

Revise This!

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WILKES UNIVERSITY CREATIVE WRITING NEWSLETTER

October 2016

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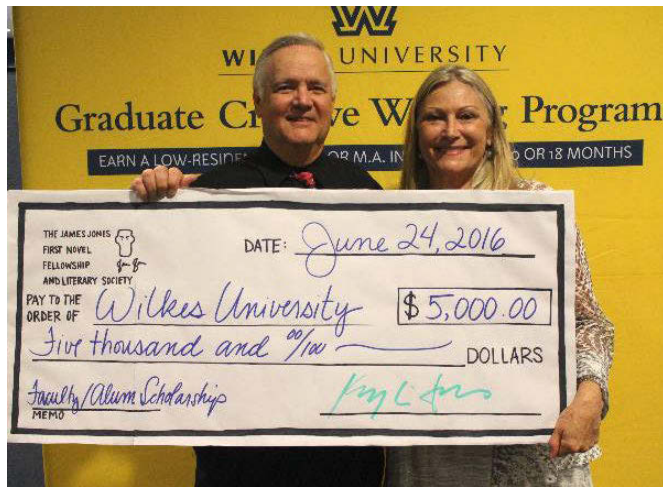
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**Scholarship programs turn writers
into graduate students**

Now entering its second year, the \$2,500 Pay It Forward scholarship grant has helped attract 15 students to the Wilkes University Graduate Creative Writing Program by using marketing's most powerful medium: word of mouth.

Pay
It



Jan Quackenbush and Kaylie Jones display the James Jones Literary Society's donation to the new Faculty/Alum Scholarship fund.

Forward puts scholarship money in the hands of every Wilkes Creative Writing faculty member and alum, who can nominate one student per term for the award. The \$2,500 defrays a portion of tuition in a student's first semester in the program.

Another scholarship initiative now in development got a boost in June with a \$5,000 donation from the James Jones Literary Society. The Faculty/Alum Scholarship Fund, organized by **Dr. J. Michael Lennon** and **Jan Quackenbush**, will be added to the merit awards given each June to continuing students. Those scholarships are based on faculty nominations, and include the Beverly Hiscox, Norris Church Mailer, and Jennifer Diskin Scholarships, and the Bergman Family Foundation Award.

In its first semester, 10 students in the Jan. 2016 cohort received Pay It Forward awards, including seven in the low-residency cohort (faculty and alums who referred them are in parentheses):

- Cooper Gorelick (referred by Anne Henry)
- Lisa Greim (Kaylie Jones)
- Patrick Kelley (Rachel Strayer)
- Bibiana Krall (David Poyer)
- Christopher Owens (Bill Schneider)
- Mark Rivera (Danielle Poupore)

- Pamela Turchin (Nichole Kanney)

Janine Dubik of the new Wilkes-Barre weekender program (referred by **Sam Chiarelli**) and Mesa weekenders **Toni Muma** (referred by **Austin Bennett**) and **Christy White** (referred by **Bonnie Culver**) also received \$2,500 scholarships.

In June, four more low-residency students and one Wilkes-Barre weekender received Pay It Forward scholarships:

- Todd Conaster (Phil Brady)
- Christa Mallecoccio (Rachel Strayer)
- Camika Spencer (Lori A. May)
- Lindsey Wotanis (J. Michael Lennon)
- Amanda Cino (Rick Priebe)

Know someone who would benefit from the program? Let them know about the \$2,500 scholarship, and pass along their names and contact information to Program Director **Dr. Bonnie Culver**.

Tim Seibles named Poet Laureate of Virginia

Etruscan Press author and Wilkes Creative Writing Advisory Board member **Tim Seibles** was named Poet Laureate of Virginia July 15 by Gov. Terry McAuliffe.

Seibles read from his National Book Award-nominated collection, *Fast Animal* (Etruscan Press, 2012), at the June residency, and spoke at the closing banquet.

[Here's a video](#) of him reading "Ode to My Hands" from *Fast Animal* at the National Book Awards Finalists Reading in 2012.

