Karen Thompson Walker joined the program’s faculty in the 2017 academic year as a new Assistant Professor of fiction. Walker’s first novel, *The Age of Miracles*, was named one of the best books of the year by *People*; *O, The Oprah Magazine; The Financial Times; Kirkus; Publishers Weekly; Amazon; and Barnes & Noble*. It has been translated into 27 languages and optioned for film by River Road Entertainment. Walker’s writing has also appeared in *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times*, and *Real Simple*, and she gave a TED talk about fear and the imagination at TEDGlobal 2012. Karen previously worked as a book editor at Simon & Schuster and is a graduate of UCLA and Columbia. Her new novel, *The Dreamers*, is set for release in January 2019.


Karen Thompson Walker (KTW): It’s about a contagious sleeping sickness that spreads through a small college town. People fall asleep, and they can’t wake up. Eventually, it becomes clear that this strange perpetual sleep is accompanied by extraordinary dreams.

MA: What led you to the idea?

I've always been interested in contagion stories. (*Blindness*, by José Saramago, which imagines an epidemic...
of blindness, is one of my favorite books and a major influence.) At the time that I
started writing this book, I was living in Iowa City. Living in a college town reminded
me of some of the weirdness of college, and of the narrative possibilities of the
crowded environment of a dorm floor, which is where The Dreamers begins. The
idea that it would be a sleeping sickness came a little later—and actually came
partly from a dream, as convenient as that may sound. I had a dream that I couldn’t
wake up. I like writing about the uncanny elements of ordinary life, and sleep and
dreaming are such clear examples.

MA: So it just fit right into what you were already working on.

KTW: Right. It was returning to territory that I was interested in and wrote
about in The Age of Miracles, which is the collision of ordinary life and ordinary
people with some kind of extreme and strange disaster situation, to see how it
affects them, or how it does or does not change them.

MA: How was the process of approaching and writing your second novel
different for you than going in to your first?

KTW: I think I was able to foresee problems a little more successfully. And just
the feeling of having written one novel before made me a little more calm and a
little more confident, which are feelings that were totally absent when writing my
first book. I didn’t even know if I could do it. Can I even write 250 pages about the
same characters and world and situation? Can this story even be something that
anyone would think to call a novel? Writing the second novel felt more like, I know I
can write a novel, but is it going to be a good novel? Every novel has its own
challenges, of course, and I’m always learning.

MA: Your first novel got a lot of positive critical reception and acclaim—you
had TED talks, articles in The Wall Street Journal, all these reviews and all these
interviews, and I can imagine that felt both amazing and also kind of overwhelming.
Do you feel like it affected your approach, or gave you any sort of hesitation toward
your next novel at all? Or was it more like, great, that worked out, and so now I’m
just going to go do that again?

KTW: [laughs] No, I wouldn’t describe it that way. I had a very strange and
lucky experience that the book got a certain amount of attention. It was great, but
for a writer, it was weird. I remember feeling that I was much more productive, and
more comfortable writing and in my writing head once time had passed. That first
year or so, the reviews were in my head—even Amazon reviews, or even things
people had said at readings, about things they didn’t think worked. Or things that
did, and I thought, well this time I’m doing the opposite.... It was just distracting, for
a while. That was 2012. I spent about four and a half, five years writing the new
book. And the further I got from that crazy time, the easier it was to work.

MA: Your previous book was narrated by a first person narrator, looking
back on her life to the time when she was 12. Does The Dreamers have a similar
narrative situation?

KTW: No, it’s in third person. It has a large cast of characters, and the narrative
voice dips into various people’s heads in different parts of the story.

MA: In choosing that, what was your reasoning behind, this is how I can best
tell this particular story, versus the perspective of your previous book, of an
individual looking back on her experience?
finding ways to conjure it but not exhaust it. I don’t know if you’ve been to the Pantheon, but for me there’s no substitute for standing in that space. Photographs are going to fail and certainly language as a medium is going to fail. But what I can do is ask questions. Why am I so haunted by and obsessed with this space? What am I trying to get at? What is it about the light, that small window of sky, that is haunting me? Then at the same time you have to confront that seemingly impossible task of trying to recreate an aspect of that, trying to focus on the minuita and find a way to draw the reader’s attention to a particular detail that you otherwise might not have appreciated as a viewer. Those are the moments for me where it’s actual investigation on my part. The course of the writing process is a meditation where I’m just forced to look at it and look at it and look at it. This is something that I feel poetry can and should do, in addition to innumerable other things: teach us about the act of looking and the world of art.

KH: The "I" speaker you deploy in Vellum is an observer, a questioner, a meditator. Was this a result of working in the ekphrastic tradition? Have you perhaps changed your approach to the speaker with your more recent collection, Rapture & the Big Bam?

