



# THE ENGLISH CHANNEL



UConn Department of English

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## DAVID SONSTROEM REFLECTS

Both my daughters made two passes through UConn. Sara earned a BA in psychology and later received her nursing degree. Louisa was a voice major before becoming an English major. From my paternal perspective I noticed that, by and large, nursing students were far more devoted to learning than were the psychology majors, and the Music majors were far more devoted than were the English majors. Recently I have been teaching The English Language, a course taken by future high-school and middle-school teachers now enrolled in the School of Education. By and large, these students were far more devoted to mastering the subject matter than were the students taking my Introduction to Poetry course. In fine, students receiving vocational training—in nursing, singing, or teaching—are far more focused and dedicated than those pursuing a broader liberal arts education.

This finding pains me, because, like you, I believe that education should widen, not narrow, one's horizon. Perhaps we could smuggle some

vocational motivation into our lofty educational endeavors without betraying our mission. I tell my composition students that there are two ways to make a living: manual labor (digging ditches, scoring touchdowns, robbing banks) and manipulating symbols (musical, mathematical, verbal). It is likely that an English major aspires to make a living by becoming an accomplished user of the language. Of course, almost all our students know English to begin with. Nevertheless, to make a living by using the language, they must rise above being mere amateurs and go pro. An English major can help them do so. However different English Department courses are, all contribute in one way or another to mastery of the language: comprehending, speaking, and especially writing it. We do not funnel students into a specific career, but we do try to enable them to move adroitly within the world of words. It is a wide world, and many rewarding jobs exist within it for those who master the craft. But mastery means sweat, course after course.

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### GRAD LANDINGS

Melissa Bugdal (PhD '17) begins this fall as Assistant Professor of English and Director of the University Writing Center at Salisbury University, Maryland.

Steve Mollmann (PhD '16) accepted a position as Term Assistant Professor of English and Writing at University of Tampa, where he will start in the fall.

Matthew Mroz (PhD '15) is Internal Funding Coordinator in UConn's Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR). He oversees funding programs, organizes grant-writing trainings, and assists in research administration and development.

Miller Oberman (PhD '17) starts as Visiting Assistant Professor at The New School, New York.

Christiana Salah (PhD '16) will begin this fall as Assistant Professor of English, specializing in 19th- and 20th-century British literature, at Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

Maria Seger (PhD '16) begins this fall as Assistant Professor of African American Literature at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, after a year as visiting professor at West Point.

Amber West (PhD '13) works as full-time lecturer with UCLA Writing Programs.

### 2016-17 PHDS EARNED

Melissa Bugdal ('17); Tina Iraca ('16); Miller Oberman ('17); Asia Rowe ('16); Maria Seger ('16)

### 2016-17 UCHI FELLOWSHIPS

Sarah Berry, "The Politics of Voice in Twentieth-Century Verse Drama"  
 Laura Wright, "Prizing Difference: PEN Awards and Multiculturalist Politics in American Fiction"



## RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Austin, Sara. "African American Genre Crossings." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*.
- Bedore, Pamela. *Great Utopian and Dystopian Works of Literature*. The Great Courses, 2017. 24-lecture series, available on cd or dvd.
- Cohen, Bruce. "Snow Blind" and "Tiny Scissors." Poems. *Gettysburg Review*.
- Courtmanche, Jason. "High School-College Partnerships and the Teaching of Nathaniel Hawthorne." *Nathaniel Hawthorne in the College Classroom*.
- Eby, Clare. "Jack London, Marriage, and Divorce." *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London*.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm, et al. "Roundtable: Affect, the Short Story, and the Cycle." *Journal of the Short Story in English*.
- Knapp, Kathy. "The Iron Heel and the Contemporary Bourgeois Novel." *The Oxford Handbook of Jack London*.
- Marsden, Jean. "Ghostwriting: Lewis Theobald's *Double Falsehood* as Adaptation." *Revisiting Shakespeare's Lost Play: Cardenio/Double Falsehood in the Eighteenth Century*.
- Piller, Erick. "Jar." *Best New Poets 2016: 50 Poems from Emerging Writers*.
- Reynolds, Claire. "Careers in the Public Humanities." Inaugural podcast for National Endowment for the Humanities Next Generation PhD Initiative. <<http://web.uri.edu/nextgenphd/podcast/>>.
- Reynolds, Joseph. *Make Dust Our Paper*. Anaphora Literary Press.
- Sneeden, Brian. "Dogmoon" and "Goodbye-harvest." Poems. *The Literary Review*.

