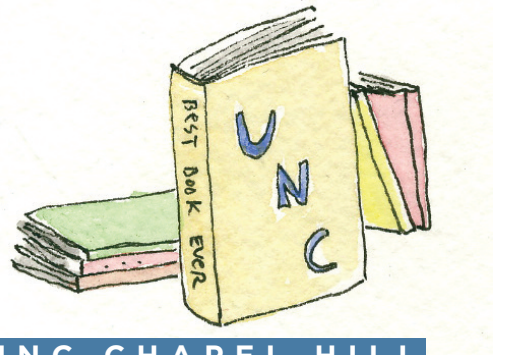


Chapter & Verse

NEWSLETTER OF THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM AT UNC CHAPEL HILL



“Like a Buffet.”

Alan Shapiro is the William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of English here at UNC, and one of those of eminences who inhabits the halls of Greenlaw with an un-self-conscious ease. You want to stop him and ask, “Hey, don’t you know who you *are*?” Here is a man who, since 1981, has published ten books of poems, two memoirs, a translation of *The Oresteia* and *The Trojan Women*, and only had one very small heart attack. He’s won the William Carlos Williams Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Award, and he was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; he’s received a Guggenheim, and the O.B. Hardison Jr. Poetry Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C.; and he’s a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The list of his accomplishments and excellence goes on and on. Suffice it to say we are very fortunate to have him here.

This interview with Professor Shapiro is prompted by his next coup: in 2012 he will be publishing two books simultaneously: *Broadway Baby*, a novel, and *Night of the Republic*, a book of poems.

Chapter & Verse: Alan, you started out as a poet, then you branched out in memoir. Now you’ve written a novel. Why all the jumping around?

Alan Shapiro: I did turn from poetry to non-fiction in 1996. I’ve primarily wanted to see what it would be like to have readers and as a memoirist have gotten a few more readers than I am normally accustomed to as a poet. Since there is a strong narrative drive in both my poetry and non-fiction, it seemed like a natural development to try fiction.

C&V: Two memoirs and ten books of poetry?

AS: Ten published. The tenth is coming out in January 2012 and I’ve got most of another book done so I’ve written eleven, ten as of January.

C&V: What’s even more interesting to us is that early next year you have a book of poetry *and* a novel that are being released at the same time. Correct?

AS: That’s correct.

C&V: How are you going to handle that? Are you going to be touring for both at the same time?

AS: I’m touring for the novel, but I’m hoping that the book of poems will latch on to the coattails of it. The publisher of the novel, Algonquin, and the publisher of the book of poems, Houghton Mifflin/Harcourt, have coordinated their efforts. It will be interesting.

C&V: So separate events for each?

AS: No, joint events. So I’ll read a poem or two at the reading and then read a scene or two from the book.

C&V: So you are basically like an all-you-can-eat deli, there’s something for everybody.

AS: More like a buffet.

C&V: A novel.

AS: Yes.

C&V: What compelled you to write a novel? Not many poets do that, do they? Move from poetry to fiction?

AS: The novel, *Broadway Baby*, started out as non-fiction and I couldn’t get anyone interested in it. It was kind of flat. But there were scenes in it, passages that I liked a lot, and I didn’t want to just throw them away. So, once I gave myself permission not to be bound by fact, it took off. It became a new book. It became something new and different. It felt as if I had just started work on it, even though it was seven years in the making from the time I started it as a non-fiction book to the time it took off as a novel.

C&V: What about the writing process with the different forms? Is it different for you when you sit down to write poems as opposed to, say, a novel?

AS: For me it’s the same in that you are trying to use your imagination and putting as much pressure on your linguistic imagination as you can, whether you are writing lines or writing sentences. But writing a novel is a lot more fun because it’s the same process but on a larger scale. So unlike a poem, which you get into and out of it relatively quickly, a novel is an alternate universe you can enter into and live in for one or two years or three years, and that’s just a lovely



Alan Shapiro

C&V: Most writers, even successful writers, have to have another job to bring in the bacon and you have been teaching for almost 30 years. Do you see teaching as a compliment to your writing or as completely different things?

AS: Different things. I don’t get any ideas for poems from classes I teach. And, when I read in order to get ready to teach, I’m exercising a different kind of attention than the kind of reading I do when I’m getting ready to write. It’s very different. I’m thinking much more analytically when I am getting ready to teach. I’m trying to articulate why something moves me the way it does. When I get ready to write I’m just trying to fall into a hallucinatory state.

C&V: If you can only write in one form, what would it be?

AS: That’s a good question! If the writing experience could last a long time it would be poetry. The problem is it doesn’t, so I’d have to say it would be writing a novel. So the fun of it would last a little longer.

C&V: Lastly, you know more jokes, and can tell them better, than anyone on the planet. Do you have one to share with our readers now?

AS: Did you hear about the old couple who froze to death at the drive-in? They went to see *Closed for Winter*.

C&V: (laughing)

AS: (laughing)

thing. I like to work. I like the self-forgetfulness that happens when I’m writing and when I’m working. I look forward to getting to the desk, but poems you finish relatively quickly and then you have to wait until the next one comes along.



Those seeking even more information about Alan Shapiro would do well to watch this video, where his private life is more intimately explored: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbUuMafm3kE>

spring 2011

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Faculty and Alumni News,
Prize-Winning Authors
and More!

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Daniel Wallace, *Editor*

UNC Chapel Hill
Greenlaw Hall, CB#3520
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520

C&V@unc.edu
<http://english.unc.edu/creative>

Phone 919.962.4000
Fax 919.962.3520

Director's Report

Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to report that Creative Writing at Carolina has enjoyed another outstanding year. Even in these challenging times, especially for state universities, our undergraduate program continues to flourish. In my third year as director of Creative Writing, I've been constantly impressed and inspired by our students and faculty and staff, all so inventive and hard-working and accomplished. I feel very lucky to be part of such a splendid literary community.

Here's the latest chapter in the story of our expansive and active program, divided into four sections: students, extracurriculars, support, and faculty and farewells.

1. STUDENTS

The Creative Writing Program served 813 UNC undergraduates in 2010-2011, a record number. Such service is made possible only because of our diligent administrative assistant, **Anita Braxton**, who—among her many duties—must coordinate the registration of hundreds of Creative Writing minors every semester, a demanding task. We filled a total of 48 classes, 32 of prose (including fiction, creative non-fiction, stylistics, and children's and young adult literature) and 16 of poetry. Several dozen different courses, from the freshman to the senior level, were available to students, including a number of new offerings—**Michael Chitwood's** "Living with Science and Technology" creative non-fiction class, **Marianne Gingher's** "Living in America" creative non-fiction class, and **Randall Kenan's** "Advanced Creative Non-Fiction" class, offered as a section of Creative Writing Special Topics.