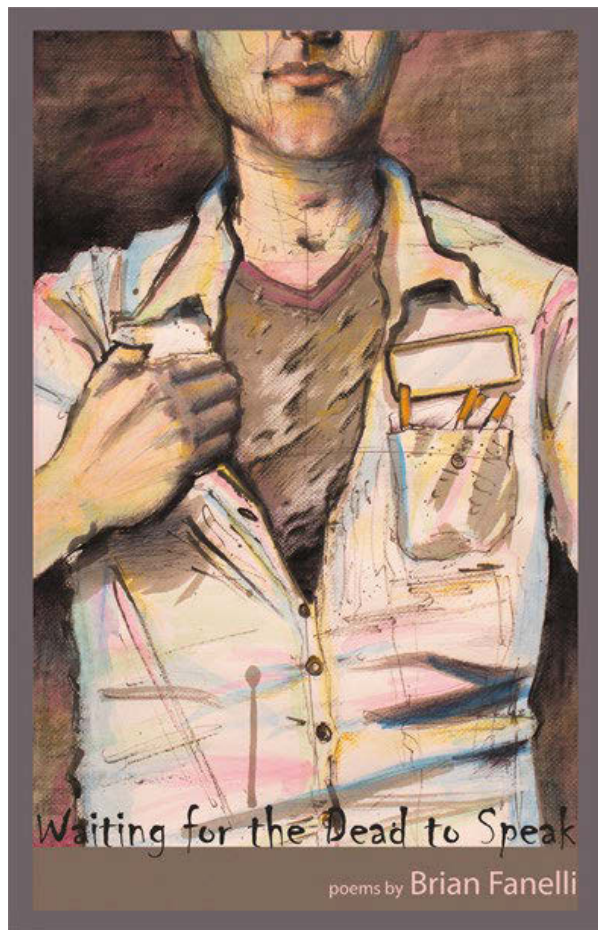
A dedicated ambassador for poetry, Seibles has won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. He received his bachelor's degree from Southern Methodist University and his MFA in creative writing from Norwich University/Vermont College of Fine Arts.

He teaches in the M.F.A. program in Creative Writing at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. Sheri Reynolds, a colleague at Old Dominion, called Seibles "a visionary writer and teacher ... a generous mentor to his students and a much-loved colleague."

Five and a half questions for Brian Fanelli (M.F.A. '10)

by Lisa Greim

A literal shout-out to a Wilkes poet happened Sept. 20 when *The Writer's Almanac*, a daily update produced by American Public Media and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation, featured work from **Brian Fanelli's** new book. [Click this link](#) to hear "Raking Leaves," read by a familiar voice, *A Prairie Home Companion's* retired host, Garrison Keillor.



Brian Fanelli's *Waiting for the Dead to Speak*.

Waiting for the Dead to Speak is Fanelli's second full-length book of poetry, published Sept. 12 by the New York Quarterly Foundation's imprint, NYQ Books. Reviewer Maria Mazziotti Gillan calls Fanelli's work "vibrant, muscular, carefully crafted poems rooted in working-class rural Pennsylvania."

Links to [order from your favorite bookseller](#) may be found at [New York](#)

[Quarterly's website](#). You can also find both the book and its author at a launch party Oct. 7 at the Olde Brick Theater in Scranton, or at readings in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York this fall. The full schedule is on his website: brianfanelli.com/events/

Fanelli holds a Ph.D. from Binghamton University, along with his Wilkes M.F.A., and is Professor of English at Lackawanna College. We asked him a few questions about the pieces in *Waiting for the Dead to Speak* and the life of a poet.

Has your writing process changed since you started your M.A.?

My schedule is vastly different now than when I enrolled in the Wilkes program and even different from when I finished the M.F.A. in 2010. I have a full-time teaching load and committee responsibilities that come with the job. So, I tend to write around my teaching schedule, often in the morning and then later at night. When I was in the program, I worked a few part-time jobs and had more time for writing. That said, I still follow a routine of writing first thing in the morning, before I do anything else. Often, my thoughts are most fluid in the morning.