MD: When I look back at the poems in Vellum, which at this point were written a while ago, it’s something that I was criticized for when I was in grad school, that I didn’t have enough of myself in the poems. At the time, I really resisted the need to have the personal in there. Maybe some of that was coming out of a resistance to the confessional tradition, and I didn’t feel like poems needed to do that. But when I look back at them, I feel like those poems could have been improved by having more of the actual self in there, and by actual self I mean self as a construct.

KH: How have you been able to balance that moment of looking with the process of conveying—without falling into abstraction—the beauty that’s in a work of art?

MD: The task of the poem when it’s approaching a work of art is not to reproduce it. It’s going to fail if it’s trying to be merely illustrative. So for me I’m interested in Art and the Ekphrastic Tradition

Interview with Matt Donovan

by Katie Haemmerle, MFA Poetry ’18

Matt Donovan is the author of the collection of essays, A Cloud of Unusual Size and Shape: Meditations on Ruin and Redemption, as well as two collections of poetry – Vellum and Rapture & the Big Bam.

Katie Haemmerle (KH): The subjects of your poems so often are rooted in artwork and music. How have those subjects come to inform your poetry and interest in the ekphrastic tradition?

Matt Donovan (MD): I’ve always been excited about art and the ekphrastic tradition. Learning about a piece of art in the process of finding the poem is to find forms that change one's relationship to that art and serve as an interrogation of the piece, or expansion of that piece—something that can rupture the stasis of visual art and work through narrative or ask questions about it as a means of engagement. The poem is in part asking questions about it, sitting with it, trying to get to that moment of the aesthetic experience and then also pushing beyond that, which poetry affords as a narrative form or form that can include narrative. Often for me, a source of a poem might be having some sort of response to a piece of music or an artist or a painting or sculpture and just wanting to understand it and go through that act of looking. Inevitably for me, even the act of writing the poem, whether it ends up being a failed poem or a piece that I feel is finally settled or distilled, will have opened up that work of art from the course of trying to approach it, understand it, interrogate it.

KH: How have you been able to balance that moment of looking with the process of conveying—without falling into abstraction—the beauty that’s in a work of art?

MD: The task of the poem when it's approaching a work of art is not to reproduce it. It's going to fail if it's trying to be merely illustrative. So for me I'm interested in
The Kidd Program has undergone many exciting changes in its 25th year. First, a little history: Founded by Garrett Hongo in 1991 with a bequest from Walter and Nancy Kidd, the Kidd Program was modeled on the Watson Foundation of Rhode Island, the Hopwood Lectures and Contests at the University of Michigan, and the Harvard Tutorials. The Kidd Program aims for the same rigorous intellectual inquiry as these esteemed institutions.

However, the model that the Kidd Program truly aspires to is the Watt’s Writer’s Workshop, a federally funded program, directed by Dudley Randall, which included adult writers (Quincy Troupe, Lonnie Elder, and Stanley Crouch, among others) teaching middle school and high school students in the "inner city" of Los Angeles during the summer of 1967. It was a way for the African American community to rebuild itself after the Watts riots. Community leaders saw the workshop as a way to promote cultural life, raise moral, and build an African-American literary consciousness. Borrowing from Watts, the Kidd Program aspires to be a community in every way: to help students grow as artists and individuals; to develop their own literary consciousness; to find their voices and be heard; and to make their pocket of the world a better place.

Kidd participants enjoy a highly individualized, intense year of study in a small group setting, as well as access to visiting writers (at least two each term) in the Creative Writing Program’s annual Reading Series. In keeping with the bequest by Nancy and Walter Kidd, the Kidd Program also offers substantial scholarships to admitted students who demonstrate financial need, awarding approximately $50,000 each year.

The Kidd Program used to be a year-long capstone course for advanced fiction writers and poets. However, last year the Kidd Program transitioned to targeting introductory and intermediate level students as a gateway to more advanced classes with faculty—facilitating enrollment in the minor. Students now attend lectures each week by faculty members in poetry and fiction in the Fall term. In the Winter and Spring terms, Kidd students continue to work with their tutors to develop a critical, craft-centered paper called a Line of Inquiry as well as their creative portfolios. Students collect their best work in the annual Kidd anthology and celebrate their progress with an end-of-year literary reading.

This year, we rebranded the Kidd Program, changing the name from The Kidd Tutorial to The Walter and Nancy Kidd Creative Writing Workshops. We hope the new name will make it clearer to the UO undergraduate population about what constitutes the Kidd Program, namely, young aspiring writers producing their own creative work and helping one another grow as artists. We also redesigned our website and advertising material and expanded our visibility on campus. The results have been promising. This year, we had a 50 percent increase in applications. In 2018-2019, we are welcoming our largest Kidd class ever, with 46 talented undergraduate writers. For the first time in many years, we are able to offer a second poetry class.