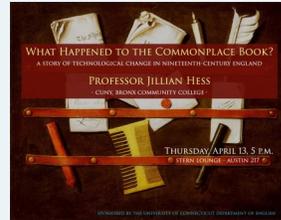
## AWARDS AND HONORS

- Brown, Pamela. Faculty Recognition Award, UConn Stamford.
- Brueggemann, Brenda. Honored at UConn investiture ceremony as Endowed Aetna Chair of Writing.
- Burns, Meghan. 2017 Aetna Graduate Teaching Award.
- Forbes, Sean. 2017 Connecticut Poetry Society, Al Savard Poetry Contest. First place for "Double Dutch Champion."
- Grant, Katie ('19). 2017 Summer Undergraduate Research Fund Award.
- Greenwell, Amanda. Children's Literature Association's Graduate Student Essay Award for "Jessie Willcox Smith's Critique of Teleological Girlhood in 'The Seven Ages of Childhood.'"
- Hogan, Patrick. UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor. —. UConn-AAUP Excellence Award for Research and Creativity.
- Kornacki, Katie (PhD '15). NEH Summer Scholar in Concord program on "Transcendentalism and Reform in the Age of Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller."
- Schlund-Vials, Cathy. CLAS Excellence in Research Award.



## EMINENT GUESTS

Aetna Writer-in-Residence **Kimiko Hahn** spoke at the UConn Bookstore on March 22. Hahn is the author of ten collections of poetry including *Air Pocket*, *The Artist's Daughter*, and *Toxic Flora*, and is a Distinguished Professor in the English Department at Queens College/CUNY.



Professor **Jillian Hess** of CUNY, Bronx Community College, presented "What Happened to the Commonplace Book?: A Story of Technological Change in Nineteenth-Century England" on April 13. Hess explored how Romantic and Victorian authors used their commonplace books as information management tools, while telling the story of what happened to this ancient tradition in the face of technological change.

Poet **Allison Joseph** read at the UConn Bookstore on February 28. Joseph is the author of eight poetry collections, including *What Keeps Us Here*, *Imitation of Life*, and *My Father's Kites*, and is the editor of *Crab Orchard Review*. Joseph holds the University of Illinois Judge Williams Holmes Cook Endowed Professorship.

**Kelly Sullivan** gave a poetry reading on April 13. Sullivan is a poet and fiction writer and Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow of Irish Studies at NYU. Her novel, *Winter Bayou*, was published by Lilliput Press, and her poems and short fiction have appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Salmagundi*, and *The Hopkins Review*.

## NOTABLE EVENTS

Acclaimed poet **A. E. Stallings** read at Konover Auditorium and the Greater Hartford Classical Magnet School on March 8 and 9 for the **54th Annual Wallace Stevens Poetry Program**. A highly regarded translator, Stallings also has published three collections of poetry: *Archaic Smile*, *Hapax*, and *Olives*. Her awards include a translation grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and fellowships from United States Artists, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation.

On April 11, author **M. T. Anderson** read at the UConn Bookstore for the **Aetna Celebration of Creative Nonfiction**. Anderson has written a wide variety of titles including works of fantasy and satire for a range of ages. The author of fifteen novels, which include *Thirsty* and *Avenue Q, or, The Smell of Danger*, he also has published four picture books. Anderson won the National Book Award in 2006.

Irish writer **Kevin Barry** read from his work at this year's **Gerson Irish Reading** on April 11. One of Ireland's most internationally prominent contemporary fiction writers, Barry is the author of the novels *City of Bohane*, winner of the 2013 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, and *Beatlebone*, which won the 2015 Goldsmiths Prize and was nominated for the 2017 International Dublin Literary Award.