Congratulations to our 2010 seniors who wrote book-length theses, completed the year-long seminars in fiction- and poetry-writing, and gave public readings in the spring—a heroic amount of work! Nineteen minors graduated from UNC in May with Honors or with Highest Honors in Creative Writing. In the senior Honors fiction class, taught by **Pam Durban**, those students were: **Thomas James Breedlove**, **Maria Patricia Devlin**, **Keith Michael Grose**, **Susannah Jeanette Long**, **Catya Shaina McMullen**, **Daniel Mark Nowell**, **Adam O. Price**, **Denise Anne Rickman**, **Jenny J. Shen**, **Lucie Elizabeth Thorsteinsson**, **Hannah Penrose Thurman**, and **Bo Zhang**. And in the senior Honors poetry class, taught by **James Seay**, those students were: **Caroline Ashley Fish**, **David Andrew Hutcheson**, **Katherine Grace Indermaur**, **Grace Anne MacNair**, **Matthew Shelton Price**, **Rebecca June Radford**, and **Evan Kershaw Rose**.

The winners of our many Creative Writing student prizes may be found on page three in this issue of *Chapter & Verse*.

The Thomas Wolfe Scholarship (founded in 2001 by author and philanthropist **Frank Borden Hanes, Sr.**, of Winston-Salem) held its tenth national competition this school year. Its reading committee members again were **Tara Powell** ('04 PhD), **Rebecca Morphis** ('01 MA), and **Courtney Jones** ('01, BA); and its four board of advisors members were poetry professor **Alan Shapiro**, fiction faculty **Pam Durban** and **Marianne Gingher**, and prizewinning novelist **David Payne** ('77). We appreciate the ongoing counsel and help we receive from Morehead Foundation officers **Charles Lovelace** ('77) and **Megan Mazzocchi** ('82). As we say congratulations and farewell to our sixth and seventh Wolfe Scholars, **Maria Devlin** ('11) and **Denise Rickman** ('11), we announce with pleasure that our tenth Thomas Wolfe Scholar—**Anna Faison**, of Aiken, South Carolina—will enter Carolina's Class of 2015 this coming fall, joining current scholars **Jenna Hall** ('12), **Maria Carlos** ('13), and **Jordan Castelloe** ('14).

2. EXTRACURRICULARS

The student/teacher exchange is at the heart of our Creative Writing Program. But a number of notable and worthy things also happen outside the classroom, all year long.

On October 7, **Lee Smith**—novelist and short-story writer, who has been called "perhaps the most charming and beloved of all storytellers abiding in the contemporary literary South"—was presented the Thomas Wolfe ('20) Award and Medal, made possible by University friend and benefactor **Ben Jones III** ('50) as part of the annual lecture series established by the Thomas Wolfe Society. Ms. Smith delivered the Wolfe Lecture to an enthusiastic full house in the Carroll Hall auditorium, reading from her work and answering audience questions with characteristic energy, humor, and wisdom.

This year's Morgan Writer-in-Residence, **Amy Hempel**—celebrated fiction writer and winner of

both the PEN/Malamud Award for Short Fiction and the prestigious Rea Award for the Short Story—read a selection of her work in Carroll Hall on March 24 and answered questions from an appreciative audience. "An influential prose stylist," as our Betts Professor **Pam Durban** said, "she is one of a handful of contemporary writers who has built a major reputation on short stories alone." During her week on campus as Morgan Writer, Ms. Hempel was a generous, thoughtful, witty, and thoroughly engaging presence, in classes and in conversation and in a wide range of situations: we greatly enjoyed having her with us for a while. As always, we are deeply grateful to our friends and Carolina alumni **Allen** ('65) and **Musette** ('76) **Morgan**, whose support started this writer-in-residence program nearly two decades ago. Every year, the entire University community looks forward to Morgan week, directed by **Susan Irons** (M.A. '79, Ph.D. '01), as the premier literary rite of Chapel Hill's spring.

We began a new reading series this year, called "Works in Progress," designed to showcase the Creative Writing faculty as writers as well as teachers. **Michael Chitwood** administers this once-a-semester series, and the first two lunchtime readers were **Pam Durban** on November 16 and **Alan Shapiro** on February 22.

We are fortunate to enjoy two Armfield Poetry Readings every year, sponsored by the Armfield Fund for Poetry, a bequest to us from the late poet **Blanche Britt Armfield** ('28 MA). Our distinguished poets and readers for 2010-2011 were **Brooks Haxton**, from Syracuse University, who read in Donovan Lounge on November 4, and **Cathy Smith Bowers**, the recently-crowned Poet Laureate of North Carolina, who on February 10 also read to a packed and attentive audience in Donovan.

Finally, **Lori Ostlund**—whose story collection *The Bigness of the World* won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction—gave her Kenan Visiting Writer reading on April 5. I'm happy to say that Lori, an excellent teacher as well as a fine writer, will spend a second year with us as Kenan Writer 2100–2012.

3. SUPPORT

A major reason that Creative Writing has flourished in recent years is the continuing and essential support that we enjoy, across this lovely campus and beyond.

Our friends at UNC are helpful in too many ways to name, but we thank them all: Department of English and Comparative Literature Chair **Beverly Taylor**; our allies and counselors in South Building, particularly Chancellor **Holden Thorp**, College of Arts & Sciences Dean **Karen Gil**, Senior Associate Dean **William Andrews**, Director of Communications **Dee Reid** and Assistant Director of Communications **Kim Spurr**; and especially the Arts & Sciences Foundation—Executive **Director Jamie May**, Associate Director **Rob Parker**, Associate Director of Capital Gifts **Margaret V. Costley**, and their staffs.

Our friends beyond campus have supported us faithfully and very generously, for many years. We are grateful beyond words for their donations, which make it possible for us to sustain and improve what we do.



Prize-Winning Writers

We honor and celebrate our writing award and prize winners for 2010 and 2011, and we express our appreciation to the judges.