How has your poetry changed?

My poetry has changed drastically since I enrolled in the Wilkes Creative Writing Program. I have deepened my knowledge of the poetic tradition, for one, thanks to the reading lists that my mentors gave me while in the program. It has also deepened because of my experience finishing my doctorate at Binghamton University. I had to take a variety of courses and read poets that I may not have read if not for the program. I have always written narrative poetry. I like poetry that is accessible in its language and democratic. I also like poetry that tells a story in whatever form that may take. I think, however, that I am getting more comfortable writing longer, meditative poems. I used to write far shorter narrative poems, but now I try to push deeper. I'm also more comfortable trying different forms.

I thought the most evocative line was, "The worst thing to do is to forget." Is that why you write?

That line comes from the book's title poem, "Waiting for the Dead to Speak," and it was about my father, specifically how I never dreamt about him after he died, unlike my other family members. I had this fear that I would forget certain memories of him, and I felt this frustration because I didn't dream about him. This book, more than anything else I've written, is about the past, about the different ways that the dead speak to us, either through dreams or through memories. It is also about the idea of not forgetting, which is what that line is all about.

The personas in your poetry are so representative of the different selves we try on as we go through life: punk rocker and homeowner, working-class kid and overworked adjunct. Was this a conscious choice as you wrote, to set up these parallels?

I wrote the poems over a span of five or six years, through different workshops, including some of the workshops I completed in the Wilkes program. I don't think I intentionally meant to represent the different ideas of self, since the poems were written over a longer period of time. However, when I started organizing the collection, which was a long process, I was conscious of how the poems interacted and spoke to each other, even worked against each other at times. To paraphrase Frost, the order of a book of poems should act like the final poem.

Who and what are you reading now?

I have always been interested in issues of class and labor, so I just finished two books that got a lot of buzz within the last year, Nancy Isenberg's book *White Trash: A 400 Year History of Class in America* and JD Vance's book *Hillbilly Elegy*. I liked them both. I was drawn to Isenberg's historical lens of class issues, which was a nice contrast to Vance's personal account of growing up poor in rural Ohio. I think both books are so important now, in the context of this election cycle and the rise of Trumpism, more specifically the anger of the white working-class.

I also just read and plan to re-read Ross Gay's *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*. It is a wonderful, moving collection of poems. The poems are about gardening, but they're about more than that. They are these long narratives that use gardening as an entry point to talk about memories of the poet's family or friends long gone. I'm going through an anthology called *The Fire This Time*, which was just released and deals with matters of race in America. Other than that, I've been reading in preparation of what I'm teaching this semester, so a lot of American literature, going back to the Puritans, to Anne Bradstreet's poems, to Phyllis Wheatley, to Native American accounts of the American experience. It's been helpful when trying to figure out where we've been as a country and where we may be headed.

Is there a moment or an experience from your Wilkes program that has stuck with you?

I remember sitting down with my poetry mentors during some of my first residencies. I remember **Christine Gelineau** and **Neil Shepard** handing me lists of books that I needed to read. I realized how much I didn't know and how much I wanted to learn. All of us are always learning. There are writers we haven't read yet. The Wilkes program is really great at pushing you, expanding your knowledge, and pulling you out of your comfort zone as a writer and reader. I am forever grateful for that.

Lisa Greim, a freelance journalist and content marketing writer in Denver, is a graduate assistant pursuing her M.A. degree in Creative Writing from Wilkes University.

Summer Commencement includes 21 creative writing degree recipients

Three cheers for the following members of the Wilkes writing community, who completed their work at the June residency and received degrees Sept. 11 at Wilkes' summer graduation ceremony.