## ELLEN LITMAN

“IN RUSSIA, YOU SIMPLY COULDN’T BE A WRITER IF YOU WERE JEWISH”



“I’m interested in the intersection of the historical and the personal,” says Ellen Litman, a Russian-born novelist, short story writer, and associate professor of creative writing. No wonder she’s interested in that intersection: she’s sitting in Starbucks in Storrs instead of heating up a samovar in a Soviet-style flat in Moscow. And all because of one historical moment that changed

her life forever.

It was 1990, and the reforms of Perestroika had begun to brew up a backlash. One night on state television, a general called for new pogroms against Soviet Jews, insisting that Russia should be for Russians only. “The Chechen war hadn’t started yet,” recalls Litman, who is Jewish. “The Chechens would soon replace Jews as the main enemy. But at the time, Jews were being watched.” Her parents decided it was no longer safe to stay, and began the process of applying to emigrate. In 1992, when Litman was 19, her family of four arrived in Pittsburgh, where an aunt had settled. That traumatic, sometimes bleakly funny adjustment period informs Litman’s debut book, *The Last Chicken in America: A Novel in Stories*.

The book’s linked stories thread through one main character, teenage Masha, and those who share her Squirrel Hill neighborhood in Pittsburgh. *The New York Times Book Review* positively clucked about *Chicken*: “It’s warm, true and original, and packed with incisive, subtle one-liners.” In 2008, Litman was a finalist for the New York Public Library Young Lions Award, for promising writers under age 35.

In 2014, her second book came out: *Mannequin Girl*, a poignant coming-of-age novel that reads uncannily like a memoir, since it’s about a young Russian Jewish girl who has scoliosis (or curvature of the spine, as Litman has) and must attend a government boarding school for others similarly afflicted (as Litman did).

Several novelists showered praise on it: Margot Livesey called it “entrancing and evocative” and Wally Lamb called Kat, the protagonist, “the kind of character I love: an endearing, flawed, vulnerable young person who can be cruel one moment, compassionate the next, haughty in her insecurity; hormonal and humane in equal measures.”

Today, Litman lives with her husband and two young daughters in Mansfield. Last semester, she taught Graduate Creative Writing and Honors I: Literary Study Through immigrant narratives. That second one, of course, hits close to home.

We caught up with Litman one snowy day this past winter at the Starbucks on Storrs Road, chatting against the din of competing student conversations and coffee beans in mid-grind. She wore a quintessentially American fleece jacket but also fur-lined boots right out of *Doctor Zhivago*. She sketched out, in a lyrical Russian accent, her personal history.

**Q:** Let’s start with your neighborhood in Moscow. Was your world “orderly, like a sheet of ruled paper, like hopscotch squares,” as you write in *Mannequin Girl*?

**Ellen Litman:** All the apartment buildings were identical. Tall cement boxes, light gray, built in the ’60s and ’70s. We lived in the northwest of Moscow in one of the new neighborhoods. Outside every apartment building entrance, a group of grandmothers would sit, socializing. They minded your business and always told you what you were doing wrong!

**Q:** Your father was a chemical engineer and your mother taught math. Your sister has worked in IT for Amazon and Microsoft. You went to the Moscow Institute of Electronics and Mathematics, got a BS in information science from the University of Pittsburgh, and had a career in IT in the US, too. Your whole family was good with numbers—but you ended up making a living from words. How did that happen?

**EL:** In Russia, you simply couldn’t be a writer if you were Jewish. You couldn’t aspire to certain things. We were taught that you have to work twice as hard as others to get things. I kept a journal and wrote poetry, but there was no way to “be a writer.”

You have to understand that Russian Jews were never considered Russians. On my passport under nationality, it said *Jewish*, not *Russian*. Being Jewish affects a lot of things, unofficially and officially. Which college you can attend, which job you can get. Some colleges won’t accept Jews because “they have bad vision.” Others admit under a quota from the local party district.

