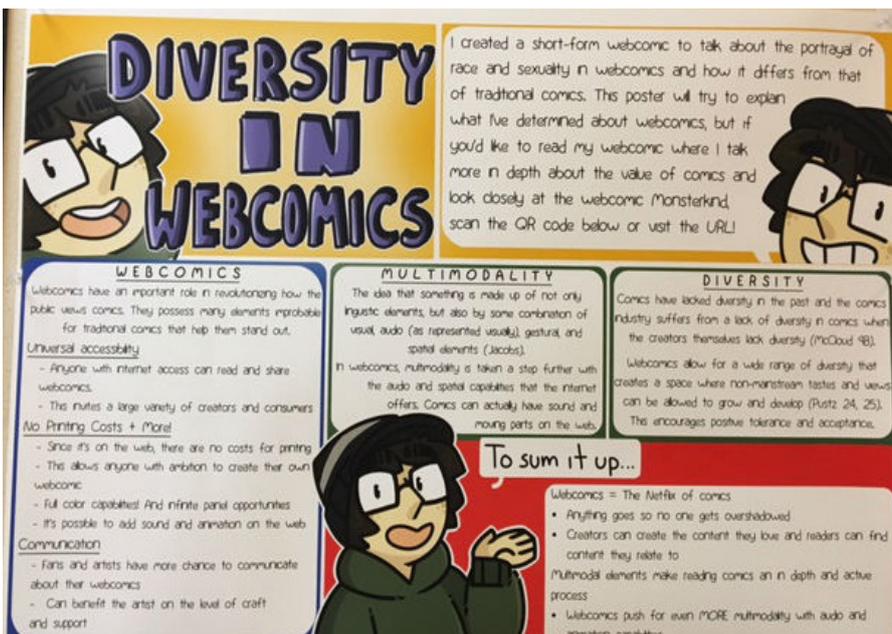
Was awarded a 2017 Artist Fellowship from the American Antiquarian Society and will spend four weeks in residence at their archives in June researching for an in-progress collection of poems about women's work in tinware colonies. New poems by Shana have appeared this year in *Muse/A*, *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Rhino Poetry Journal* and *The Portland Press Herald*.

Second City Comedy

by Gail Bello

Graduating Creative Writing BFA and Theater double major Zack Peercy attended the Second City Training Center for his apprenticeship. Second City is the premier improvisational comedy troupe of Chicago, whose stage has seen the birth of many successful careers, such as Tina Fey, Stephen Colbert, Steve Carell, and many others. Zack described his time at the nine week intensive program by saying that “every day, nine to five, monday through friday, my job was to be funny”. Zack has since gone to utilize the lessons learned at the summer program through his involvement in UMFS improv group, The Lawn Chair Pirates, and in his creative work. He feels the program has changed him by teaching him how to “cut the fat” out of his writing.

Webcomics Rock



BFA major Stephanie LaFreniere (17) displayed her webcomics project at the spring 2017 Symposium Day.

Senior Sem Participants

Fall 2016

- Samuel Bennett
- Olivia Cyr
- Amber Duffus
- Julia Fletcher
- Adam Hewins
- Aliza Dube

Spring 2017

- Lorrin Burnham
- Silas Cooper
- Lindsey Dagget
- Emily Eldridge
- Zack Peercy
- Emma Pidden
- Konner Wilson

Graduate School Plans

- Konner Wilson - Northwestern
- Amber Duffus - UNH

CW Prize Winners

Fall 2016: Olivia Cyr

Spring 2017: Zack Peercy & Konner Wilson

Beth Eisen Scholarship: Aliza Dube

The Creative Writing Prize is awarded each semester to a BFA candidate in the Senior Seminar who shows excellence and promise in writing.

The Beth Eisen Scholarship is awarded annually to a student in the BFA program whom faculty believe shows a passion for creativity and promise as a writer.

Alumni Spotlight



Savannah Ridgley in France

Savannah Ridgley, 2016, travelled to France after graduation and became Lectrice D'Anglais at the Universite du Maine au Mans through the UMF partnership. For her main vocation she leads several groups of French students in English classes, teaching the students, facilitating discussions, and providing information on English culture and media. In February 2017, Savannah accepted a second subject, teaching an extracurricular writing workshop class once every week.

by Zach Roberge

Love Letter Activism

Audrey Gidma, 2015, has been using her powers as a poet to change the world-- one love letter at a time. "After Trump was elected," she explains, "I started sending love letters. I sent over 100 in the first month. Letters of resilience and encouragement." The letters are in long hand, and sometimes include her own poems, or the poems of other writers. So far, she's sent letters to 35 states, 4 continents, to Patagonia, Tanzania, Mozambique, France, Canada and Brazil. "It has been a healing process for me to send out as much kindness and love as I can," she says.



by Gretchen Legler

Student Updates

- **Audrey Gidman** (15) won 1000 dollars for the Slippery Elm Poetry prize. Her poem "Anatomy/Geography/Ethnography" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.
- **Kim Arthurs** (16) has her experimental short "No Signal" featured in this year's Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival in Vermont.
- **Tori Axford** (14) has accepted a job as full-time library technician at the Plymouth Public Library
- **Patrick Bagley's** (04) story, "Pandora," was published in *Detective Fiction*. Patrick has signed a contract for a new paperback and e-book edition of *BITTER WATER BLUES* to be published by Down & Out Books.
- **Chelsea Bartlett** (14) had her story, "Dusty's Treasure Chest" published in *Lost River*, Fall 2016
- **Ben Bedard** (1996) wrote, with Maria Fernanda Glaser Danton, "Regional Creature: An Introduction to Gabriela Mistral," published in 2017 by Editorial Letrarte.
- **Marcelle Hutchins'** (12) article/story "I Attended a Donald Trump Rally As A Black Journalist In The Whitest State In The U.S." was published in the *Huffington Post* on 10/19/16.
- **Jordan McNair** (14) has an essay in *Mandala Journal* called "Daddy Found God Sometime After His Second Wife."
- **Lauren Stetson** (current BFA major), who is studying in France, has had a poem accepted in *Asterism*.
- **Tryfon Tolides** (01) has a poem in *The Missouri Review*.
- **Kerri-lyn Traves** (14?) Writes for the *Odyssey*.