Master of Arts

- Anna Laurene Arnett (Creative Nonfiction)
- Spencer Aubrey (Poetry)
- Michelle Byrnes (Screenwriting)
- Wendy Decker (Fiction)
- Kayleigh DeMace (Fiction)
- Brianna Eller (Fiction)
- Joshua Horwitz (Creative Nonfiction)
- Jennifer Jenkins (Fiction)
- M. Anthony Kapolka (Fiction)
- Nathalie O'Brien (Fiction)
- Dale Louise Mervine (Fiction)
- Kerri Miller (Poetry)
- Michael Mortimer (Screenwriting)
- Donna Talarico (Publishing)
- Kristin Vath (Fiction)

Master of Fine Arts

- Caryn Devinenti
- Megan Haikes
- Corinne Nulton
- Vanessa Taylor-O'Connor
- Ezzel Thomas
- John Winston

Faculty News

Screenwriting faculty member **Ross Klavan** is one of three authors, along with Charles Salzberg and Tim O'Mara, in *Triple Shot*, a new compilation of three novellas just published by Down and Out Books. His

noir-ish story of cops who go bad, and then worse, is called "Thump Gun Hitched."

Fiction faculty member **Lenore Hart's** narrative poem "Crazy Quilt 1918" was selected for inclusion in the upcoming anthology *Forgotten Women*, forthcoming later this year from Grayson Books. A novel manuscript, *The Alchemy of Light* (formerly *Dead Light*), which Hart has read from several times at residencies, was a semifinalist for the Faulkner-Wisdom Novel Award.

Galleys are completed for faculty member **Nancy McKinley's** short story "The Dog" in the canine-themed anthology *To Unsnare Time's Warp*. She promises, "The collection of dog stories and poems will make you howl with literary delight." You can get a pre-publication discount at [Main Street Rag Publishing's online bookstore](#).

Playwriting faculty member **Juanita Rockwell** was awarded the 2016-2017 [Marion International Fellowship](#) to write a play with songs set on the day of the bombing of Hiroshima, from the perspective of various women whose work led to its detonation. She just returned from "[Scientific Delirium Madness 3.0](#)," the third annual July residency at the Djerassi Resident Artist Program, with a dozen scientists and artists working on projects that bridge the (imaginary) gap between science and art.

Student and Alumni News

Cheryl Bazzoui (M.A. '14) has been busy writing book reviews on the Story Circle Network's website: [Hope You Guess My Name](#) by **Heather Harlen**; [Six Car Lengths Behind an Elephant: Undercover & Overwhelmed as a CIA Wife and Mother](#) by Lillian McCloy; and [In Robin's Nest](#) by Elizabeth Sumner Wafler. Her review of *Tipping Point* by fiction faculty member **David Poyer** aired on [WPSU's BookMark](#).

Jennifer D. Bokal (M.A. '10) gave a presentation on character development at the Lilac City Fiction Writers August meeting. In early September she presented on writing love scenes at the Connecticut Fiction Fest. Jen also signed a three-book contract with Harlequin's Romantic Suspense line, with the first one released for the holidays in 2017. Jen is represented by **Chris Tomasino** of the Tomasino Agency.

M.A.



Todd Conner appears this fall in *Metamorphoses*.

student Todd Conatser, whose stage name is Todd Conner, will present three performances of *Metamorphoses* Sept. 27, Oct. 25 and Nov. 15 at the Players Club, 16 Gramercy Park South, New York City. Seats are available by guest RSVP only at mayasphereproject@gmail.com. A \$15 cash admission will be asked at the club, whose dress code is business casual. Conner premiered his solo storytelling version of Ovid's epic mythology in 2000 at the S. Mark Taper Foundation Amphitheatre in Beverly Hills, Calif. Entertainment Today in L.A. called it a "grand combination of art and entertainment." Conner learned to play the harp for this production, and composed new music to accompany his live storytelling.

Wendy Decker (M.A. '16) will teach a young adult workshop at Neptune Public Library in Neptune, N.J., 6-8 p.m. on Sept. 29.