In its 25th year, the Kidd Program remains committed more than ever to its mission of helping undergraduate writers find their community here at the University of Oregon.

In my first year as Kidd Director, it has been a bit nerve-wracking shepherding the program through so many changes. But I was also able to witness the powerful opportunity that the Kidd Program offers. As I hosted the lectures, I saw each speaker engage the students’ curiosity and passion for writing in a new way. As I helped our tutors compile the Kidd Anthology this spring, I saw the quantum leaps forward that the Kidd students took as artists and people. Reading through the mountain of applications this spring, I couldn’t help but be excited about the progress these young writers would make in just a year’s time. Throughout the year, I kept thinking: Man, I wish my alma mater had a program like this when I was an undergraduate student. I am continually struck by how unique and special the Kidd Program truly is. We are lucky to have it.
MICHAEL COPPERMAN (MFA Fiction ’06) began our reading series with a craft talk about navigating different types of retrospection, a common challenge faced during first drafts.

During his reading, he read from his memoir, *Teacher: Two Years in the Mississippi Delta*, which was a finalist for the 2018 Oregon Book Award in creative nonfiction.

ROBIN COSTE LEWIS is the 2015 National Book Award winner for her book *Voyage of the Sable Venus*. Her poetry has appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *Callaloo*, *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review*, *VIDA*, and *Phantom Limb*, among others. She holds an MFA from NYU and an MTS in Sanskrit and comparative religious literature from the Divinity School at Harvard University.

In her craft talk, she read from “Boarding the Voyage,” her lyric essay about the archaeological act of researching that went into the writing of *Voyage of the Sable Venus*.

MATT DONOVAN, author of two poetry collections, *Vellum* and *Rapture & the Big Bam*, as well as the essay collection *A Cloud of Unusual Size and Shape: Meditations on Ruin and Redemption*. He is the recipient of an NEA Fellowship, the Rome Prize in Literature, a Pushcart Prize, and the Larry Levis Reading Prize.

His craft talk explored the role of syntax in the elegy through close readings of Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool,” Frank O’Hara’s “The Day Lady Died,” Rickey Laurentiis’ “Writing an Elegy” and a scene from *Hamlet*.


She thrilled us by allowing us to be the first audience to hear an excerpt from her upcoming novel. Her craft talk covered many methods fiction writers can use to communicate a character’s emotions to the reader.

MARY JO SALTER has published eight books of poetry, including *A Phone Call to the Future: New and Selected Poems*, *Nothing by Design*, and *The Surveyors*. She served as co-editor of three editions of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* and is a Krieger-Eisenhower Professor in The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University.

Through an analysis of Dickinson’s heightened attention to language, her craft talk considered the significance of words as both signifiers and things in the world. The lecture focused on the unconscious work a poet does that changes word choice and motivates decisions later in a poem.

ANDRE DUBUS III is the author of six books including *House of Sand and Fog* which was adapted into an Academy Award-nominated motion picture. He has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, The National Magazine Award for Fiction, two Pushcart Prizes, and an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature.

As a novelist and short story writer, he gave a craft talk about abandoning outlines and following the subconscious when constructing a narrative. He encouraged students in the audience to make their art their first priority.

In an unconventional reading, Dubus personalized the event by chatting with the audience about his life experiences and his upbringing. He then read an excerpt from his memoir, *Townie*, that detailed the moment he knew he’d become a writer.
Faculty News

Poet and Former Program Director Passes Away

Ralph Salisbury, Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing and Literature, former director of the MFA in Creative Writing and editor-in-chief of the Northwest Review, passed away on October 9, 2017.

Ralph began his career at the University of Oregon in 1960. Early on he directed the MFA in Creative Writing program (which he helped to develop) in addition to serving as editor-in-chief of the Northwest Review for six years. He also edited A Nation Within, an anthology of contemporary Native American writing (Outriggers Press, New Zealand) and won many accolades in poetry, including a Rockefeller Foundation Residency at the Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Italy; the Chapelbrook Award; the Northwest Poetry Award; three Fulbright professorships to Germany and Norway; and an Amparts (USIS) lectureship in India.

Mat Johnson
Professor of Fiction

Mat Johnson joins the university in a shared position with English and will begin teaching in the Creative Writing Program in Fall 2018. Mat is the author of the novels Loving Day, Pym, Drop, Hunting in Harlem, the nonfiction novella The Great Negro Plot, and the comic books Incognito and Dark Rain. He is a recipient of the American Book Award, the United States Artist James Baldwin Fellowship, The Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, and the John Dos Passos Prize for Literature.