BFA graduates: Don't see your news here below? That's probably because you haven't sent it to us. Let us know what you're doing—not only publications and honors, but jobs, school, marriages, children, pets . . . We would love to hear from you. Send to Pat O'Donnell at (podonnel@maine.edu)

- **David Bersell's** (10) first book of essays, *The Way I've Seen Her Ever Since*, is available for pre-order from The Lettered Streets Press.
- **Peter Biello's** (05) team at New Hampshire Public Radio has won a National Murrow Award.
- **Audrey Blaufuss's** (16) poem was selected as a top entry for the Ode to the Zip Code poetry contest!
- **Amber Duffus** (17) has been accepted into the Nonfiction Program at Southern New Hampshire State University.
- **Molly King** (15) has accepted a position as a special education teacher at Troy Howard Middle School in Belfast.
- **Jess Mann** (03) has her piece, "What It's Like To Get Pregnant While Battling An Eating Disorder" in *Refinery 29*, Nov. 14, 2016.
- **Jesse Miller's** (1999) novel, *Unwrap Your Candy*, will be published by Common Deer Press in the fall 2017.
- **Kelsey Moore's** (11) story "Ravens" appeared in *Persephone's Daughters*, 2016.
- **Robert Malloy's** (1996) poem, "Workhorse in the Rain," appeared online in *Permafrost Magazine*.

Student Updates Continued

- **Beth Walk** has been accepted into the MFA in Creative Writing program at San Francisco State University.
- **Mary Ellms** had her piece "Je Suis" published in *Heliotrope*
- **Ashley Forshaw**, a sophomore in the BFA Program, has her novel *Faking Delinquency: A Young Adult Romantic Comedy* available on Amazon Kindle from Blvnp Publishing.
- **Sara Gelston's** poems about flood myths, fear of the female, and societal collapse have been published by *DIAGRAM* / New Michigan Press.
- **Jamie Landry's** story "The Seer Witch" was accepted for publication in *The Frankenstein Anthology*.
- **Caleb Rea's** poem "Touch Shy" was published March 23, 2017 in *Eunioa Review*
- **Rachel Robbins** was selected to be included on the Maine Arts Commission PK-12 Teaching Artist roster.
- **Kate Russell's** story "Laura" appeared in *Juked* on 03.14.17

News from AJB



Alice James Books has some exciting news! Jane Mead's "World of Made and Unmade" was selected for the 2016 Longlist for the National Book Award in Poetry, the International Shortlist for the 2017 Griffin Poetry Prize, and was a finalist for the 2016 Los Angeles Times Book Prize in Poetry. Additionally, Phillip B. Williams received a 2017 Whiting Award and won the Kate Tufts Discovery Award for his collection "Thief in the Interior." Jamaal May was a finalist for the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award for his collection "The Big Book of Exit Strategies" and also received the Benjamin H. Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

AJB has kickstarted two new opportunities for UMF students, including the AJB Talk Series: How to Become a Writer, as well as our Director's Chair Fellowship. For more information about these events and news, and to learn more about our internship opportunities, please visit us on our website: alicejamesbooks.org.



Wilson Scholar News

Writer's Guild Officers

President :

Zack Percy (16-17), Allie Umstadt (17-18)

Vice President:

Zach Roberge (16-17), Tyler Gudair (17-18)

Treasurer :

Allie Umstadt (16-17),
Annie Moloney (17-18)

Events Coordinator:

Gail Bello (16-17) (17-18)

Secretary:

Annie Malonie, (16-17),
Alexandra Dupuis (17-18)

Sandy River Review

Fall 2016

- **Editor**
Konner Wilson
- **Assistant Editor**
Zack Percy

Spring 2017

- **Editor**
Alexandra Umstadt
- **Assistant Editor**
Annie Moloney

The *Sandy River Review* (The Sandy) is published electronically three times a year in the spring, summer, and winter. The journal is located in the Alice James Books House Intern Loft on the University of Maine at Farmington campus. The Faculty Advisor is Shana Youngdahl, whose office is located at 115 South Street, Farmington, ME 04938.

Literature and Magic

With the support of a Wilson Scholarship, Creative Writing and English major Richard Southard developed a scholarly and creative project focused on adaptations of literature to magic, which he presented at this spring's Symposium Day. Richard developed a set of card magic routines adapted from a variety of literary texts (e.g., a card trick based on John Keats's "The Human Seasons"), which he performed. He also gave a presentation about the history of magical adaptations of literature and then talked about his own process of adaptation.

Creative Writing at AWP



Back: Sam, Jaques Rancourt, Gretchen Legler, David Bersell, Nate Frits, Nicole Byrne, Peter Bielo, Shana Youngdahl, Happy Person, Konner Wilson, Caleb Rae.
Middle: Rachel Anderson, Allie Umstadt.
Front: Shana Tilley, Annie Maloney, Kristine Sarasin, Pat O'Donnell, Meagan Jones, Sophie Schell.