BLANCHE BRITT ARMFIELD PRIZE IN POETRY
Liana Marie Roux

SUZANNE BOLCH LITERARY AWARD
Catya Shaina McMullen

WILLIE LAVONSA MOORE PRIZE
IN CREATIVE NON-FICTION
Shaina Diane New
Jennifer Lynn Slee, Runner Up

GEORGE B. WYNNE AWARD FOR FICTION
Andrea Josey

ROBERT RUARK AWARD IN
CREATIVE NON-FICTION
Robert Henry Fleming

ROBERT B. HOUSE MEMORIAL PRIZE
IN POETRY
Grace Anne MacNair

LOUIS D. RUBIN, JR., PRIZE IN
CREATIVE WRITING
Adam O. Price

MAX STEELE PRIZE IN FICTION
Catya Shaina McMullen

ANN WILLIAMS BURRUS PRIZE
David Andrew Hutcheson
Honorable Mention: **Alisha Jolene Gard**

MINI-MAX SHORT-SHORT FICTION PRIZE
Melissa M. Parker
Noah Katz, 2nd Place
Jessica Celeste Adams, 3rd Place

WILLIAM H. HOOKS AWARDS FOR
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Best Young Adult Novel:
Kamila Tanara Albert

Best Middle Grade Novel:
Devin McCafferty Miller

Best Picture Book:
Nicole Elizabeth Brosan

Thanks to **Sallie Shuping-Russell** ('77) of Chapel Hill, whose major gift made possible the offering of a new "Living Writers" course in the fall of 2009. We took a break from that class this past academic year, but we expect to have exciting news about the use of the Shuping-Russell gift in the near future.

Thanks too to **Frank Borden Hanes**, for his endowment and abiding support of the Thomas Wolfe Scholarship (see the last paragraph of section one above).

Thanks also to **James Kenan III** ('68), whose substantial gift has made possible the Kenan Visiting Writer Program for the past decade. **Lori Ostlund** was our tenth Kenan Writer in 2010-2011, and will serve another year.

Finally, we give thanks for other private funds supporting Creative Writing activities, including the Rankin Faculty Support Fund, established by **Alex Rankin** ('77); the Burrus Fund, established by **Ann Williams Burrus** ('52); the Froelich Family Fund, established to help increase our lecturers' stipends by **Henry** ('81) and **Molly Froelich** of Charlotte; and our Gift Fund. The Walker Percy ('37) Fund, an endowment to help underwrite our lecturers, was set in motion several years ago by **Frank Borden Hanes, Sr.** ('42). And the Robert Ruark Award, for student non-fiction writing about North Carolina's natural world, receives support from the Ruark Society of Chapel Hill, led by retired attorney and author **James T. Cheatham III** ('57, '61 LLBJD). We deeply appreciate the support of these friends of Creative Writing.

If you're interested in contributing to our Doris Betts/Jessie Rehder Creative Writing Fund or to our Max Steele Fund, established to honor these great author-teachers and intended to support through innovations and enhancements the continued vitality of the program, please contact **Mr. James May**, The Arts & Sciences Foundation, CB# 6115, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599.

4. FACULTY & FAREWELLS

The Creative Writing faculty members wear many hats. They are dedicated teachers, but they are also working writers, and they frequently serve as literary ambassadors to our state and nation. It's impossible to describe everything they do, but I thank them for doing it so well and so cheerfully. Here's the roll call of our 2010-2011 faculty, 17 in all, most of whom have detailed individual entries about their activities elsewhere in this newsletter: **Michael Chitwood, Quinn Dalton, Pam Durban, Marianne Gingher, Evan Gurney, Randall Kenan, Michael McFee, Ruth Moose, Lawrence Naumoff, Lori Ostlund, Rachel Richardson, Nina Riggs, James Seay, Alan Shapiro, Bland Simpson, Daniel Wallace, and Ross White.**

I'd like to say a particular word of thanks to two of

our faculty. One is **Ruth Moose**, who—after 15 years of service—retired at the end of the spring 2011 semester. Ruth came to Carolina after a national search for a lecturer in fiction writing: she taught that subject for many years, but she also discovered specialties that no one else could teach, Writing Children's Literature and Writing Young Adult Literature. Ruth's loyalty to her students was legendary. She'll be missed.

I'd also like to thank **Daniel Wallace**, the J. Ross MacDonald Distinguished Professor of English and inimitable editor/illustrator of *Chapter & Verse*. Daniel has always been a tremendously helpful colleague, agreeing to serve on committees or assist with any number of tasks; and I'm delighted to announce that he will be my successor as Director of the Creative Writing Program, effective July 1. He'll do a terrific job as our leader in the coming years.

Being director of such a large and dynamic program has been quite an experience for this hillbilly lyric poet—often exciting, sometimes exhausting, always interesting. I look forward to focusing on my teaching and writing again, but I'll also miss the pleasures of working on a larger scale with all the wonderful Creative Writing students, teachers, alumni, and loyal friends and supporters. (And with my assistant Anita Braxton, who has had to put up with me for three long years!) It was a privilege to serve in this position at this place during this time, when ours was—thanks to so many people, particularly my visionary directorial predecessors, **Bland Simpson** and **Marianne Gingher** and **Jim Seay** and the late **Max Steele**—the finest undergraduate Creative Writing Program in existence. I have no doubt that it will continue to be so.

Sincerely,
Michael McFee, Director,
Creative Writing at Carolina, 2008-2011



Lee Smith, delivering the Wolfe Lecture, on October 7, 2010, in Carroll Hall.

M

rs. Greed had been married for forty years, her husband the cuckold of all time. A homely man with a notable fortune, he escorted her on errands in the neighborhood. It was a point of honor with Mrs. Greed to say she would never leave him. No matter if her affection for him was surpassed by her devotion to others. Including, for example, my husband. If she was home at night in her husband's bed, did he care what she did with her days?

I was the one who cared.

Protected by men, money, and a lack of shame, Mrs. Greed had long been able to avoid what she had coming. She had the kind of glee that meant men did not think she slept around, they thought she had joie de vivre; they thought her a libertine, not a whore.

She had the means to indulge impetuous behavior and sleep through the mornings after nights she kept secret from her friends. She traveled the world, and turned into the person she could be in other places with people she would never see again.

She was many years older than my husband, running on the fumes of her beauty. Hers had been a conventional beauty, and I was embarrassed by my husband's homage to it. Running through their rendezvous: a stream of regret that they had not met sooner.

He asked if she had maternal feelings for him. She said she was not sure what he wanted to hear. She told him she felt an erotic mix of passion and tenderness. If he wanted to think the tenderness maternal, let him.

