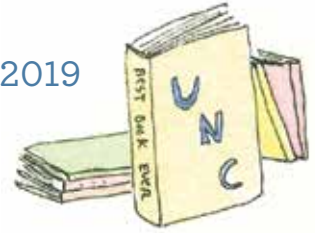


FALL 2019



# Chapter & Verse

NEWSLETTER OF THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM AT UNC CHAPEL HILL

## Frank B. Hanes Writer-in Residence, Tayari Jones



**Tayari Jones** was the 2019 Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence. As our own Randall Kenan wrote, “She is best known for her fourth novel, *An American Marriage* (2018). This tale of love, marriage, the United States justice system, and the travails of relationship, seized the hearts and imagination of a multitude of readers. This response was not simply because of Oprah Winfrey’s endorsement, but due to its artistry, unstinting realism, and compelling characters.”

*continued on page 6*

On October 2nd, 2018, the eve of Thomas Wolfe’s 118th birthday, Gillian Welch was awarded the Thomas Wolfe Medal, and — a first for the ceremony — sang her lecture. Moeser Auditorium was full, the audience entranced, and the night had a magical feel to it. Along with her partner, David Rawlings, she sang the songs that brought her here: “Revelator,” “Look at Miss Ohio,” “Orphan Girl,” and many, many others. Listening to them, her exquisite artistry as a songwriter and a storyteller was on grand display.

*continued on page 6*



## Gillian Welch Awarded the Wolfe Medal

2019–2020

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

**Chapter & Verse** is published yearly by the Creative Writing Program.

Daniel Wallace, *Editor* | UNC Chapel Hill | Greenlaw Hall, CB#3520 | Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3520  
C&V@unc.edu | <http://english.unc.edu/creative> | PHONE 919.962.4000 | FAX 919.962.3520

# Dear Friends,

**T**hank you for your interest in and support of Creative Writing at Carolina. Our program continues to flourish because of our students, our former students, and many others who see real value in committing ourselves to teaching the art of writing to all comers.

This year almost seven hundred students took one of the forty-eight classes we offered in fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. For the first time, we offered a Musical Writing track, and these classes



were enthusiastically received. Many of our 4th year students graduated with honors and went on to graduate schools, pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts degree. Gram-O-Rama, a skit class devoted to the comedy inherent in grammar, directed with panache by **Ross White**, continues to entertain students, faculty and university administrators.

In the fall **Gillian Welch** received the **Thomas Wolfe Medal**, and, along with her partner, **David Rawlings**, sang her beautiful songs to a full house in Moeser Auditorium. She's the first lyricist ever to receive the prize. In the spring, **Tayari Jones**

was our **Frank B. Hanes Writer-in-Residence**, whose presence here would not have been possible without the support of **Nancy White** and **Robin Hanes**. Through the course of her week on campus, Tayari was a compelling speaker and reader.

None of this would have been possible without an avid group of steadfast advocates for literacy and literature. None of it would be possible without **Anita Braxton**, our office administrator, who continues to run our program with the aplomb of the seasoned professional she is. She never lets us see her sweat, and maybe she doesn't. But all of us in the **Creative Writing Program** know



what she does for us, and we know she is invaluable.

We are fortunate to enjoy two Armfield Poetry Readings every year, made possible by the **Armfield Fund for Poetry**, a bequest to us from the late poet **Blanche Britt Armfield** (MA 1928). Our distinguished poets and readers for 2018 – 2019 were **Aimee Nezhukumatathil** and **Rose McLarney**.

The Department of English, where we make our home, could not be more hospitable. I am certain there is no creative writing program in the country with a relationship better than the one we have with our department and its gracious leader, **Mary Floyd-Wilson**. She supports and sustains us; **Jennifer Washington**, who is the Business Officer for the English Department, does the same. **Linda Horne, Robin Samuels, Nelly Whitney, Tony Royle** and **Cheryl Siler-Jones** all do their parts to keep our program robust.

This is a note of thanks to all of you who attend our programs and shows, who support us financially, and who read our books. But it's a thank you especially to our students. Thank you for continuing to have faith in us. I'm often asked if current students are not as engaged or literate as students of yore, before the digital world invaded the prairie-quiet, contemplative life of teenagers. The answer to that is no. They are just as good as they ever were. And we're glad they're here.