**Q:** In *Mannequin Girl*, you write this of Kat: “She’s scared of changes ... they’re almost never good. They start with this thinly veiled secrecy—a dismissal, a smile, a cryptic hint—only to explode in your face, breaking your life into bits, scattering them without a second thought.” Like Kat, you were diagnosed with scoliosis as a little girl, had to wear a brace until you were a teen, and had to go to a special school. How did the diagnosis change your family’s story?

**EL:** It transformed our whole life. I was 3, and would start school when I turned 5. We had to move to a new neighborhood closer to the Number 76 School, which treated children with scoliosis. In Russia then, you couldn’t just move and buy or rent another place. You had to go to an exchange bureau and organize a swap, our apartment in our neighborhood for someone else’s apartment in another neighborhood. My mother quit her job in order to work at my school. In the world we lived in, we did not know about bad illnesses or situations, so we didn’t know what to do when we learned I had scoliosis. A lot of things were kept out of the society. If a child had limitations, that child was hidden from the world, sent to a special school.

When we first immigrated to Pittsburgh, I wondered why there were so many disabled people on the streets, on the bus. Then I realized that it wasn’t that there were no disabled people in Russia. They were just hidden away. In America, they were visible.

**Q:** Was it hard to leave Russia? (cont. on page 5)



## CAREER PANEL



The Writing Internship Program presented the eleventh annual panel discussion “Careers for English Majors: Strategies, Options, and Ideas” on March 27. Current English majors discussed career options with recent UConn graduates who are using their English degrees in a variety of jobs. Carla Calandra ('16), a Publisher Support and Editorial Assistant at Oxford University Press; Mary Malley ('16), Assistant Editor at Rowman and Littlefield Publishers; Eric Vo ('13), a Health News Reporter and Editor at Aetna; and Myles Udland ('12), Business News Reporter for *Yahoo Finance*, talked about their paths to choosing a major and the valuable skills they gained in college courses. Coincidentally, none of the four speakers started out as an English major. Two began as science majors, one majored in business, and one was undecided. Their advice on switching plans of study, finding jobs, and fitting in to the work force with their degrees made clear the broad range of options for English majors. Later, the panelists took questions from the audience. Students asked about how to find a job, what to wear to a job interview, and what to expect in follow-up interviews. Despite perceptions sometimes associated with pursuing a degree in English, the panel affirmed that there is a broad variety of opportunities for English majors after graduation.



Mary Malley and Myles Udland      Eric Vo and Carla Calandra

## IN MEMORIAM

Professor **Joe Comprone** (1943-2017), among whose proudest achievements were Avery Point’s Maritime Studies Program and student center and his students’ careers and accomplishments, died on May 1. We remember Joe as an inspirational and supportive visionary who influenced many lives and shaped institutions where he worked. He loved the sea, a well made martini, the blues, raw oysters, movies, the Yankees, and, most of all, his children and grandchildren.

We are grateful for the generosity of our many donors—students and their parents, faculty, staff, and others—which allows us to fund scholarships and bring a rich array of learning opportunities to the community. Your gift to the department may be made to honor a department member or student, to support an existing fund or scholarship, or to create a new fund for either current needs or the support of programs into the future. Contribute online through the UConn Foundation [secure giving page](#). Click the search box at the top of the page and type in (or copy and paste) the number and name of one of the following funds that directly benefit the Department of English: The [English Fund \(20199\)](#), the [Tribute Fund \(31438\)](#), the [Connecticut Writing Project \(20113\)](#), [Long River Review \(22535\)](#), or the [Elizabeth Shanley Gerson Fund for Irish Studies \(30524\)](#).

Thanks to the generosity of two of our alums, **Kathleen Walsh** ('77 '79 '84) and **Jim Carrington** ('78), we introduced last year the **Tribute to English Professors Fund for Graduate Education (31438)**. The fund provides financial support, including fellowships and travel to conferences, seminars, and symposia, for English graduate students in honor or in memory of English professors.

## CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

### Edward R. and Frances Schreiber Collins Literary Prizes

Prose Winner/\$2,000: **Breanna Patterson**, “The Times”  
 Honorable Mention: **Stephanie Koo**, “Where Do Birds Go to Die?”  
 Poetry Winner/\$2,000: **Emma Kraner**, “Uffizi Gallery”  
 Honorable Mention: **Emma Kraner**, “Dissection”

### Jennie Hackman Memorial Prize for Fiction

First place/\$1,000: **Lilia Shen**, “The Picasso House”  
 Second place/\$300: **Sten Spinella**, “Angus”  
 Third Place/\$200: **Jeremiah Dennehy**, “Constance”  
 Honorable Mention: **Brianna McNish**, “In Another Life”

### Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

First place/\$1,000: **Anna Ziering**  
 Second place/\$500: **Brian Sneedan**  
 Third place/\$250: **Jillian Cundari**  
 Honorable Mentions:

**Akshayaa Chittibabu** and **Samantha Bassman**

### The Aetna Children’s Literature Award

Winner/\$250: **Jameson Croteau**, “Moon Bound”

### The Aetna Translation Award

Winner/\$250: **Matthew Ryan Shelton**, “Transubstantiation”  
 Honorable Mention: **Matthew Ryan Shelton**, “Etched Away”

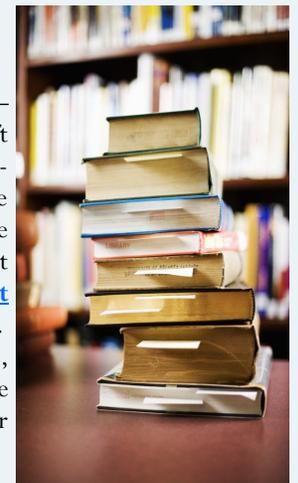
### The Aetna Creative Nonfiction Awards

Undergraduate First prize/\$250:  
**Noah Bukowski**, “Guilt Treatment”  
 Honorable Mention/\$100: **Kiana Cao**, “My Home, Your Home”  
 Graduate First Prize/\$250:  
**Nyanka Joseph**, “Marrow and Mopping”

### Long River Graduate Writing Award

Winner/\$250: **Kristina Reardon**, “Crumbling Walls”

## SUPPORT



(Litman, from page 3)

**EL:** I was destroyed. In Russia, you never expect to move. There are not equal opportunities in other cities within Russia, so hardly anyone leaves the place where they were born. You expect to stay in the same neighborhood and have the same friends forever. Everything my life was built on was disappearing. It felt unimaginable to leave.

**Q:** How does your scoliosis affect you now?

**EL:** It doesn't affect me too much. It can be hard to find clothes that fit properly. There's on and off pain, especially in winter, and if I stand on my feet more than 20 minutes, it takes its toll. I don't do physical therapy any more, but I do a lot of swimming.

**Q:** Growing up in Russia, what was your impression of America?

**EL:** In the early '90s, they allowed one week of American TV per year. You could see "The Flintstones" and "Beverly Hills, 90210" and "Dallas." There was a bright gloss on everything in that world. I was very aware I could not have that gloss.

**Q:** What was it like to start over in a new country as an immigrant?

**EL:** *The Last Chicken in America* was about the initial immigrant experience. Immigration is really hard on the ego. Your whole sense of self and identity changes. Even the simplest conversation is hard. My English, barely serviceable, was the best in the family, so I made appointments and asked directions. It was incredibly hard on my parents. Everything was breaking apart, and nothing felt normal.

**Q:** After college, you worked a number of IT jobs, in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Boston. Were you also writing?

**EL:** Not at first, but I started taking writing classes at night at Cambridge Adult Education and then GrubStreet [a Boston-based creative writing center]. Julie Rold was the first person to say I had real talent. It was one of those moments that changes everything. But writing was always a spare-time thing. I thought that maybe I could write part-time and do computer work part-time—but the value of what I was doing was edging out the computer stuff. And I was getting a lot of encouragement from teachers like Steve Almond. And so I decided to give myself a few years to really work on writing, and I applied to graduate programs.

**Q:** You attended the MFA program in creative writing at Syracuse University, studying with such luminaries as Gary Lutz and George Saunders. How was that experience?