When they met, he said, he had not hidden the fact that she looked like his mother, a glamorous woman who had been cruel to him and died when he was a boy. He had not said this to underscore her age, nor did she think it a fixation. She would have heard it as she felt it was intended: as a compliment, an added opportunity to bind them together. She would have been happy to be the good mother as well as the ultimate sensate. And see how her pleasure-seeking brought pleasure to those around her!

A thing between them: green apples. Never red, always green. I knew when my husband had entertained Mrs. Greed because a trio of baskets in the kitchen would be filled with polished green apples. My husband claimed to like the look of them; I never saw him eat one. As soon as they would start to soften and turn brown, I would throw them out. And there would be the basket filled so soon again.

He told me he got them from the Italian market in town. But I checked, and the Italian market does not carry green apples.

What the green apples meant to them, I don't know, don't want to know. But she brought them each time she entered our house, and I felt that if I had not thrown the rotting ones out, he would have held on to every one of them. The way he fetishized these apples—it made him less attractive to me.

Mrs. Greed convinced her young lover, my husband, that she was "not the type" to have "work" done, but she had had work done. She must have had a high threshold for pain. She could stay out of sight for the month or more of healing after each procedure. She had less success hiding the results of surgery on her spine. She claimed her athleticism had made it necessary, claimed a "sports injury" to lessen the horror of simple aging. But she could not hide the stiffness that followed, a lack of elasticity that marked her an old woman who crossed the street slowly in low-heeled shoes. I watched her cross the street like this, supported by my husband.

Maybe that was why she liked to hear complaints about his other women, that they were spoiled and petty, gossips who resented his involvement with her. Because he would not keep quiet about such a thing. At first, she felt the others had "won" because they could see him at any time. Then she saw that their

GREED

A story by Amy Hempel



Amy Hempel, 2011 Morgan Writer-in-Residence, reading in Carroll Hall on March 24.

availability guaranteed he would tire of them. They were impermanent, and she knew it before they did. So however much he pleaded with her to leave her husband, or at least see HIM more often, Mrs. Greed refused. It galled me that he wanted her more than she wanted him.

I listened to them often. I hooked up the camera to the computer when I was at home alone. For \$200 I'd bought a hidden surveillance camera that was fitted into a book. I did not expect it to work. I left it next to the clock on the nightstand. I did not pay the additional \$75 that would have showed them to me in color. But the 90-degree field of view was adequate for our bedroom, and sound came in from up to 700 feet. Had this not worked so well, I would have stood in line for the camera that came hidden in a ceiling-mounted smoke detector.

Usually the things they said were exchanges of unforeseen delight, and riffs of gratitude. But the last time I listened to them, my husband said something clever. Mrs. Greed sounded oddly winsome, said she sometimes wished the two of them had "waited." My husband told her they could STILL wait—they could wait a day, a week, a month—"It just won't be the FIRST time," he said.

How she laughed.

I said to myself, "I am a better person!" I am a speech therapist who works with children. Parents say I change their lives. But men don't care about a better person. You can't photograph virtue.

I found the collection of photographs he had tried to hide. I liked that the photos of herself she brought to him were photos from so long ago. Decades ago. She wears old-fashioned bathing suits aboard sailboats with islands in the faded background. Let her note that the photographs of me that my husband took himself were taken in this bed.

Together, they lacked fear, I thought, to the extent that she told him to bring me to dinner at her house. With her husband. Really, this was the most startling thing I heard on playback. Just before the invitation, she told him she would not go to bed with the two of us. My husband was the one to suggest it. As though the two of us had talked it over, as if this were something I wanted! I heard her say, "I have to be the queen bee." Saw her say it.

She would not go to bed with us, but she would play hostess at dinner in her home.

I looked inside my closets, as though I might actually go. What does one wear for such an occasion? The corset dress? Something off the shoulder? Something to make me look older? But no dress existed for me to wear to this dinner. The dress had to do too much. It had to say: I am the sexy wife, and I will outlast you. It had to say: You are no threat to my happiness, and I will outlive you.

...

Down the street from our house, a car waited for Mrs. Greed. I knew, because I had taken note before, that a driver brought her to see my husband when I visited clients out of town. Was there a bar in the back of this car? I couldn't tell—the windows had a tint. Maybe she would not normally drink, but because there was a decanter of Scotch and she was being driven some distance at dusk, maybe she poured herself a glass and toasted her good luck?

This last thought reassured me. How was it this felt normal to me, to think of her being driven home after a tumble with my husband? I guess it depends on what you are used to. I knew a man who found Army boot camp "touching," the attention he received from the drill sergeant, the way the Army fed him daily. It was a comfort to him to know what each day would bring.

I felt there could be no compensation for being apart from my husband. Not for me, and not for her.

I knew I was supposed to be angry with HIM, not with her. She was not the first. She was the first he would not give up. But I could not summon the feelings pointed in the right direction. I even thought that killing her might be the form my SELF-destruction took. Had to take that chance. I tried to go cold for a time—when I thought of him, when I thought of her. But there was a heat and richness to what I conceived that made me think of times I was late to visit a place that my friends had already seen. When you discover something long after others have known it, there is a heady contentment that comes.

What I heard on the tapes after that: their relaxed relentlessness, impersonal intimacy, the air of resuming a rolling conversation that WE had not been having. As though living in another dimension, a dimension I thought I could live in too, once. Just take me there. Just teach me the new rules.

Watching them on camera I thought: What if I'm doing just what I'm supposed to be doing? And then I thought: I am.

...

The boys said they would give me a sign.

It was money well spent. With what I saved not needing to film in color, and knowing I would not need the standard two-year warranty, I had enough to pay the thuggish teens a client's son hung out with. The kid with the stutter had hinted he needed m-m-money. I will even give them a bonus—I will let them keep the surveillance camera hidden in the book after they send me the final tape.

Mrs. Greed does not live so far away that I will miss the ambulance siren.

And what to make of this? The apples my husband "bought," the green ones from the Italian market that does not carry green apples—I ate one on the front steps of our house and threw the core into pachysandra. The next morning the core I had thrown was on the top step where I had been sitting when I ate it. I threw it again, this time farther out so it lodged in pine needles alongside the road in front of our house. The morning after that, today, the core was back in place on the top step.

Boys.

I thought: Let's see what happens next.

We have so many apples left.

"Creed" ©2011 by Amy Hempel. Reprinted with permission of the author.

