

BFA NEWSLETTER

Director's Note

by Patricia O'Donnell

Greetings to BFA alums, current students, faculty and friends! The Creative Writing House was quieter than usual this year, with Gretchen on full-year sabbatical and Pat on half leave. But we carried on, with Senior Readings and Visiting Writers readings and Writers Guild and AWP and Longfellow Summer Writing Program and all the other things that make our Program interesting. This issue highlights “The Minions”—the four Work Study students who, in the office on the ground floor of the Creative Writing House, keep the Program running. Former minions we miss you; current minions, we appreciate all that you do. Learn more about our current workers below. And Alums, if you find yourself in Farmington, please stop by 115 South and say hello!



The Minions

by The Minions

For those unaware, the Creative Writing House has four student workers fondly referred to as, The Minions. These Minions are tasked with maintaining the Creative Writing House, organizing the many portfolios, magazines, and books the house holds, and printing creative work for stressed-out students. The Minion Team is as follows:

Zack Peercy

The minion with the most years under his belt. Zack Peercy is a Junior going into his senior year. He is president of the UMF Writers' Guild as well as an e board member for many other clubs such as Lawn Chair Pirates and Stumpf. He is in charge of the Creative Writing Facebook page and website, but also takes great pride in keeping all the other minions in line.

Zach Roberge

I'm a non-traditional student and the graphic design minion who oversees the super cool marketing portion of the Creative Writing House. I have a couple of video production/audio editing projects under my belt such as The UMF AWP Creative Writing Advertisement Interview and the podcast Reading Writers, but mostly I take on design marketing jobs. I've crafted many posters for various events including various faculty readings and the senior reading, I made the new bookmark for Long Fellow Workshop, and I've taken my share of pictures of random events and faculty members, some of my pictures are on the UMF Creative Writing website. Aside from that I also draw a nifty picture, usually a character from a movie, on the minion board in the Creative Writing House with a quote of some kind for all to enjoy. Right now it is Phil from Hercules saying "aaaaanimals."

Allie Umstadt

I am Alexandra (Allie) Umstadt, and I am one of the “minions” (officially, administrative assistants) who works at the creative writing house. I come from southern New Hampshire, somewhere approximately in the middle of some woods and a town primarily populated by the elderly. I’m a creative writing and geology dual major, and I might be adding an art minor. I don’t plan on writing about rocks, but I may be looking into science writing. My primary responsibility at the creative writing house is to keep the portfolio room organized, and (slowly), I’m working on archiving the portfolios of years past and creating an index.

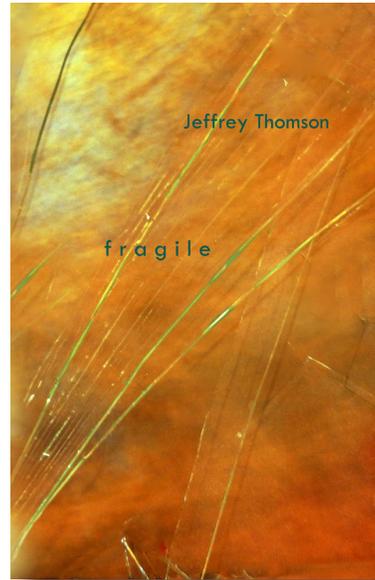
Gail Bello

My name is Gail Bello. Originally from Waltham Massachusetts, I am a first year Creative Writing Major and the newest Minion in the house. The faculty and my fellow Minions have welcomed me in with open arms and I am striving to do my very best to assist everyone with their creative writing house needs. I am an active member of Writer’s Guild and Student Theater UMF. I write mostly fiction short stories, but I am interested in getting into playwriting. As cliché as this sounds, in my short time here in Farmington I have learned to see the beauty in all people and have also grown to accept myself for who I am inside and out. That may make me sound a little “flower-childy” but it is wholeheartedly true.

Jeff Thomson - *fragile*

by Gail Bello

This past November, Poet and Professor Jeffrey Thomson published his memoir *fragile* with Red Mountain books. The memoir chronicles Jeffrey's travels to Costa Rica, the tropics, the American west, the cities of old Europe, and the three near death experiences he has along the way. The story is a globe-trotting adventure, a meditation on place and beauty and a tragedy of a man searching to escape, but unknowingly carries a threat within his own chest. Thomson says that "I wrote *fragile* to talk about place and landscape--particularly the tropical world of Costa Rica--but also to think deeper about the way those landscapes mean and the way language (primarily through poetry) rewrites our understanding of place and danger."