**EL:** I got incredibly lucky! George Saunders became my thesis advisor, and he was generous to me and to all his students. I learned a ton from his literature classes, and I learned how to teach creative writing classes too. He had a very intuitive approach to responding to students' work and to the energy of a class. He talked about having respect for the reader. Think of your writing as if you're driving a motorcycle, he'd say, and the reader is in the sidecar right next to you. You don't want to condescend. The reader is an equal.

Half of us were doing traditional writing, half were more experimental. I'm more traditional. Gary Lutz approached language like a poet would. And other teachers offered encouragement if something could be improved in your writing, if each word was the best possible choice. I wrote the bulk of the stories for *Last Chicken* at Syracuse, and had the manuscript by the time I finished.

**Q:** How did you end up at UConn?

**EL:** After I taught some workshops at Syracuse, I taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and also at Babson College in Welles-

ley, Massachusetts. After *Last Chicken in America* was published, I thought I'd see where it took me. Penelope Pelizzon was on the search committee at UConn. She was the one who really loved the book. She's been my champion and mentor and supporter ever since. We went on to co-direct the Creative Writing Program in the English Department. It's not a big program, but it's found a lot of people whose work I admire. I started here in 2007, before I had kids. And when I had Polina (now 7) and Olwen (3), I found it to be a really supportive family-friendly environment. I love this place.

**Q:** Speaking of family, let me mention your husband, Ian Fraser. He's a native of Johannesburg, and was a playwright, fiction writer, and standup comedian there. How did you two meet?

**EL:** On the T! We were on the Red Line in Boston. We both got on at Park Street and got off at Harvard Square. He was visiting America and asked if he was on the right platform, which started a conversation, and he asked if I'd like to go out on a coffee date. I said yes. He left for home the next day, but we emailed and Skyped, met in London, and were married six months later.

**Q:** In the book, Kat's parents are dissidents. Were your parents dissidents, too?

**EL:** No. My parents were part of a generation that had experienced many hard things, and they did not want to be involved. They needed to be very cautious. It was ingrained in me, too, to be cautious.

But I did have two charismatic literature teachers whom I adored. Anechka and Misha [Kat's parents in the book] were a product of that. But once I had these characters, I couldn't rely on my own experience so much. I was more well-behaved than Kat. My eldest daughter is very self-confident and will debate her teacher and ask for help. And I'm this mouse! Part of it is that my daughter's a product of where she was born, and I'm a product of where I was born. In Russia, in my brace, I had to brace myself. I was pointed at. And anyone, at any time, a neighbor, a clerk, will yell at you for no good reason. Rudeness was just part of the reality in Russia. Everything is state-run. There was no competition. Why be nice? It's not like you'll go to a different store.

**Q:** What are you working on now?

**EL:** I'm in the middle of three projects. One is a sequel to *Mannequin Girl*, with some of the same characters, set in the late perestroika years. Having lived with perestroika, I'm very much interested in how it shaped one's political sensibilities. Corruption set in after perestroika, and eventually this led the way to Putin. In America, people may believe in a leader. I don't think many Russians have that idealism.

In my Immigrant Narrative class now, we talk about how America is supposed to be the land of immigrants. But it's never been equally accepting to immigrants, letting in European immigrants but not Asian immigrants in the past, for instance. My students can find this a revelation. With what's going on in the news with immigration, every day, it all completely resonates with them now. And with me.

—Katharine Whittimore, [UConn Magazine](#), 7 June 2017



orange 2017 *Long River Review* in their hands.

The event celebrated a year of hard work by the publication's undergraduate staff, which produces the magazine featuring original works of fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, translations, and artwork by UConn students, members of the community, and this year for the first time ever, contributors from outside of UConn.

Unlike previous release parties, the evening also celebrated the magazine's legacy and marked a significant milestone: the 20th anniversary of a publication that had come to mean a great deal to the students who prepared it.

"There's no substitute for what I've learned producing *Long River Review*," says Stephanie Koo ('17), this year's editor-in-chief. "We have one annual publication that we work hard on for a whole semester, and it's really cool to finally hold a hard copy of it."

### Educating Editors

*Long River Review*'s UConn roots stretch back to 1983 with the establishment of the publication's predecessor, *Writing UConn*. This was funded by the English department and distributed across the state through the [Connecticut Writing Project](#), a professional development network with the goal of improving student achievement by improving the teaching of writing and learning in schools.