Mat Johnson's story “Counterblast” won an O. Henry Award and will be reprinted in The O. Henry Prize Stories 2018. Marjorie was the recipient of a Faculty Research Award from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and a Faculty Research Grant from the Center for the Study of Women in Society. Both grants were in support of her second novel, which will be published in Canada, the UK, and Spain in 2019. In addition, she was a Visiting Writer at Willamette University and at Ohio University, and will be a Visiting Writer at the Mineral School next September.

Brian Trapp
Career Instructor of Fiction

Brian Trapp was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Willamette University, where he taught creative writing and disability studies. He won an Oregon Arts Fellowship in Nonfiction for his memoir-in-progress, Twelve Words. He also received a writing residency at Centrum in Port Townsend, WA.

Brian Trapp
Assistant Professor of Fiction

In this last year, Geri Doran's poems have appeared in Yale Review, New England Review, and A Poetry Congeries (a feature of the online journal, Connotation Press). Her new poetry collection, Blue Marble, is forthcoming in 2019 from Tupelo Press.

Geri Doran
Associate Professor of Poetry

“The Mirror Diary tracks the emergence of an original poetic voice and a learned consciousness amid multiple and sometimes competing influences of complex literary traditions and regional and ethnic histories. Beginning with a literary inquiry into the history of Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i and California, Garrett Hongo draws on his own history to consider the mosaic of American identities—personal, cultural, and poetic—in the context of a postmodern diaspora.”

In addition to readings in California and Washington this past year, Garrett’s poems have appeared in the *Harvard Review and Renga for Obama*. He has poems forthcoming in *New England Review, Kenyon Review, Harvard Review*, and the *Asian American Literary Review*.

Last summer he participated in the Smithsonian Institute’s Asian American Literary Festival and taught at Bread Loaf Writers Conference. This spring and summer he will be a Lucas Fellow at the Lucas Artist Retreats at Villa Montalvo (Saratoga CA), visiting artist at the American Academy (Rome, Italy), and fellow at the Djerassi Artist Retreats (Woodside CA).
Student News
Scholarships, Fellowships, and What’s Next

From left to right: Amanda Cox, Blaine Ely, Katie Haemmerle, Ndinda Kioko, Kieran Mundy, and Erik Neave.

Amanda Cox (Poetry ‘19)
Amanda was awarded The Miriam McFall Starlin Poetry Prize. This summer award honors a first-year program student in poetry.

Blaine Ely (Fiction ‘18)
Blaine will join the University of Houston’s PhD program in Literature and Creative Writing in the fall.

Katie Haemmerle (Fiction ‘18)
Katie was named a Sewanee Writers’ Conference Scholar. She will attend the workshops in Tennessee in July.

Ndinda Kioko (Fiction ‘18)
Ndinda received an Olive B. O’Connor Fellowship in Fiction from Colgate University for 2018–19. The annual fellowship is designed to support writers completing their first book, and provides a generous stipend, office space, and an intellectual community for the recipients. Ndinda will teach a creative-writing workshop each semester and give a public reading of her work.

Ndinda also won the Logsdon Award for Creative Fiction Writing for 2018. This prize honors a second-year program student in fiction.

Kieran Mundy (Fiction ‘19)

Erik Neave (Poetry ‘18)
Erik also was named a Sewanee Writers’ Conference Scholar for 2018. He will join Katie in Tennessee in July.

Annual Giving Reminder

Consider giving to the Creative Writing Program. Your generous support helps us educate students, strengthen our program, and prepare tomorrow’s writers—our future literary voices. There are a variety of ways to support the program and gifts of all sizes are a powerful investment in our mission and community. Whether you are making a one-time gift, making a pledge of recurring contributions, considering a planned gift, or establishing an endowed fund, donations to the program and program-related funds allow us to provide a competitive education for our growing body of undergraduates and graduate students.

The faculty and staff in the Creative Writing Program are committed to advancing the educational and scholarly mission of the university and we thank you for your generosity. For more information, visit our webpage: http://crwr.uoregon.edu/give-now/.
The Walter and Nancy Kidd Writing Competition

Fiction winners with personalized citations by guest judge, Andre Dubus, III

1st  Selene Steets  “Crystal”

“Written with gritty, evocative, and honest prose, ‘Crystal’ is a haunting lament, a cry for connection in a place where all the ties that bind have broken. This is a deeply affecting, moving, and important short story, and it marks the appearance of a talented new writer among us.”

2nd  Garod Drumm  “Waning”

“Told in the wonderfully authentic voice of a troubled young girl with too much weight on her shoulders, ‘Waning’ brims over with a myriad of emotional truths. It also show-cases the work of a truly gifted young writer.”