Jeffrey Thomson has three books published in 2015-16: *The Poems of Catullus: An Annotated Translation*, *The New Faces of Belfast* (chapbook), and the memoir, *fragile*. In 2017, his fifth full-length collection of poems, *The Belfast Notebooks*, is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry.

AWP 2016

by Zack Peercy

The UMF Writer's Guild was humbled, as always, to attend this year's AWP conference. Student Senate, in their benevolent glory, praise be, allowed us the appropriate funds to send 11 people in the BFA community. It seems like every year there's an unofficial theme for The Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference. This year, in downtown Los Angeles, the prevailing message on the tongues of panelists, publishers, and patrons was, "This is who I am." The pages of the immense catalog of panels and presentations held opportunities for women writers, writers of color, writers in the LGBT+ community, and the bane of literary fiction: genre writers. They talked about the struggles of being accepted in the writing community, their work being compromised, and constantly being told that what they're passionate about isn't good enough.

While I don't fall into any of these specific categories, these struggles are part of a whole: discrimination against writers. Currently pursuing a degree in Creative Writing from our fabulous BFA program, I'm always asked, "what can you do with a degree in Creative Writing?" It would be inappropriate to ask a Secondary Education major, who makes up a majority of this campus, "How are you going to get a job after you graduate? There aren't many jobs for teachers," but a future in the arts is always subject to scrutiny. It is only in writing communities, whether it be UMF's Creative Writing House, an MFA program, or AWP, that we are respected for our artistic path. In the communities we create we can proudly proclaim, "I am a writer," and have the response be, "fiction or poetry?" instead of, "would you like fries with that?"

As a big member of UMF's writing community, I've learned not to look down on what people choose to write about. If you're a YA fantasy writer, that's fantastic. If sultry romance is more your taste, more power to you. Even if you want to write fan fiction, that's cool. So long as we're writing and accepting of those who write, we are in the right.

In addition, several panels at AWP addressed concepts and theories surrounding the teaching and workshopping of creative work. One such panel, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own: Mentors and Mentees," presented five experienced professors in the creative writing field as they talked about how they joined creative writing and who inspired them and molded them on their journey.

The panel was incredibly interesting. The professors presenting were: Michael Croley, Richard Bausch, Jill McCorkle, and Pam Houston. The Bausch brothers at the panel each had around 40+ years of experience being a creative writing professor.

The main concept for this panel was to examine the best ways to contribute to establishing young writers. Every pannelist was in agreement that one cannot impose griplock rules onto a mentee, but each panelist had a slightly different idea on how to help a mentee otherwise. I would recommend checking into each of the pannelists' websites, but as an example, Robert Bausch expressed his ideas on workshop.

He said, and this is ad-libbed, that he never seeks to criticize or determine what is a good or what is not a good story. Instead, he will investigate what drove his student to write the story, and what can be done to bring out the best parts and make the story great.

New Art in Minion Office

Victoria Luce, '15, sent the following framed work of art to the BFA Program, with this note:

“This quilt square was my Creative Writing, senior community project for the University of Maine at Farmington class of 2015. Its yarn is created from everything I ever write in my creative writing courses, printed on black newsprint that is then cut into strips and spun, using a drop-spindle, together with yarn. The finished ‘yarn’ was then crocheted into a blanket. Each color is a different piece; for instance, the large yellow section is my screenplay and the final green section is my artist’s statement. I was always sitting in class crocheting and wanted to combine two things I love, crafts and writing. I really enjoy the idea of everything I’ve ever written building on itself to create a piece of art, something meant to keep people warm. It total it took me around six weeks to complete.”



Faculty News

Pat O'Donnell

Pat O'Donnell is this year's Trustee Professor at UMF. While teaching half-time on this fellowship, she is working on a collection of short stories and a memoir. Her short story "Chickadee" appeared in *Be Wilder*, a "Word Portland" anthology this fall. Her short story, "With Birds Flying Below Her," appeared in *Bryant Literary Review*; the poem "What I Love" appeared in *Northern New England Review*; and the short story "The Moon and the Ravine" is forthcoming in *Read Short Fiction*. Her novel, *The Vigilance of Stars*, is under consideration at presses. Her memoir, *Waiting to Begin*, will be published this year by Bottom Dog Press.

Gretchen Legler

Gretchen Legler has been on sabbatical leave this academic year, working on a collection of essays about living in rural Maine. She looks forward to returning to teaching in Fall of 2016 and is excited about a new class she will be offering in Spring of 2017, *Producing The Radio Essay*. One of her essays, "Consider the Acorn," was published in a recent issue of *Orion Magazine*: <https://orion-magazine.org/issue/septemberoctober-2015/>.

Teal Minton

Teal Minton spent two weeks at the Vermont Studio Center on a merit scholarship this spring working on his novel.