Of course, we owe a debt to our allies and counselors in **South Building**, particularly **Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz**, **Interim College of Arts & Sciences Dean Terry Rhodes**,



**Interim Senior Associate Dean for Fine Arts and Humanities Elizabeth Engelhardt**, and **Director of Communications Geneva Collins**.

I want to recognize specific private funds supporting Creative Writing activities, including the **Rankin Faculty Support Fund**, established by **Alex Rankin** (class of 1977); the **Burrus Fund**, established by **Ann Williams Burrus** (class of 1952); and our **Gift Fund**, which is supported and supplemented by so many of our friends and associates. **The Walker Percy** (class of 1937) **Fund**, an endowment to help underwrite our lecturers, was set in motion several years ago by **Frank Borden Hanes, Sr.** (class of 1942). 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**.

**Nancy White** and **Robin Hanes** have been our staunch allies for many years; they continue to support the **Hanes Distinguished Visiting Writer** series, and for that we will be forever grateful. Immense gratitude also goes to **John Skipper** for his avid and unwavering support of the **Thomas Wolfe Lecture**. Thank you all.

Daniel Wallace  
*Director*

# CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS FOR 2018

Department of English  
and Comparative Literature

## BLANCHE ARMFIELD

### PRIZE IN POETRY

Marina Greenfeld

## SUZANNE BOLCH LITERARY AWARD

Olivia Nea

## ROBERT B. HOUSE MEMORIAL

### PRIZE IN POETRY

Jack Davis

## ROBERT RUARK SOCIETY

### PRIZE IN NON-FICTION

Olivia Neal

## LOUIS D. RUBIN, JR., PRIZE IN CREATIVE WRITING

Andrew Edmon King

## BLAND SIMPSON PRIZE IN CREATIVE NON-FICTION

Emily Kian — 1st Place

Adair Tompkins — 2nd Place

## MAX STEELE PRIZE IN FICTION

Kailey Morgan

Hayley Sigmon

## GEORGE B. WYNNE AWARD IN FICTION

Kayla Rutledge

## ANN WILLIAMS BURRUS PRIZE

Aisling Henihan

Honorable Mention: Taylor Brunson

## MINI-MAX SHORT-SHORT FICTION PRIZE

Caroline Rose Porter — 1st place

Sofia Martinez — 2nd Place

Takhona Hlatshwako — 3rd Place

Honorable Mentions: Christian Hand,

Kayla Delanie Rutledge and

Kacey Thigpen



Why aren't you writing?

The following students graduated with Honors from the Creative Writing Program this past year. Beside their names are the titles of the works they completed in the year-long Honors class.

## Fiction Honors

Bland Simpson, Director

Isabella Bonner	<i>Nothing But Space Waiting to Be Found</i>
Marc Brunton	<i>Upper South</i>
Bryant Lee Chappell	<i>What It Means to Smile</i>
Maya Chari	<i>Eschatology for Dummies</i>
Christian Hand	<i>Dancing Towards Default</i>
Andrew Edmon King	<i>Tell, Tell</i>
Kailey Morgan	<i>No Good Man &amp; Other Stories</i>
Katie Ann Otto	<i>Faultlines</i>
Robert Pierce	<i>Hometown Wilds</i>
Hayley Sigmon	<i>Junkyard Tales</i>

## Poetry Honors

Michael McFee, Director

Taylor Brunson	<i>Spine &amp; Spike</i>
Jack Davis	<i>All This Light Hiding</i>
Bethany Garrison	<i>Night Check</i>
Ronald Harris	<i>Tend To</i>
Aisling Henihan	<i>Sound Fruit</i>
Carter Hodge	<i>It's All Down Hill</i>
Mariah Lindsey	<i>Gulf</i>
Alex Reinhart	<i>Oak Under Fire</i>
Victoria Young	<i>Are You Blood</i>

# Faculty News

## GABRIELLE CALVOCORESSI

published the poem *Hammond B3 Organ Cistern* in the November 19, 2018 issue of *The New Yorker*. Gaby also published poems in *Tin House* and became the Director of The Frost Place Conference on Poetry (<https://frostplace.org/programs/conference-on-poetry/>), a weeklong poetry conference in New Hampshire that welcomes poets of all levels. As Poetry Editor for *Southern Cultures*, Gaby edited, along with undergrad co-editor Marina Greenfeld, *Bounty Everlasting*, a chapbook celebrating 25 years of poetry from the journal.