3rd  Patrick Riley  “Confinati”

“‘Confinati’ is a wise, compassionate, and naturalistic gem. I could have spent a novel’s stretch of pages with these compelling characters in The Crooked Mountains of Italy.”

Poetry winners with personalized citations by guest judge, Mary Jo Salter

1st  Sarah Hovet  “The Artist”

“In ‘The Artist,’ the poet lavishes careful attention on the various creations of a tattoo artist, as if they were masterpieces in a museum. But these tattoos are the work of a ‘cartographer’—they map the world and also are dispersed all over the world, on the bodies of people. The tattoos are described in words whose precision mirrors the tattooist’s, and whose musical harmonies make us delight in them further.”

2nd  James Barton  “Pieter Bruegel: Winter Landscape, 1565”

“This poem begins by seeing into the minds of people depicted in a Breughel winter landscape, although the people themselves ‘cannot see beyond the river’s bend.’ That is, they can neither see beyond their daily environment, nor beyond the bounds of the painting that frames them. The poet not only sees but hears everything going on in the winter landscape, and makes a welcome connection between Flemish sixteenth-century culture and a small town of the present.”

3rd  Veronica Fernandez-Alvarado  “Amor de Veracruz”

“‘Amor de Veracruz’ deals with a social problem, physical and verbal abuse in families, with a sense of the complicated compromises people often make. The poem’s best moment is in its ending, when the harsh words of family members coexist with their choice (daily, it seems) to make peace at the end of the day.”

Pictured below from left to right:
Patrick Riley (Fiction, 3rd place) and Sarah Hovet (Poetry, 1st place) with guest author, Andre Dubus, III
Angela Bogart-Monteith
Angela originally hails from North Idaho, where her family has lived for four generations. She graduated with a BA in Creative Writing from the University of Colorado Denver, where she worked behind the scenes with Copper Nickel.

Since leaving her home-town, she spent the last decade living in southern Germany; Chicago, IL; Bend, OR; and Denver, CO, and is thrilled for the opportunity to study at the university and trade in the dry Colorado climate for the mushroom-strewn mountains of coastal Oregon. Beyond whole-heartedly locking herself away to write for the next few years, she plans to make time for pottery, gardening, and possibly beekeeping.

Beatrice Bugané
Beatrice is from Brasília, a city in Brazil that is shaped like a plane—fitting, given the many countries she has resided in. Finding many books along her travels, fiction has provided her a sense of continuity and stability she has yet to encounter in life.

She will graduate from Brown University in May of 2018 with a degree in English and a readiness to write more stories—she has spent too many of her undergraduate years trying to find something else to major in. Family friends have warned her about the solitary life of a writer, which at times has pushed her away from it—but secretly, she longs for the quiet, calm of it, and she daydreams about owning a cat.

Chris Connolly
Chris was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland. Having spent much of his twenties working strange jobs, travelling to strange places, and making a series of strange decisions, he decided to make one last one and try to write. He’s been doing so for the past few years, mostly from his room in the basement of a decrepit, crumbling, riddled old Georgian mansion.

He’s very much looking forward to escaping his basement and moving 5,000 miles to kick things up a notch in Eugene: learning, meeting, teaching, seeing—all the important things.

Mark Hennion
Mark spent his early years reading and writing horror and slipstream fiction in Harrisburg, PA. Since then, he has lived in Colorado Springs, CO; Manhattan, NY; and most recently Myrtle Beach, SC.

He is a veteran of the U.S. Army and served as a Cavalry Scout with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He holds a BA in religion from Columbia University and an MA in writing from Coastal Carolina University. Between degrees, Mark has worked as a heavy metal photojournalist, a professional photographer, over-the-road trucker, and a mental health specialist. He is an avid collector of paperback horror and all things Punisher, a collection he will be thinning down to help make the trek to Eugene with his son, Victor.

Steven Kiernan
Steven was born and raised in Northern California. At 17, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served as an infantryman from 2005–2010. During his deployment to Iraq, he was wounded in an IED blast which resulted in the amputation of both legs and spent two years recovering at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

After being medically discharged, he received a BA in English Literature from the University of Virginia and is now looking forward to pursuing an MFA in creative writing. His work has appeared in Kenyon Review Online, The Wrath-Bearing Tree, and O-Dark-Thirty.

He has been splitting his time between Fredericksburg and Charlottesvile, VA, with his wife and two dogs.
Poetry

Dewey Fox

Dewey was born and grew up where the Susquehanna River empties into the Chesapeake Bay, and he has lived in Baltimore, MD, for the last decade.

His occupational history is varied: sportswriter, police reporter, roofer, editor, teacher, crab steamer, water deliverer, clothier, and forthcoming, student of poetry at the University of Oregon, which is a dream that he keeps waiting to wake from. A journalist and fiction writer for most of his adult life, he decided to direct all his energies to poetry after reading a copy of Charles Wright’s *Country Music* that he purchased at a used bookstore.