The journal was transformed in 1998 into a student-focused literary magazine by three faculty advisors: authors **Wally Lamb** ('72; '77 MA), **Leslie Brody** ('93), and Emeritus Professor and former Connecticut Poet Laureate **Marilyn Nelson**.

Since that time, *LRR* has grown into a joint venture between the Department of English and the School of Fine Arts' Design Center, with a new committee of undergraduate students from both disciplines assuming ownership of the publication each year. Students enrolled in the *LRR* course meet each week to discuss, make decisions about, and produce the magazine. Outside of class, they review hundreds of submissions and work independently on promotional projects and fundraising initiatives for the magazine.

"It's not like any other class I'm used to teaching," says Assistant Professor and Director of Creative Writing **Sean Frederick Forbes**, who served as the faculty advisor of the 2017 publication. "It's not like a creative writing workshop or a lecture. It's technically a practicum course, but it's also more than that."

Under Forbes's guidance, students learn about what goes into a literary journal. They apply practical skills ranging from working in groups to managing individual projects and organizing events and fundraisers.

"It's a collaborative effort entirely run by undergraduates," Forbes says. "You don't have that at many institutions, and if you do, it's at the more privileged institutions. I think that's important for students at UConn to realize; this is a great privilege."

### Building a Portfolio

To the magazine's undergraduate editors, the publication is more than a course. It is a unique professional development opportunity.

"Practically speaking, serving on the staff of *LRR* gets our students jobs," says Visiting Assistant Professor **Darcie Dennigan**, who advised the magazine in 2013-2014. "It's an apprenticeship in literary editing and publishing. I've seen how our alumni leverage their experience on the journal into jobs. Having a professional quality product as part of their portfolio is invaluable."

Koo, a biology and English double major, says that working on the journal allowed her to engage directly with the literary and arts side of her education. "I've gained confidence and concrete life skills. My other classes don't really give that," Koo explains. "Even other English classes don't give you the hands-on experience with literature that the *Long River Review* does."

*LRR* alumni also praise the experience, which they say equipped them with skills to excel in various professional fields. "For many students, it's an amazing taste of what publishing would look like as a career," says Tim Stobierski ('11), who is currently an inbound consultant at Pepperland Marketing and a freelance writer and editor. After he graduated, his experiences on *LRR* staff landed him an internship with Yale University Press and ultimately a job at Taunton Press in Newtown. "Every part of the editing process from *LRR* carries over to the real world of publishing and editing," Stobierski says. "Even though I work in marketing now, many of the same principles apply as when I was in publishing. Creating and editing content, marketing it to the world, and working with other people are skills you need in any industry."

### An Evolving Publication

*LRR* publication evolves each year with a new crop of undergrad editors who have their own perspective for the magazine.

For many UConn students, *LRR* is the first place their work has been officially published. To celebrate twenty years of publications, the 2017 production class wanted to expand this opportunity to writers and artists outside of the UConn community by accepting national submissions. "I hope that opening up to national submissions is the beginning of something new and will expand readership beyond the college," says Koo.

In addition to expanding the publication's reach, this year the staff created new leadership positions for the magazine, including a publicity and social media coordinator and an arts liaison. These new roles helped expedite production and create a stronger online presence alongside the journal's [website](#).

Going forward, Koo wants to see *LRR* grow by making connections with other literary magazines in the area and expanding its presence as a nationally recognized publisher of literature and art.

But these initiatives will be left up to the next cohort of student editors. Koo graduated in May and plans to attend medical school. She hopes to use her knowledge of what's called "narrative medicine," which combines the humanities and storytelling with the practice of medicine, into her approach as a doctor.

"Unlike some undergraduate literary journals, *LRR* changes with the students who make it. It incorporates new media and evolving aesthetics, and each year has a different flavor than the last," says Dennigan. "It's important because it means that the UConn community has something to say and has the power and means to create a vehicle in which to say it with volume."

—Sydney Lauro ('17), *Inside CLAS* June/July 2017