STAR JOURNALIST
THANASSIS CAMBANIS ('96)
PUBLISHES FIRST BOOK

were visiting Thanassis' mother. Not often a man of leisure, Thanassis was soon leaving for Egypt on one of any number of trips he regularly makes to the Middle East — the subject of much of his journalism. But he was also gearing up for the publication of his first book, *A Privilege to Die: Inside Hezbollah's Legions and Their Endless War Against Israel*. Early reviews of the book were promising. "Brilliant and revealing," wrote Leslie Gelb, President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations. "Cambanis tells an important story with emotional power." Richard Engel, Chief Foreign Correspondent of NBC News, praised *A Privilege to Die* as "a gripping street level



view of Hezbollah [and how it became] the world's most sophisticated resistance group."

he lives in New York City and teaches in Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and the New School's Graduate Program in International Affairs.

Since the book's publication in fall 2010, Cambanis has been in demand as a lecturer and speaker and has made appearances on *Charlie Rose* and NPR's *Fresh Air*. He and his wife, Anne, an editor at *The New York Times*, just had their second child, a daughter they named Athina.

A history major and creative writing minor while he studied at UNC, Cambanis was also editor-in-chief of *The Daily Tar Heel*. What did he take away from his creative writing experiences at UNC? "I took two fiction writing classes with Marianne Gingher and wrote an honors thesis for Doris Betts," Cambanis reports. "They taught me to graciously critique the work of others, to remember my audience, and to eschew cliché. And along with my lifetime friend and mentor Daphne Athas, who taught me to rhyme when I first learned to speak, they taught me to have fun with words: language as craft, language as play."

A Privilege to Die grew out of Cambanis's investigative experiences over years of reporting on the Middle East. Beginning in 2003 he served first as a reporter in Iraq and then became Baghdad and Middle East Bureau Chief for *The Boston Globe*. He has written for *The New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, and numerous other periodicals as well. In 2008-2009, he was Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton University. Currently

How did he become interested in journalism?

"The muckracking reporter was always lodged in my mind as a Platonic ideal," he confesses. "Perhaps I wanted to follow in Tintin's footsteps."

I edited the paper at Chapel Hill High School and never imagined any work could be as enjoyable. I've detoured through other avenues over the years, and none so far has proven equal. What other line of work invites you to camp beside the front lines of an invading army in Iraq, spend the night in Tahrir Square with Egyptian revolutionaries, and gain exclusive entree to the travails of a transsexual in a Massachusetts prison?"

What advice would he give to an aspiring young writer? "The same advice Marianne and Doris gave me, and which Daphne still does almost every time we speak: read more, write more, and edit your own work mercilessly. The best writers I encounter — as a reader, an editor, and these days, as a teacher — are the ones who read widely and voraciously. As a writer, you are what you read. In the age of Twitter, that is not always a pretty thing."

You can follow his blog at thanassis.cambanis.com

Chapter & Verse caught up with Creative Writing alumnus, Thanassis Cambanis, in Paros, Greece, last summer, where he and his three-year-old son, Odysseas,



Grammar
You Can
Dance To

It was another standing-room-only audience for the annual Gram-o-Rama Performance

(aka Stylistics, aka Glossolalia) held December 7, 2010, in Wilson Library. *Forgive Me, Father, for I Have Syntaxed* was Gram-o-Rama's 10th consecutive show since Daphne Athas and Marianne Gingher resurrected the class in 2001. The brainchild of Athas, who retired in 2009, Gram-o-Rama has been called "perhaps the most innovative creative writing course in America" [*Charlotte Observer*, 2010]. The class operates like Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory, except, instead of trying to create a monster, students attempt to have monstrous fun making language come jaw-droppingly alive for the listener. Dubbed the "Cirque de Soleil of Language Arts," Gram-o-Rama re-energizes how writers think about language—specifically its similarities to music. Through a series of exercises that break traditional rules of the straight-laced grammar lesson, students reinvigorate their senses of wordplay and pay homage to the eight parts of speech.

Highlights from "Forgive Me, Father, for I Have Syntaxed" included a subject/verb choral arrangement that featured the Sharks and Jets of Bernstein's *West Side Story*. Written and choreographed by Will Barringer, it was the first time in the history of Gram-o-Rama that a grammar exercise has been vigorously danced to. Zena Cardman's performance of "The Loneliest Sloth in the World" (a ten-sentence story in which every sentence varies in type, order, and emphasis, according to syntax), nearly brought down the house. Jarrard Cole's parody "As I Sit Falling" retold the plight of Humpty Dumpty as a bedtime story written by William Faulkner. Here in its entirety is Zena Cardman's "The Sound of a 56K Dial-Up Modem Expressed Only in Names of *Star Wars* Characters":

R2D2 Boba Fett
Luuuuuuuuuuuuuuke
C-3-P-O
Dartttttthhhhh
Yoda Yoda
Obi Waaaaaaan

Say the above out loud. The proof of the writing's success is in the hearing of it.

—Marianne Gingher

My Novel Idea

A short story writer finally takes the long way home

By David Rowell



I gained so many valuable insights in my creative writing classes at Carolina, but what stayed with me the most was an obsessive love of the short story.

Novels? I don't remember Jim Seay, Max Steele, Doris Betts, or Marianne Gingher ever talking to us about those lumbering behemoths. Instead, we stayed intensely focused on unraveling the mysteries and intricacies of the glorious short story, like a group of underground agents speaking in code.

After graduation, I wrote only short stories for 15 years or more. The great challenge and appeal with short stories was that they were like performing tricks—you either got it right, or you didn't. With the novel, you could still receive high praise even if your book was “flawed” or “uneven” or “at times maddening.” Where, I wondered, was the magic in that?

My devotion to the short story, however, hadn't produced a first book the way I had hoped. I had published a handful of stories, but none in *The New Yorker* or *Harper's*, say, and I hadn't won a prestigious short story competition. All this time later, I had a decision to make: either try my hand at a novel, or maybe stop writing altogether.

But how do you drive a semi-trailer when you've been getting by on a scooter?