**MICHAEL CHITWOOD** will be the inaugural reader in the Larmore Reading Series at Emory & Henry College in September. He has poems in the current or forthcoming issues of *North American Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Poetry East*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Birmingham Poetry Review* and *New Letters*. He coordinates the popular *Tar Heel Verses* in the *Daily Tar Heel*, spotlighting poetry written by students in the Program.

**MARIANNE GINGHER** published two essays, "Groovy's Hat" and "A Beautiful Mother," in anthologies. She and her collaborator wrote, designed, and performed a new puppet play, "The Poet's Menagerie," at the Greensboro Bound Literary Festival. The play is based on Fred Chappell's new book of verse, *As If It Were*. She received a Maker's Space faculty grant to incorporate Maker's Space technology into a new First Year Seminar she will teach in fall 2019, "Writing for the Puppet Stage."

## STEPHANIE ELIZONDO GRIEST

presented her book *All the Agents and Saints* around the country, including at the Brooklyn Book Festival, Texas Book Festival, Sanibel Island Writers Conference, Rhodes College, University of San Diego, and College of the Holy Cross. She gave the culminating keynote at the 2018 NonfictionNow Conference. Stephanie published an essay in the anthology *Mothers and Strangers* and was commissioned to write the 2019 Meridel Le Sueur Essay for the *Water-Stone Review*. The Lannan Foundation awarded her a month-long residency in Marfa, Texas.

**RANDALL KENAN** is currently the Chancellor of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He was guest curator for two photo exhibits for the Southbound collection at the Gregg Museum of NCSU and the Power Plant Gallery at Duke University's American Tobacco Campus.

During the past year, **MICHAEL MCFEE** has received two prizes: the Thomas and Lillie D. Chaffin Award for Appalachian Literature, presented by Morehead State University in March, and the North Carolina Award for Literature, the state's highest civilian honor, presented by Governor Cooper in Raleigh last November.

**M. RANDAL O'WAIN**'s short story collection titled *Hallelujah Station* will be published Fall/2020 by Autumn House. His memoir, *Meander Belt*, was published in 2019, by the University of Nebraska Press. He is currently at work on a book about bioluminescence, a narrative investigation of how light and dark



Gabrielle Calvocoressi



Michael Chitwood



Marianne Ginger



Stephanie Griest



Randall Kenan



Michael McFee



M. Randal O'wain



Alan Shapiro



Bland Simpson



Daniel Wallace



Ross White

(*chiaro e scuro*) have been portrayed culturally throughout written history.

**ALAN SHAPIRO**'s new book, *Against Translation*, was published this past March. His poem "Encore" has been selected for *Best American Poetry 2019*.

**BLAND SIMPSON** co-hosted the Albemarle Sound Boat Tour (NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources); performed *King Mackerel & The Blues Are Running* in NYC and GA, and with Red Clay Ramblers at the Pat Conroy Literary Festival; gave inaugural Stabler Lecture for UNC's Lineberger Center; performed at the *Best of Our State*; at Weymouth Center and the 25th Partnership for the Sounds Anniversary. Essays "Common Wall of Warmth" and "Island Time" in *Our State* and "The Last Word" in *Mothers & Strangers*. Launched *Musical Writing I & II*, producing student shows *Candor in C* and, with Gaby Calvocoressi, *It's a Great Day for a Flight*. On University Day, Simpson received the Edward Kidder Graham Award for UNC Faculty Service.

**DANIEL WALLACE**'s essay, "Child Bride," about his mother's first marriage, was published in *Mothers and Strangers*, from UNC Press. His novel, *Extraordinary Adventures*, won Best Fiction of the Year from the Alabama Library Association. He also received the Harper Lee Award, awarded to a living Alabama writer in recognition of a lifelong contribution to the arts. His ping pong game continues to mature.