Jeffrey Thomson

Jeffrey Thomson published 2 books--The Poems of Catullus: An Annotated Translation and a memoir, fragile--in 2015-16 as well as a chapbook of poems, The New Faces of Belfast. He is currently working on a novel called A Song for the Blackbird.

Shana Youngdahl

Shana Youngdahl has a poems coming out this spring in two anthologies All We Can Hold: A Collection of Poetry On Motherhood published by Sage Hill Press and The Words of Womyn International: A Yellow Chair Review Anthology. She's headed for the first week of break to Dickinson House: Belgium to work on her book.

Elizabeth Cooke

Elizabeth Cooke has retired, but returns to UMF to teach the occasional Fiction Writing class. Her essay, "It Is Easy To Drown," appears in the Jan/ Feb issue of Yankee Magazine.

Alumni & Student News

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 (podonnel@maine.edu) and Gretchen Legler (legler@maine.edu).

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Patrick Bagley ('04) book BITTER WAR BLUES will be published by 280 Steps this fall, in paperback and a new e-book. It will have new cover art, in keeping with the overall look of their line. This book has been called a “nasty, brutal, and thoroughly entertaining novel.”

Chelsea Bartlett, ('14), is attending Stonecoast's MFA Program in Fiction. Audrey Blaufuss's ('16) short story “Flying” has been accepted for publication in Crab Fat magazine.

Nick Bucci, ('16), has two pieces accepted in the winter, 2016 Water Soup Press issue: “In Your Arms” and “Instructions for Your Apartment.”

Bridget Burns, ('05), is serving as the inaugural Grave Library Writer-in-Residence at the Louis T. Graves Memorial Public Library in Kennebunkport.

She will use her residency to work on researching and writing nonfiction about Freedom Farm in Kennebunkport. More news here: <http://mainewriters.org/graves-library-writer-in-residence-announced/>

Lee Cart, ('10), novel, *Born in the Wayeb: Book One of The Mayan Chronicles* has been selected as a finalist in the 2015 International Latino Book Awards in the Fantasy/Sci-Fi category.

Ariel Cohen, ('10), lives in LA where she is pursuing being a professional actor. In 2013 she received her MFA in writing from California College of the Arts in San Francisco. She is the Producer of an original play, called *Sex, Faith, and Jason Wexler*. She and her fiance are also writing a web series pilot. Emma Deans, ('11), is a Communications Associate in the Marketing & Communications Department at Thornton Academy (an independent school serving grades 6-12 in Saco, Maine) /<http://emmadeans.com>. After graduating from UMF, Emma earned a master's degree in Multimedia Journalism from the University of Oregon.

Aimee DeGroat (current student) story "Feel Something" is a finalist in Hollins University Fiction Contest for their 2016 Literary Festival. Susan Dorman, a UMF student who worked with BFA faculty in the 1980's, has a second book of essays coming out from Wipf & Stock Press.

Nathaniel Duggan, ('16), had his essay "Sandy River" published in *Minor Literatures*. Read it here: <http://minorliteratures.com/2016/03/01/sandy-river-nathaniel-duggan/>

He has also won the 2016 COPLAC (Consortium of Public Liberal Arts Colleges) David J. Prior award. Each year COPLAC gives this award to recognize an outstanding student essay on the public liberal arts experience. Nathaniel's essay is entitled *Liberal Arts Degrees and Lobster Tanks: A Lesson in Stopping to Smell the Fishy Roses*.

Sara Gelston, ('05), is a Lecturer in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's English Program.

Kylie Groat, ('14), has an essay on smoking forthcoming in "Relief Journal." Ashley Haroldsen, ('15), works at Texas Instruments in Portland as a Document Writer.

Marcelle Hutchins, ('12), who earned her MA from Emerson in 2015, is working for PBS as a project coordinator and assistant to the co-president. She is also working for a nonprofit called Story Shares as a web journalist/ communications coordinator. Her piece "My Life, My Decision: Getting Past Guilt and Shame After An Abortion" appeared in Beyond Classically Beautiful, October 2015. She also published "I AM Black Enough" in the same journal. This piece was reposted in PRI's The World. Read it here: <http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-03-11/i-am-black-enough>

Brittany Kashar, ('12), has completed her first semester of classes online through Kent State University for a Master's in Library and Information Science

Dani LeBlanc, ('08), and Lindsay Tice, (BFA '98), have articles in Farmington First, summer 2015. The issue also features a story about Ben Gadberry, ('12), videographer.

Dani LeBlanc and Emily Young, both '08, edited Be Wilder, A Word Portland Anthology. Dani and Emily are co-founders of the Word Portland reading series.