Outside of reading and writing, he enjoys painting, playing guitar, and letting the Orioles break his heart every baseball season. He’s going to drive from Maryland to Oregon at some point in August with nothing but his clothes and boxes of books—he's more excited about this than he can convey here.

Jonathan Hill

Jonathan was born in Atlanta, GA, and raised in Fairview, TN, a rural town outside Nashville, where he grew up playing soccer, getting lost in the woods, and reading in his family’s bucolic backyard.

He studied language and literature at Indiana University, earning his BA in Middle Eastern Language & Culture with a minor in creative writing. He spent several years as an English teacher between the West Bank, Cairo, and South Korea with stints back in Tennessee working in cafés where he honed his sandwich craft.

Most recently, he earned his MA in English at East Tennessee State University where he specialized in 20th century British literature, particularly on the work of Welsh poet R. S. Thomas.

He enjoys hiking with his wife Rachel and his puppy Nova, and he’s thrilled to continue reading, writing, and exploring with the folks and forests of Oregon this fall.

Natalie Staples

Natalie received her BA in English, with an emphasis in Creative Writing, from Kenyon College in 2014. Since graduation, she has worked for a college-access program, The Schuler Scholar Program, that serves underrepresented students in the Chicago area. As a writing program associate, she teaches writing to ninth-through twelfth-grade students.

She grew up on the east coast and has spent eight years studying and living in the Midwest; she can’t wait to see what the west coast has to offer! Her interests include riding horses and ogling at strangers’ dogs. She is thrilled to be studying poetry at Oregon this fall.

Nathaniel Nelson

Nathaniel hails from Chattanooga, TN, by way of Crawfordsville, IN, and New York City. He discovered poetry while working on his BA in English Literature, which he earned from Sewanee: The University of the South. Currently, he works as the Tennessee Williams Post-Baccalaureate Fellow for the Sewanee Writers’ Conference.

Recent poetic interests include the luminosity of everyday objects, gender expression, identity, and fluidity, the positive and negative aspects of naming as a linguistic tool, and the place of human consciousness in the larger natural world. He also likes anime, animals, and spending time in the woods. He is beyond excited to join this year’s class of incoming MFA students and to continue his studies in poetry at the University of Oregon.
Alumni News

Award-winning Civil Twilight reviewed at Huffington Post

Jeffrey Schultz (MFA Poetry ’03) is a rare two-time winner of the National Poetry Series:
- 2013 for What Ridiculous Things We Could Ask of Each Other
- 2016 for Civil Twilight

Jeff is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Pepperdine/Seaver College (Malibu, CA) where he served as Interim Director of Creative Writing (2014–2015).

Copperman Named Finalist for Oregon Book Award

Mike Copperman (MFA Fiction ’06) was named one of five finalists for the 2018 Oregon Book Awards/Sarah Winnemucca Award for Creative Nonfiction. His book, Teacher: Two Years in the Mississippi Delta (University Press of Mississippi), was selected by judges Steven Church, Alison Hawthorne Deming, and Lia Purpura.

Copperman Named Finalist for Oregon Book Award

Christian Knoeller
MFA Poetry ’81

Christian Knoeller has published book chapters and articles widely on both critical and pedagogical topics, including internationally in Canada and Australia. His work on environmental history as well as Midwestern and Native American Literature has appeared in leading ecocritical journals including Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment and the Journal of Ecocriticism. This wide-ranging work is consolidated in his new book-length, ecocritical study, Reimagining Environmental History: Ecological Memory in the Wake of Landscape Change (University of Nevada Press, published in October 2017). In addition, Christian was promoted to Full Professor of English at Purdue. He is past President of Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature.

Veach Releases Debut Collection

Cindy Veach’s (MFA Poetry ’82) debut poetry collection, Gloved Against Blood, has been published by CavanKerry Press. Gloved Against Blood explores the fraught relationships of four generations of women against a backdrop of the patriarchal textile mills of 19th century Lowell, Massachusetts, that were fueled by the blood and sweat of exploited mill girls and enslaved African-Americans in the south. This collection speaks to family, lost love, infidelities, abandonment and the close work, women’s work, of mending what is torn, and making it like new despite the forces of inherited histories.

Call for Alumni News

Submit through our online portal: http://crwr.uoregon.edu/ or email: cwrweb@uoregon.edu (Subject: CRWR Alumni News). Be sure to include your name, genre, and graduation year.
2017 Philip Levine Prize for Poetry

Tina Mozelle Braziel (MFA Poetry ‘15), winner of the 2017 Philip Levine Prize for Poetry, directs the Ada Long Creative Writing Workshop for high school students at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Her collection, Known by Salt, will be published by Anhinga Press in 2019. Her chapbook, Rooted by Thirst, was published by Porkbelly Press in 2016.