**ROSS WHITE**'s first full-length collection of poems, *Charm Offensive*, won Eyewear Publishing's Sexton Poetry Prize for the best unpublished poetry collection by an American poet. A micro-chapbook, *sin Wave*, appeared from Rinky Dink Press in late 2018. New poems appear or are forthcoming in *BOAAT*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Moon City Review*, and others. He now serves as the Associate Director of the Frost Place Conference on Poetry.



continued from page 1

Her nearly weeklong visit was an immense treat for our students, who had an opportunity to speak with her on a number of occasions. Tayari gave freely of her time, was on two panels, and spent hours in classrooms and one-on-one with as many young

Randall Kenan; Mary-Floyd Wilson, Chair of the English Department; Tayari Jones; and Daniel Wallace, Director of the Creative Writing Program

writers as she could in the time she had. Her talk, which centered on her journey as a writer, was as entertaining as it was instructive.



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October 2nd is the eve of Thomas Wolfe's birthday, but it actually is Gillian Welch's birthday. We celebrated it with a cake and a song.

In every issue of *Chapter & Verse* we include a piece by or about one of our alumae. This edition is a short reflection from Joanna Pearson ('02), whose most recent book is *Every Human Love*, a collection of stories.

# ONCE UPON A TIME

Once upon a time, there was a senior honors class comprised of only four students: two were tall, one was small, and one had an affinity for wolves. All together, they looked like a zany, slightly off-kilter gang — the kind of gang you see in a musical, ready to doff their caps and start snapping together in a well-choreographed dance battle. They laughed a lot. They wore shirts layered on top of other shirts because the 90's had only recently ended and this was cool. One had awesome tattoos. One moved through campus with the air of an Eastern mystic. One had a love-hate relationship with free-verse; one, with rhyme. They liked to discuss, with passion, the well-placed caesura. Tone, speaker, an off-rhyme. Good acoustics — they loved that! — the way a line could reverberate with meaning. At the start of their fall semester, airplanes flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon — both of which seemed so far away from Chapel Hill, NC, but also not so far away at all. The world was changed. Who could possibly write poetry, or fiction?! But who could possibly *not* write poetry or fiction?! In a way, these four figured, you had to forget all that stuff and just *write!* In another way, these four figured, you couldn't forget

any of that stuff, but you had to hold on to it all and just *write!*

These four learned to write badly.

And by this, I mean these four aspired to write well. But to write at all is to write badly. One must write a lot, most of it bad, and keep going. One must slog.

They slogged merrily! It was fun! Their teacher carried little notecards in his pocket on which he scribbled, words or phrases that caught his attention, poems to copy and bring to share. He led the class kindly, quick to notice bright spots in the students' work, eager to lend a book, and gracious when that book was not quickly returned.

He responded to the students' work with a specific system of checkmarks versus squiggles. (They aspired to earn a checkmark! A check plus!) Sometimes, there were readings and receptions for fancy visiting writers, and this made them feel inspired, imbued with a sense of Culture and Literary Tradition. These students applied for — and got — a

grant to go to Merlefest together, because poetry is music, and music is singing, and singing is narrative, and narrative is lyric, and lyric is poetry. People had been doing this kind of thing a *loooooong* time. They were, what, all of 21, 22-years-old? They'd better pay attention.

They loved reading things that moved them. They wanted to write

things that moved someone. This rarely happened, but they kept writing. Much of their writing would embarrass them now. These four were generous with one another, and encouraging. Every now and then, a stanza zinged. They read and wrote. They graduated. They grew up.

You can now find three of them wandering Orange or Chatham County. One of them is off living with the wolves, or else maybe he married an Italian princess and moved to her villa — something like that. They realized quickly that outside of a creative writing program, there is no sheltered space for writing. No

one is waiting for your poem, ready to bestow a checkmark or a squiggle. And look at all the distractions — deductibles, 1040 forms, a howling child! The world is changed and changed again. Who could possibly write poetry, or fiction?! Writing, they understood, is a thing you do in the interstitial

time. You must do it for no other reason than the fact that, in certain rare moments, to have done so — to have written a thing that works! — feels better and more satisfying than anything else you can imagine. So someone keeps writing. Slog on!