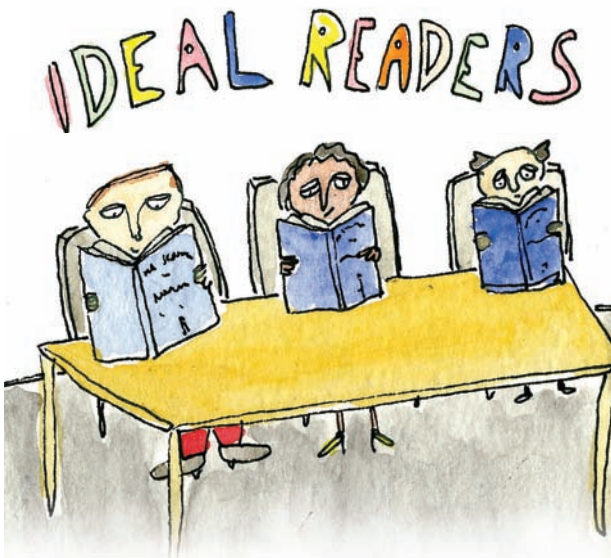
For several years I had been poring over a book of photographs called *RFK Funeral Train*, taken by Paul Fusco as he rode the train carrying the slain Robert Kennedy, from New York to Washington, in June of 1968. The pictures are a deeply moving, dreamy display of a historic—though under-documented—American spectacle; hundreds of thousands of mourners—maybe more than a million—lined the tracks to pay their respects. These pictures, I decided, would serve as the basis of my novel, though I would approach it like a short story writer; I would write about six groups of characters who set out to see the train that day—in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington. As an editor at the *Washington Post Magazine*, I had produced several fiction issues by sending along photographs to writers to see what stories they might inspire. Now I was assigning myself the same exercise, only on a much larger scale.

For all those years of meager success with the short story, I had the opposite experience with my first novel. I got an agent within days of sending it out, and some weeks after that, I had sold it to a major publisher. Still, I braced myself for someone at the publishing house to ask the obvious: What is this?

Linked stories? What do we call it? But no one questioned the very form. It wasn't conventional, but it was a novel. In the end, I could take a strange kind of satisfaction in that.

My devotion to the short story had paid off, after all—just in a way I had never imagined.

David Rowell graduated from Carolina in 1989. His novel, *The Train of Small Mercies*, will be published by Putnam, an imprint of Penguin USA, in September.



Faculty News

Michael Chitwood has had recent work in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Threepenny Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Boulevard*, *Crazyhorse*, *Cincinnati Review* and other journals. His book, *Poor-Mouth Jubilee*, came out last fall from Tupelo Press. Garrison Keillor selected a poem from it to read on his Writer's Almanac radio show, and it's a finalist for *ForeWord Magazine's* Best Book of Poetry for the year. His essay “A Story about The General” will appear in a new anthology *Cherished: 21 Writers on Animals They Have Loved and Lost*.

Pam Durban has recently finished a novel and a collection of short stories, and was an invited writer at a conference in Beaufort, SC, in November on South Carolina novelists.

Randall Kenan was on the faculties of the Sewanee Writers' Conference and the Aspen Writers' Foundation's “Summer Words” Retreat. He taught in the Low-Residency MFA Program at Pine Manor College, and gave readings and talks at Old Dominion, Emory, Rutgers, Georgia State, UNC-Greensboro and other schools. In March he was the 2011 Stum Visiting Writer-in-Residence at West Virginia University. A stage adaptation of his short story, “Run, Mourner, Run,” by playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney, was performed in Philadelphia in November 2010. An excerpt from his upcoming novel, “There is a Man Going Round Taking Names,” was published in *Barely South Review* earlier this year.

Michael McFee served his third and final year as Director of the Creative Writing Program. He received the R. Hunt Parker Award for Significant Contributions to the Literature of North Carolina from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association in November. He gave a Hutchins Lecture called “My Inner Hillbilly” at UNC's Center for the Study of the American South in September, and a craft talk called “Anthologizing” at the University of Mississippi's 18th annual Oxford Conference for the Book in March. New poems and essays were published in *Hudson Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *River Styx*, *Edible Piedmont*, *Southern Cultures*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume III: Contemporary Appalachia*.



Michael Chitwood



Pam Durban



Marianne Gingham

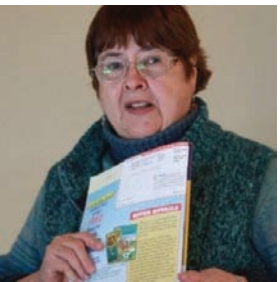


Randall Kenan

MIRIAM BERKLEY



Michael McFee



Ruth Moose



Lawrence Naumoff

STEVE EXUM



Lori Ostlund



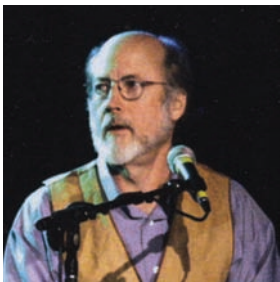
Rachel Richardson



James Seay



Alan Shapiro



Bland Simpson



Daniel Wallace



Ross White

Ruth Moose "taught a in the CW dept at UNC for 15 years. She published 2 books of short stories, 6 books of poetry, most recently *The Librarian* and *Tea, Other Assorted Poems*. Her stories were published in England, Denmark, South Africa and other places. She's had an NC Arts Council Fellowship, a McDowell Fellowship and most recently a Chapman Award for teaching."

Lawrence Naumoff made his latest book, *The Last Southern Novel*, an e-book, available in all digital formats, from Amazon. It's spoofish and comedic. His Hamlet, N.C. chicken plant fire "neo-realist" novel is also now an e-book, and Farrar Straus & Giroux is going to bring out *Rootie Kazootie* as an e-book. The opening section of his short story, titled, "The Beautiful Couple, Everyone Says So," will be included in 27 *Views of Chapel Hill*, forthcoming in Fall 2011, from Eno Publishers.

Lori Ostlund's story collection, *The Bigness of the World*, was released in paperback (UGA Press) in October. Stories from the collection were chosen for the *Best American Short Stories 2010* and the 2011 *PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories* and received Honorable Mentions in the current editions of *Best American Short Stories*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and the *Pushcart Prize*. New work is forthcoming in *The Iowa Review* and *Bluestem*, which is publishing a chapter from *After the Parade*, the novel that she hopes to finish during her time as the Kenan Visiting Writer. She is pleased to be featured in translation in *Golestaneh, an Iranian Journal of Literature and Culture* (2011). She is also learning about contest judging: she served as the guest judge for the *Blue Mesa Review* fiction contest and as a screening judge for the 2011 Bakeless Literary Prize and is reading for this year's Flannery O'Connor Award. In April, she will serve on a panel discussing the state of the short story and short story collection awards and contests at the Newburyport Literary Festival. She's thrilled to be returning for a second year as the Kenan Visiting Writer.