Dani LeBlanc also accepted a position teaching 8th grade at Brunswick Junior High.

Jess Mann, ('05), is in the middle of her final semester in the Goddard College MFA program. She is also an instructor at Boston's Grub Street, a creative writing nonprofit, and is the proud mother of her new son, Bastian.

Kyle Manning, ('14'), who is currently in France teaching English, was selected as a Fulbright Ambassador for next year. He is headed to Canada (Quebec City) to conduct a research project on comic blogs as an emerging genre. Among other things, he plans to work with the organizers of a blogging festival and network with these writers.

Kellsey Metzger, ('14), was accepted to three MFA Programs: Southern New Hampshire University, Lesley University, and The New School. She will attend SNHU.

Kelsey Moore, ('13), column, "Visitation," appeared in RiverTeeth online. You can read it here: <http://www.riverteethjournal.com/blog/2015/12/28/visitation>

Sarah Moore, ('12), has an article coming out in the next issue of Ocean Navigator.

Shanna McNair, ('02), co-directs The Writer's Hotel Master Class in Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry, a mini-residency program in New York City. The next conference is held June 1-7, 2016. Shanna is editor of The New Guard. See here for more information about The Writer's Hotel: https://www.awpwriter.org/wcc/wcc_entry_view/1397/the_writers_hotel_master_class_in_fiction_nonfiction_poetry_2016_june_1-7_

Samantha Shepard, ('10), is moving to Japan to participate in the JET Program (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program) after two years of tutoring at Bangor School Department.

Kat Nicoll, ('13), and a friend are starting a creative writing program for middle school/high school teens in Cape Elizabeth, called "Unwritten Roads."

J.W. Oliver, ('10), has been named as Editor of the The Lincoln County News J.W. has been Deputy Editor. Read about it here:

<http://lincolncountynewsonline.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=75&ArticleID=67239>

Ryan Ouimet, ('12), was accepted into both the NYU and Hofstra MFA Programs. He will attend NYU in Fiction.

Jacques Rancourt, ('09), says: “Happy to announce that my first book of poems, NOVENA, won the Lena-Miles Wever Todd prize from Pleiades Press and will be out in the world in March 2017.”

Jacques’s poem “Against Aristophanes,” published Nov. 15, 2015 in linebreak, can be read (and heard) here: <https://linebreak.org/poems/against-aristophanes/> And his poem “Wild Through the Sea” appeared in the Winter 2015-2016 issue of Ploughshares.

Meg Reid, ('08), has edited Carolina Writers at Home, an anthology showcasing the homes of Southern writers. The book came out in paperback from Hub City Press in October, 2015. Her essay “Ghosts: An Outline” appeared in Diagram, 16:1. Meg also got married to Matthew Lewis in October of 2015—congratulations, Meg!

Kate Russell’s ('06) story “Loup” in the new Quarterly West was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. It can be read here: <http://quarterlywest.com/?p=2814> Her story “Mountains” was a finalist in Glimmer Train’s “Very Short Fiction” contest, 2015. That story will be published in Necessary Fiction. She writes: “The best part of this story is that Tallulah [her dog] makes a cameo as a whining dog in a hotel room.”

She will have a prose poem about about Oksana Baiul published in Prairie Schooner’s Sports Shorts blog.



Sarah Sevegny, ('06), is an English Language Teacher at Nanyang Normal University in Nanyang, Henan, in China. She is also a tattoo artist.

Jenna Silliboy, (15'), is working as a proofreader for Focus Forward. They are an agency that services transcriptions for marketing researchers, medical institutions, etc. As a proofreader she reviews the final transcription before it is sent to the client for grammatical errors, accuracy, spelling, and format.

Darren Smart, ('12), graduated with a Masters Degree in Occupational Therapy from USM and is doing an internship in Austin, Texas.

Kira Taylor, ('06), will have her poem "Turkey Vultures" appear in the Spring, 2016 issue of Prairie Schooner. Her two poems, "Salal Choka" and "Skinning the Goat," were accepted by Southern Humanities Review. She also had a poem "Pieces" in the 2014 edition of Tule Review and "Paper Wasp" in the Summer, 2014 edition of Catamaran Literary Reader.

Carla Worden, ('06), attended the Squaw Valley Writers Conference in 2015 on scholarship. She is teaching British Literature and Composition to 10th and 12th grades at an online charter high school-- California Virtual Academy.

Tim Bushika, ('16), took first place in the UMA Terry Plunkett Poetry Festival Student Poetry Contest with his poem "Six Days at the Bottom of the Ocean." He also had his short story "Underneath an Oak Tree" accepted for the Water Soup Press 2016 winter issue.

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