# Alumni News



## CLASS OF 1977

**Warren Rochelle's** short story, "Mirrors," a gay-themed retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*, was accepted for publication in the forthcoming Cuil Press queering romance anthology *So You Think You Know Love?*

## CLASS OF 1978

**Ann Cary Simpson**, President of the NC Coastal Land Trust and UNC Press author, presented the deed to 1,000 acres of land along Salmon Creek in Bertie County (NCCLT's Site X project) to NC Natural & Cultural Resources Secretary Susi Hamilton in a ceremony at the mouth of Salmon Creek on Friday, March 15th, 2019. This property becomes the state's newest natural area, accessible to all in the relatively near future, to be managed by NC State Parks for conservation, education, and recreation purposes.

## CLASS OF 1980

**Ben Fountain** recently received the Carr P. Collins Award from the Texas Institute of Letters for his book *Beautiful Country Burn Again: Democracy, Rebellion, and Revolution* (Ecco/HarperCollins 2018), which examines the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *Beautiful Country* is based on a series of essays and reportage that he did for the *Guardian* over the course of 2016; the series was subsequently nominated by the editors of the *Guardian* for the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary. His more recent writing on U.S. politics has been published in *The New York Review of Books*, *The Daily Beast*, *TomDispatch.com*, and (again) the *Guardian*, though his main efforts these days are devoted toward a novel that he hopes to bring out in 2021.

## CLASS OF 1988

**Scott Martin** is writing direct response copy for clients around the world as he is also working on books 17, 18 and 19. He is a part time ski instructor and busy fighting off vixens.

## CLASS OF 1992

**Mark Sutton** and co-editor, Sally Chandler, were published as part of the WAC Clearinghouse's Perspectives on Writing Series. The collection is titled *The Writing Studio Sampler: Stories about Change* and is available online at The Writing Studio Sampler: Stories about Change — The WAC Clearinghouse.

## CLASS OF 1996

**Jonathan Farmer** recently published a book of essays, *That Peculiar Affirmative: On the Social Life of Poems*, and had a launch event in Chapel Hill alongside Alan Shapiro.

**Dan Koiss's** memoir *How to Be a Family* will be published by Little, Brown in September. In addition, he is enjoying playing a lot of soccer.

**Matthew Vollmer** in the past year has had stories in *The Sun*, *The Normal School*, *Epoch*, and *Smoke Long Quarterly*. Essays are forthcoming in *Passages North* and *The Seneca Review*. His latest book, *Permanent Exhibit*, a collection of lyric essays, was published by BOA Editions in September, 2018. In July, 2019, he was the New Harmony Writer-in-Residence at the University of Southern Illinois. He is currently an Associate Professor at Virginia Tech.

## 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](mailto:C&V@unc.edu). Whether you're making books, making babies, or simply making a life, we'd love to hear from you.

## CLASS OF 1997

**Richard Allen's** essay "Future Development" appeared on Slate.com last fall. "I Will Be There at 1 P.M.," a work of multimedia creative nonfiction, is forthcoming in *At Length*.

## CLASS OF 1998

**Chris Barge** is still working at Community Foundation Boulder County in Colorado and is responsible for editing their biennial TRENDS Report on the social, economic and environmental health of our community. Chris is partnering with their community radio station to expand the print project into bilingual radio this fall. It's part of a new equity reporting initiative, aimed at ensuring stories of their most vulnerable and marginalized residents are heard, despite a shrinking local news landscape.

**Laura Emerson's** first nonfiction work, *The Delegates of 1849 — Originators of California's Reputation as a Bold and Independent State*, will be available through IngramSpark in the coming weeks.

**Jennifer Young** has moved to sunny Cornwall with her 6-year-old daughter. She is the Head of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University and she also judges for the inaugural Comedy Women in Print prize for funny women novelists. Her second novel, *The Running Lie*, will be out in Spring 2020.



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## CLASS OF 1999

**John Ikeda** is a senior financial specialist at the World Bank, focusing on financial innovation in the water sector. He recently co-authored a publication on fintech for water available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/387931552667416907/Fintech-for-the-Water-Sector-Advancing-Financial-Inclusion-for-More-Equitable-Access-to-Water>

## CLASS OF 2001

**Kimberly O'Connor** had a poem called “The History of My Silence” in the Fall 2018 *Colorado Review* and has another poem, “My American Childhood in Reverse,” forthcoming in *Cagibi*.