Her work has also appeared in The Cincinnati Review, Southern Humanities Review, Tampa Review, and other journals.

Elizabeth George Foundation Grant Winners

Claire Luchette (MFA Fiction ‘17) and Phoebe Bright (MFA Fiction ‘16) have been awarded competitive grants from the Elizabeth George Foundation. The Foundation makes artistic grants to unpublished fiction writers, poets, emerging playwrights and organizations benefiting disadvantaged youth.

Jenna Lynch
MFA Poetry ‘13

Jenna Lynch recently accepted a position at Fairleigh Dickinson University (Teaneck, NJ) as the Reading and Writing Specialist in the Academic Support Center. Her chapbook, The Mouth of Which You Are, was accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press and is due out July 2018.

Her work has appeared in Construction Magazine, The Westchester Review, Newtown Literary, Forklift, Ohio, among others. She was named a finalist for the 2013 Joy Harjo Poetry Prize by Cutthroat: A Journal of the Arts, and has received fellowships and residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and the Norman Mailer Writers Colony. Jenna lives in Astoria, Queens (New York).

Paul Hoobyar
MFA Fiction ‘89

Paul Hoobyar’s novel, Rogue River Reprieve, going to print later this spring, is about a fishing guide who is confronted with a multi-national corporation's plans to open a heap-leach mine in the lower Rogue Canyon to mine gold. As the guide learns more about the devastation that the mine could wreak in his beloved Rogue River, the action shifts to his and others' efforts to fight the corporation and its minions.

Paul worked as a fishing guide, whitewater kayak instructor and adventure travel writer in the Pacific Northwest for two decades.

Eliza Rotterman
MFA Poetry ‘06

Eliza Rotterman’s chapbook, Dirt Eaters, selected by Brenta Shaghnessy for the Tupelo Press Snowbound Award will be released in 2018.

Eliza's poetry has appeared in Volta, Quarterly West, Colorado Review and Poetry International, among others. She has received fellowships from the Vermont Studio Center and Squaw Valley Community of Writers. Currently she lives in Portland, OR, and practices nursing.

Jacob Berns
(MFA Fiction ‘15)

Jacob’s story “Frieda, Callie, Kelly Lou” will be featured in an upcoming episode of Painted Bride Quarterly’s podcast and published in the journal’s annual print edition.

J. Stillwell Powers
(MFA Fiction ‘16)

Jake has been awarded a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown for 2018–19.

Allison Donohue
(MFA Poetry ‘17)

Karen Thompson Walker’s second novel, *The Dreamers*, will be published by Random House in January of 2019. Television rights have been optioned by Warren Littlefield, executive producer of *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Fargo*, at Fox 21 Television Studios.

**THE DREAMERS**

**KTW**: I’m really excited to be here. It has been so nice to work with both undergrads and graduate students, and it keeps making me think, especially working with graduate students—about the things I was trying to figure out when I was a student. It has just been such an interesting, and challenging and satisfying, experience.

**MA**: What has your experience been like in the program this year?

**KTW**: I was an editorial assistant and eventually moved up to editor. I think it made me a better writer of sentences, because I was used to editing other people’s sentences. It also gave me a better sense of long form narrative. In graduate school, I thought more about short stories. But in publishing I was constantly helping people refine these long book-length projects. It taught me something about how a story can be told over a few hundred pages.

**MA**: Based on the reading we’ve done for your graduate courses, it seems like you have all sorts of literary influences. And you’ve mentioned before that you’ve not always written, or always been interested in, fantastical fiction. Can you talk a little bit about what led you to embracing the fantastical in your work?

When I was younger I was interested in the fantastical in the way that kids often are, but my reading was mostly not in that direction. The one fantastical book that I really did love in high school was *Slaughterhouse Five*. But I didn’t ever think of myself as planning to write in that way. Then in graduate school I took a fantastical fiction class, where I read Saramago’s *Blindness* for the first time. Then, the final assignment for the course was to write a short story with a fantastical element. That same semester, I’d read that, in 2004 the earthquake in Indonesia really did, by a tiny amount, change the rotation of the earth, so I decided to try writing a short story with that detail in mind, except a more extreme version. That was really the first time I wrote something that was outside of regular, real life. A few years later I came back to that story and turned it into a novel, but from the time I read *Blindness* to the time when I was deep into writing *The Age of Miracles*, I became more and more interested in how writers figure out how to write about the fantastical, and what they’re using those elements for.

**MA**: Between completing your MFA and your first novel you worked in publishing. Did that experience influence your work or writing in any way?