Rachel Richardson's first book of poems, *Copperhead*, was published by Carnegie Mellon University Press in February 2011. She won the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prize in January, and her poems have recently appeared in *Linebreak*, *The Hopkins Review*, and *New South*.

James Seay's essay, "Down among the Bones, the Darks, the Sparrows," appeared locally in the *Independent Weekly* and will be reprinted in an anthology devoted to experiences in Chapel Hill. His work will also be represented in an anthology of love poems to be published by Jacar Press.

Alan Shapiro will have two books published in 2012: *Broadway Baby*, a novel, and *Night of the Republic*, a book of poems.

Bland Simpson published *The Coasts of Carolina* (UNC Press), in collaboration with photographer Scott Taylor, to strong critical and popular response—the *News & Observer* said *Coasts* was "a unique and welcoming vision of the coastal region" and *Library Journal* called it "a delight." Simpson did readings from the book—a finalist for The Southern Environmental Law Center's Reed Award for Environmental Writing—around North Carolina. As a member of The Red Clay Ramblers, he performed from the McGlohon Theatre in Charlotte to the Turnage in Washington and Thalian Hall in Wilmington, from Black Mountain to the Outer Banks and well beyond, including Celebrate Brooklyn in Prospect Park and the Vancouver Island Music Festival in Canada. He returned to Thalian Hall with the Coastal Cohorts to do a major fundraiser for the NC Coastal Federation, on whose board he has long served. The Ramblers were featured in *Big River*, the first musical produced by UNC's PlayMakers Repertory Company in over a decade. Simpson was the Honoree at the 2010 North Carolina Writers Conference, and he received the Hardee-Rives Award for Significant Contributions to the Dramatic Arts from the NC Literary & Historical Association.

Daniel Wallace recently published stories in *Glimmer Train* and *Inch* magazine. His story in *Inch*, "How to Build a Coffin," has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His non-fiction has appeared in *Garden and Gun* and *Oxford American*, and his monthly humor column continues to appear in *Our State* magazine. Wallace is the incoming Director of the Creative Writing Program.

Ruth Moose Retires

First, a little toast:

Her name alone is jaunty verse
With nearly perfect rhyme— and terse.
Ruth Moose, Ruth Moose,
Dance a jig with Mother Goose,
Stories spun from straw to gold,
Write until the stars turn cold,
Sing a poem and pat-a-cake,
Sift a novel, let it bake.
Daughter, Wife, Mother, Friend,
Teacher with an ear to lend,
Her ever-ready golden heart
Is guide of all Ruth Moose’s art.

Let Ruth be the first to tell me that I’m no poet and to do so with a twinkle in her eye. Despite many years of teaching her famous Writing for Children and Writing the Young Adult novel classes, her tolerance for sing-song and her velvet gloved criticism never waned. In 2011 alone, she was nominated by her students for *two* teaching awards.

I first encountered the impressive name Ruth Moose in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Redbook* magazines and on the lips of the novelist and short story writer Allan Gurganus who had met her in a workshop and read her early work. “What did you say her name was?” I asked Allan.

“Ruth Moose,” he said, and laughed. Indeed, the name sounded like a nonsense rhyme.

“Did she make it up?”

“Not that I know of,” he said.

It’s too good. She had to have made it up, I thought.

But she hadn’t made it up. She’d married a man whose name rhymed with her own. It was like the end of a wonderful little fairy tale, and I think I always felt that Ruth Moose was somebody that stories simply happened to like that. If she was in the mood, she stuck out her butterfly net and caught one.

I met Ruth Moose more than 30 years ago at a writers’ gathering in South Carolina. She had an open smiling freckled face, a warm laugh, and she was carrying a big oversized purse like Mary Poppins might have carried. It was stuffed with books. She appeared to know everybody

in the room, even if she didn’t. What struck me immediately about Ruth Moose, was her unpretentious and chirpy manner.

She did not hang back; she barreled into every literary circle and struck up conversation with the high and mighty as dauntlessly as she had with lowly worm me. She was the refreshing upstart wildflower among all the prickly and over-cultivated roses and I liked her immediately.

Over time I came to know and admire her gifts as a fiction writer and poet. Her characters were always people like Ruth herself, people you wanted to know better, people who didn’t set themselves above others, but bumbled steadily along in their lives trying to untangle whatever messes they’d made or unwittingly stepped into. “How does she know so much?” Lee Smith once observed of Ruth’s stories. I think Ruth probably knows so much because of her immense curiosity, her lack of intimidation, her agreeable, bright-eyed and penetrating gaze upon the world, her

penchant for pausing to observe the story that exists in a teacup, a thimble. Nothing is too small for her to notice and revere. Finding the beautiful, bold mountain in the humble little molehill is her specialty.

In the early 1990s it was my privilege to serve along with Doris Betts, Jim Seay, and Bland Simpson, on a search committee that advised the Department of English to hire Ruth Moose to join the writing faculty at UNC. What a delight it’s been to work alongside Ruth Moose for more than two decades.

She has been a tireless enthusiast for helping young writers be the best on the page that they can be. She frequently made herself available for students hoping to complete books they’d begun in her class, undertaking multiple independent study projects every semester in addition to teaching her regular classes. Several of her students have gone on to publish children’s books and young adult novels with New York publishers. She had been a wonderfully loyal and generous colleague as well. I can’t tell you the number of times Ruth has clipped out some book review I’ve written for a local newspaper and slipped it under my door. She reads everything! A keen observer—and compliment giver — of even the most minutely newsworthy, Ruth Moose makes you feel better when you’re around her. She’s kind. A writer who lives by the Golden Rule. Among writer types, that’s a rare and precious virtue.

In addition to her two collections of short stories and six poetry collections including the immensely well-received *The Librarian* and the recently published *Tea*, some highlights of Ruth’s literary activities and accolades in recent years have included writing a slew of book reviews for every newspaper in North Carolina, serving as poetry editor of *Rambler Magazine*, attending conferences on children’s literature at Harvard, the Centennial Symposium on Eudora Welty in Jackson, MS, and the Images Conference at St. John’s College in Santa Fe. Her body of work was honored by the North Carolina Writers Organization; United States poet laureate Ted Kooser chose one of her poems for a poetry project sponsored by the Library of Congress; a Danish anthology on Southern women writers included a chapter on her contributions to Southern letters.