## CLASS OF 2002

**Joanna Pearson**’s collection of short stories, *Every Human Love*, came out in May 2019 from Acre Books.

## CLASS OF 2005

**Lucy Bryan** is a faculty member in the James Madison University Writing Center. She and her husband Nate welcomed their first child, Mads Todd Robert Malenke, into their family on July 3, 2018. Lucy also continues to write and publish creative nonfiction. Her article “Citizens Afield” (about volunteers helping with climate change research in Joshua Tree National Park) was the cover story for *Earth Island Journal*’s Summer 2018 issue. Her essay “Island, Wilding” (about becoming a mother in a time of climate crisis) won *Parks and Points*’ Fall 2018 essay contest. *Newfound Journal* published her essay “In the Woods” in its Spring 2019 issue.



## CLASS OF 2006

**Jared Fernley** proudly welcomed his son, Mr. Charles Henry Fernley, into the world on May 18, 2019. Despite the plot reversals, dramatic thunderstorm and well-drawn characters related to his birth story, Young Charlie has shown little literary inclination or prowess as of yet. But, it's early.

**Melissa Sutton-Seng** moved back to North Carolina last year after several years in California, where she received dual Masters degrees in Intercultural Studies and Divinity, met her husband, and discovered a passion for sustainability. Stubbornly refusing to select just one career path, Melissa is currently working as a freelance writer and editor in Wilmington, speaking and teaching in religious settings occasionally, and trying to convince her family, friends, and anyone else who will listen to save the planet.

## CLASS OF 2007

**Kristy Woodson Harvey** recently signed a deal with Gallery Books/Simon & Schuster for her sixth and seventh novels, *Feels Like Falling*, which is set to release April 28, 2020, as well as an untitled 2021 release. The books in her Peachtree Bluff Series — *Slightly South of Simple*, *The Secret to Southern Charm* and *The Southern Side of Paradise* — have been optioned for TV.

## CLASS OF 2008

**Nate Dixon** has finished an MA in English at NC Central University and will enter the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Georgia, Athens, this fall.

**Adam Edgerton**’s big news this year is that he has recently won a National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, which is \$27,500 awarded to the most promising doctoral students in the country.

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**Sean Honea** was offered a great job opportunity with the VA Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska as a full-time acupuncturist. As a veteran himself, he is excited about the opportunity to treat this patient population.

#### CLASS OF 2009

**Travis Smith** now works at Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. He recently published his poem *The Water Theater* in *Harper's*: <https://harpers.org/archive/2019/01/the-water-theater-travis-smith/> and published a chapbook in 2016 with Ninepin Press, Amherst, MA: <http://ninepinpress.com/zodiac-b>.

#### CLASS OF 2010

**Delaney Nolan** is currently living in Brussels, where she is a freelance copywriter. Last summer, she taught creative writing at a summer camp as a Fulbright Specialist in Moscow for RANEPa University. In February she was a writer-in-residence at Yaddo. She is at work on a novel.

**Sarah Smith** is a literary agent at the David Black Literary Agency in Brooklyn, representing mostly non-fiction clients. She recently went with fellow Creative Writing alum Sally Symons to see Professor Daniel Wallace launch his new novel in Brooklyn with Elizabeth Strout. It was a great opportunity to celebrate his work.

#### CLASS OF 2012

**Annie Vitalsey (Josey)** graduated this spring with her MFA in fiction from Arizona State University. She will be the 2019-2020 Olive B. O'Connor Fellow at Colgate University, where she will teach creative writing and work towards finishing her first novel.

#### CLASS OF 2013

**Pat Robinson** has been teaching theatre at a high school in Canarsie, which most recently performed "Macbeth." He has also had several of his originals performed at the renowned Dixon Place in NYC, including "Pigeon Spikes," "Sleepy Eyed Kids," and his latest "Vox" in May 2019.

**Taylor Hartley** published her debut novel *She's Powerful Trouble* with publisher The Parliament House on May 28, 2019.