**KTW**: I was in graduate school, Nathan Englander was one of my teachers. He was really influential just in terms of how to think about story, how story can work. There was also the level of seriousness and almost sacredness that he treated writing, and how hard he worked at it. How many hours, how perfectionistic he was. Those kinds of things stayed with me.

**MA**: What is something you’re reading now or have read recently that you enjoyed or has affected you in some way?

**KTW**: I recently read *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamad, which I just loved and then put on the syllabus for my course. It’s a nice example of how a story with a fantastical element can really be about the real world. That line between what’s real and unreal doesn’t have to be as clear or as fixed as we might otherwise think.
KH: The poetic self.

MD: Exactly. More of the “I” as a dynamic first person narrator rather than the “I” serving merely as a remote observer asking questions, because the ekphrastic tradition can also risk the kind of a voice of a docent or museum door. Poems have opportunities to do something more dynamic and complex than that. I don’t think the emotional stakes can only be generated by having a version of the self or the personal speaker in a poem. I resist the idea that every poem needs to have that. But I do think it is a clear means to an end. If overall the body of the work is resisting those personal emotional stakes, eventually that can be a more limited experience for the reader.

As I have moved forward as a writer, I’m much more interested in the opportunities that having more of myself and personal experience in them can afford. The essays that I wrote, for example, have more of my own experience in them.

KH: Aside from consideration of the personal, did you notice a large difference in process when writing those essays?

MD: Here’s the story of how I found my way into nonfiction. I was trying to write about the Trinity Test Site—the place in New Mexico where the world’s first nuclear bomb was tested—and I wrote a terrible poem about it. There was so much happening there on site. There was a Boy Scout troop that was running around and so much complicated history to bring into it. So I couldn’t start with a place of compression as a poem might require. Form and enjambment went out the window, and it was incredibly liberating for me to forget about line breaks and forget about compression and suddenly write in prose. I felt like I was given a new lease on life in terms of being able to ask all the questions that I wanted to ask and incorporate all the history and all of the details that I wanted to from that visit. Given my interest in engaging with that complicated subject matter, it made sense to address it in a much more direct way via prose. That’s not to say poems cannot do that, but for me it was incredibly liberating for my process and for that piece to just make sure that I could say it exactly the way I wanted to say it and have a more direct engagement with the reader.

KH: Was writing in the essay form a way to sub-consciously work with poetry, take a break from it, let ideas fester and then return to it?

MD: For me in part it was. It was a way of shaking myself out of my habits as a poet. Suddenly I’m writing in a genre I’ve never written before. So even though many of my essays do behave like poems and a lot of my ticks and styles are probably still embedded in those prose essays, it felt so liberating to be working in a new genre and feel as if I was moving through a blueprint of a piece in an entirely different way, that was different than a standard structure I may have relied on through some of my poems.

KH: I noticed many of your essays were written in a fragmented structure. Was that a way of bringing in an idea of poetry?

MD: Absolutely. I’m still interested in the lyricism and the associative leaps. In the braiding that those essays do in prose, you can find corollaries with my poems. So yes, my habits are definitely still there.

KH: The same braiding and weaving that defines the lyric essay, that connects disparate parts, is a lot of what poetry does.

MD: Right. Through those associate connections, to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. The lyric essay means you are trying to brush shoulders with—to associate with, to interrogate through—ambiguity and accrual in a way that the academic essay doesn’t. I want the act of writing a poem to be similar to the act of writing an essay. We inherit the word “essay” from the French verb for “to try,” and I think in any successful essay you’re trying something out, you’re asking questions. It is an interrogative act, and if I come out of a poem and haven’t learned something about myself or about the content that I’m writing about, that poem has failed in some ways. I don’t want to have a poem suddenly reveal itself to me from the start. Those poems have always felt dead on arrival to me. Robert Frost has that maxim “No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.” I feel the same way. I want there to be a moment of revelation for me as a writer and new understanding through the course of writing, because otherwise I don’t know why I’m doing it.
In this Issue

Interview with Karen Thompson Walker ....................... 1
Literary Reference ....................................................... 2
Interview with Matt Donovan ..................................... 3
Kidd Creative Writing Workshops ............................... 4
Reading Series ............................................................. 5
Faculty News ........................................................... 6–7
Student News .............................................................. 8
Giving .......................................................... 8
Kidd Writing Prize Winners ......................................... 9
Welcome New Students ...................................... 10–11
Alumni News ............................................................ 12–13

FICTION

Sam Axelrod
Blaine Ely
Nicky Gonzalez
Ndinda Kioko
Ryan MacLennan

POETRY

Maha Abdelwahab
Katie Haemmerle
Erik Neave
Sarah Skochko

Class of 2018