It’s easy to recognize and admire Ruth’s as a literary life lived well, and all of us in creative writing will miss her delightful company. If I write any more praise, we’ll have to take Ruth off and *bronze* her, so I’ll stop with **hearty congratulations to our dear colleague as she clears her desk of student papers and recommendations, sits down to listen to her own muse again, and writes poems and stories to her heart’s great content.**

—Marianne Gingher





CLASS OF '70

Jim Wann has a new show, *The Great Unknown*, in NYC <http://www.greatunknownmusical.com>

CLASS OF '96

Dan Kois is a film critic and culture writer living in Arlington, Virginia. He writes regularly for the *Washington Post*, the *Village Voice*, *Slate*, *New York*, and the *New York Times Book Review*.

CLASS OF '97

Tara Powell published her poetry chapbook *Physical Science* with Finishing Line Press in 2010. Her book *The Intellectual in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* is forthcoming from Louisiana State University Press in Fall 2011.

CLASS OF '98

Sheryl Mebane moved to Cincinnati to work for the EPA as a Technology Transfer Specialist. She works with researchers to get the word out about their work on Sustainable Technologies, so her writing and science worlds have merged happily.

CLASS OF '99

Amy Kortrewa teaches English and Creative Writing at Cedar Ridge High School in Orange County.

Tyrell Haberkorn is being published by the University of Wisconsin Press in May, 2011. His book is *Revolution Interrupted: Farmers, Students, Law, and Violence*.

CLASS OF '01

Lisa Bennett is taking classes at NC Central to get a teaching credential, spending time at the ArtsCenter doing ceramics, and tutoring high school students in various subjects. She has an essay in *California Magazine* called "Thoughts on Moving Home."

CLASS OF '02

Joanna Pearson will publish her first YA novel in July this year, entitled *The Rites and Wrongs of Janice Wills*.

Alumni News

CLASS OF '03

Zachary Gresham has completed a Master of Theological Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and has begun a doctorate in liturgical studies in the theology department of the University of Notre Dame.

Atinuke Diver launched her site/blog www.yesweretogether.com where she writes humorous, creative non-fiction and short essays about interracial relationships in the 21st century. She is also a literary journal reviewer for *The Review Review* <http://www.thereviewreview.net/> and a member of a writing community in Boston called Grub Street. She still "daylights" as a lawyer in Cambridge, MA.

Kerri French has recently published poems in *Barrow Street*, *The Pinch*, *Sou'wester*, *The American Poetry Journal*, *Artifice*, *Crab Creek Review*, and *Linebreak's Two Weeks* anthology, among others. She was a finalist in the PANK Little Books contest in 2010 and has recently given poetry readings at the University of Nottingham and the British Library's Eccles Centre for American Studies. She is living with her husband in England and works for the University of Cambridge.

CLASS OF '05

Dianna Calareso recently married and moved to Nashville, TN, where she works as a copywriter at an advertising agency and a freelance editor. She has published several creative nonfiction essays: "Detained" in *Evergreen Review*; "Sunflowers Are Yellow, Violets Are Blue" in *Mary*; "We Are Gathered" in the *Dream of Things* Anthology *Saying Goodbye*; "Sunset" (an excerpt from her memoir) in *Concisely*. Her essay "And in Five" earned an Honorable Mention for short-short stories in *New Millennium Writings*. She continues to post new essays to her blog, www.dcalareso.blogspot.com, and has started a cooking blog: www.mostlylocal.blogspot.com.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

At Carolina, we realize writing is a pursuit that takes place over the course of a lifetime. We want to hear about it. If you have some news you'd like to share with your Carolina friends, family and former teachers, please send it our way, at C&V@unc.edu. Whether you're making books, making babies, or simply making a life, we'd love to hear from you.

Erika Kranz received her J.D. in May 2009 from Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C.. During her time as a student she worked as a research assistant for Professor Richard Lazarus, as a clerk at the U.S. Department of Justice Environmental Enforcement Section and in Georgetown's Institute for Public Representation clinic, focusing on environmental issues. Since August 2009 she has been a clerk for Judge Nancy Firestone at the Court of Federal Claims.

Timur Hammond is in a Ph.D. program at UCLA for Geography.

CLASS OF '06

Jared Fernley is living in Chicago, working as an actor and improviser and recently started work as a writer for Groupon. Almost daily, he draws upon the exemplary education he received from teachers like Pam Durban and Bland Simpson. Thinking of and missing all things Greenlaw.

CLASS OF '07

Zachary Jepsen is currently an officer in the Marine Corps. He is supposed to start flight school sometime between now and the Apocalypse.

Andy Jones just finished the MFA in screenwriting at the American Film Institute. A screenplay he wrote found its way onto the "blacklist," which is a good thing. See the article about it at http://www.hollywood.com/news/Profile_Zombie_Baby_Screenwriter_Andy_Jones/7743686.

Corrie Lynn White has had poems published in *Lullwater Review* and *Pinesong*. This upcoming academic year she will be attending UNC Greensboro's MFA program.

CLASS OF '08

Ali Tharrington is an 8th grade Science teacher and Science Department Chair for Kettering Middle School, Washington DC. <http://sites.google.com/site/teamsciencekms/>

Katherine Meehan has recently had a story "Thin Women and the Dead" published by *Wilderness House Literary Review* and is co-editing an online quarterly, *The Ear Hustler* (www.earhustlermag.com) and is tweeting extremely short fiction at twitter.com/elsonmeehan.

CLASS OF '09

Lauren Bailey of Charlotte is now interning for the *Charlotte Observer*.

Guion Pratt is halfway through his first of two years at UVA's Poetry MFA program in Charlottesville. His new wife is fellow UNC English Department alum Abby Farson (Class of '10).

Travis Smith spent most of his first year after graduation as the assistant to the late Reynolds Price. He's now working on his M.F.A. in poetry as a John Grisham Fellow at the University of Mississippi. This year he has poems in the Music Issue of *Southern Cultures* and online at *Wag's Revue*.



*"Teachers of creative writing . . .
practice an art that aims for the
ages, what Milton called 'a life
beyond life.' "*

—from "Teacher! Teacher! Professing the
Humanities in a Postmodern World," the
2010 E. Maynard Adams Lecture, given by
Joseph M. Flora, Atlanta Professor of Southern
Culture Emeritus, Department of English and
Comparative Literature, UNC-Chapel Hill

For information
on readings and
upcoming events:
english.unc.edu/creative