**Allen Tedder** was in the Juilliard MFA acting program in NYC and is currently playing guitar in the hit Broadway adaptation of "To Kill a Mockingbird." He is the 2019 recipient of New York Carolina Club's Young Alumnus Award.

#### CLASS OF 2014

**Emily Palmer** works as a crime and courts reporter for *The New York Times*. She has covered the trials of narco-lord Joaquin Guzman Loera and con-artist Anna "Delvey" Sorokin, who pretended to be a German heiress in order to pursue multi-million loans. Over the course of those trials, Emily conducted exclusive interviews with Chapo's wife, Emma Coronel Aispuro, and went to Rikers Island for a series of jailhouse interviews with Anna. Recent reporting has taken her to Durango, Mexico, where she is researching a potential book.

**Cary Bland Simpson** (Columbia University MFA '18) is Development Manager for the New York City theatre non-profit Only Make Believe, which employs professional actors to create shows for and with young patients in some forty-five NYC metro area hospitals. [www.onlymakebelieve.org](http://www.onlymakebelieve.org)

#### CLASS OF 2016

**Mason Boyles** is entering his third year of the MFA program at UC Irvine, revising the draft of a novel that he intends to submit as his thesis. His recent fiction has been published in magazines such as *New Guard*, the *Baltimore Review*, the *Wisconsin Review*, *Flying South*, and *Black Dandy*.

**Heather Wilson** is a communications specialist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. When not teaching School of Medicine professors the difference between a "twitter" and a "like," she spends her time doing comedy in the Triangle. She is also working on a potentially slush-pile-worthy novel about robots, siblings, progress and paranoia.

### CLASS OF 2017

**Maddie Norris**, previously the Thomas Wolfe Scholar at Chapel Hill, is an MFA candidate at the University of Arizona in creative nonfiction. She was nominated for an AWP intro award and is the recipient of Ninth Letter's Literary Award in Creative Nonfiction. Her recent work can be found in *Essay Daily* and is forthcoming from *Territory* and *Ninth Letter*.

**Sophie Shaw** has been working with two high schools in Dare County (Outer Banks) through the Carolina College Advising Corps, helping students and parents research careers and colleges, apply for scholarships and financial aid, and make good decisions about college. She plans to apply for MFA programs in fiction in the winter.

### CLASS OF 2019

**Andrew King** (Highest Honors, Senior Honors Fiction) started a position at Tor Books, a division of Macmillan Publishers, in August. Tor is the world's most successful science fiction and fantasy publisher, winner of the Locus Award for Best Science Fiction Publisher for 25 consecutive years. <https://us.macmillan.com/torforge/>

**Hayley Sigmon** has joined the MFA Writing Program at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.





UNC  
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ARTS & SCIENCES

Creative Writing Program  
Department of English and Comparative Literature  
Greenlaw Hall CB 3520  
UNC-Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520

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## A hundred years ago

this fall, Frederick Koch first taught playwriting in our Department of English, and thus began modern imaginative writing at Carolina.

One of Proff Koch's first students was Thomas Wolfe, who found his great voice in some of the most powerful literary prose we know. Wolfe loved music—in *Look Homeward Angel*, he translated his real sister into a fictional member of a musical duo, the Dixie Melody Twins, and he even wrote a song for his fictional father, W. O. Grant, to sing as he sloshed gasoline into the raging hearth,

borrowing his melody from our Bell Tower chimes.

When he lived in New York City in the 1920s and '30s. Thomas Wolfe attended many musical plays and revues, and his works are filled not only with a powerful musicality, but also with many song titles and song lyrics of the day. Wolfe would have been mightily pleased with what we are about here tonight

We honor, as our Thomas Wolfe Prize awardee, a writer whose art is the composition of lyrics and melodies. We celebrate the highly literary and musical values embodied in the

remarkable songwriting career that has brought Gillian Welch and her longtime collaborator David Rawlings both popular success and critical acclaim. Gillian's and David's deeply American musical art has already joined the best of the best in our nation's broad, complex library of popular song, and their words have found the way into our hearts and minds, and, I daresay, our souls.

—Bland Simpson, *Introduction of Gillian Welch & David Rawlings, Hill Hall, UNC, October 2, 2018*