Cindy Dlugolecki (M.A. '11) had her 10-minute play, *A Matter Of Taste*, produced in August at Hershey Area Playhouse. *The Bombcatchers*, another 10-minute work, had two staged readings, at Mt. Gretna Playhouse in August and Hershey Area Playhouse in September. Cindy also signed a contract with Once-in-a-Blue Moon Plays to publish her one-act Christmas comedy, *A.N.G.E.L.s Inc.*

Gale



Gale Martin's Don Juan in Hankey, Pa.

Martin's (M.F.A. '10) novel *Don Juan in Hankey, Pa.*, has been reissued in a newly revised edition by Northampton House Press. Editor Lenore Hart says: "Peek beneath the surface of an extraordinary small-town opera company, and get to know a fabulous cast of characters: determined flirts, a lusty singing gaucho, ingenious manipulators, a bipolar ketchup heiress, devious lovers, and some very determined ghosts. Delve into high society in Hankey, Pa.—a world of simmering seductions, convoluted mysteries and entertaining intrigues. *Don Juan in Hankey, Pa.*, will delight readers everywhere, opera lovers or not!"

Janine P. Dubik (M.A. student) is among 16 writers whose poems were selected for the [2016 Poetry in Transit program](#) with the Luzerne County Transportation Authority in Wilkes-Barre. In its 10th year, Poetry in Transit displays the poems in each LCTA bus route from September through August. The 2016 program launched Aug. 19.

Richard Fellingner (M.F.A. '10) published a pair of op-eds on the presidential race in [July](#) and [August](#) in the Lancaster paper, lancasteronline.com.

M.A. student Cooper Gorelick is now working for the Theater

Department at Rutgers University Camden as a production stage manager and event staff crew, starting with their production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, which runs Oct. 26-30. He adds: "It's what I'll be contending with while I write an M.A. screenplay about putting on a play."

Heather Harlen (M.A. '08) participated in the Collingswood Book Festival Oct. 1 in Collingswood, N.J., showcasing her novel *Hope You Guess My Name: A Thriller*, from Northampton House Press. Heather also wrote an essay for *Yoganonymous* called "[Closer To Quiet: How Meditation Helped Me Heal My Grief.](#)"



Scenes from Lit Crawl Sept. 2 in Denver, organized by Monique Antonette Lewis

M.F.A. student Jennifer Jenkins is teaching "Thinking and Writing" at King's College for the fall 2016 semester, while she continues to write for the marketing/communications department at Wilkes as a graduate assistant.

Monique Antonette Lewis (M.F.A. '12) was the lead organizer for the first annual Lit Crawl Denver, a project of the Litquake Foundation. The Sept. 2 event featured more than 30 local writers holding readings across six venues in northwest Denver. Her organization, At The Inkwell, also held a reading which included Aurora, Colo., poet laureate Jovan Mays.

Lori A. May (M.F.A.'13) has new writing in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* and *Panorama: The Journal of Intelligent Travel*. She will be at AWP 2017, speaking on the panel "Don't forget the day job: preparing creative writing graduates for lifelong careers." In October, Lori is presenting at

three writers' conferences: Write on the Sound, Surrey International Writers' Conference, and BinderCon NYC. She is also a featured reader at the WordsWest Literary Series in Seattle, taking place October 19.

Josh Penzone's (M.A. '13) short story "After Zion" appears in the October issue of *FICTION Silicon Valley*. His short story "The Scratch" will appear in an upcoming issue of *Chantwood Magazine*.

Jim Scheers (M.A. '08) showcased his novel *This Is What You Want, This What You Get* (Northampton House Press) at the Collingswood Book Festival Oct. 1 in Collingswood, N.J.

M.A. student Karley Stasko has been appointed a graduate assistant to Dean Paul Riggs in the Wilkes University College of Arts, Humanities and Social Services.

M.A. student Ronnie K. Stephens reports: "I've had numerous posts from my blog picked up by various outlets over the last couple of months, including *Scary Mommy* and *The Good Men Project*. The topics range from the dreaded sex talk and parenting through divorce to Pokemon Go and mental health. I even had my son's birth story circulated by the *You Share Project!*"

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