



The Word

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a newsletter from the english
program at messiah university

A Conversation with Professor Perrin

By Nate Castellitto ('23)

After more than 20 years of teaching in a variety of roles at Messiah, the English Program celebrated Professor Christine Perrin as she prepares to retire from Messiah this summer. Professor Perrin has taught numerous courses in her time at Messiah, including “Introduction to Creative Writing,” “Contemporary American Poetry,” “The Writing of the Inklings,” and “Literary Non-Fiction.” She most recently served as the Director of Writing and Director of the Writing Center, as well. Just before finals, I had the chance to interview Professor Perrin and recount a storied career to date. (Parts of the interview have been edited for clarity.)

Nate: Looking back on your teaching career so far, what are some of your favorite memories?

Professor Perrin: Well, the first favorite is that remarkable experience of gathering around a text with people who want to pay attention together and who want to say things, notice things, listen, cherish, and tend to what's in front of them. I love that; I don't think there's anything like that. I think it's just a remarkable joy to do that with other people, and not everyone is as willing a participant. And there's this mystery that happens with group dynamics, you know, that some groups learn how to do that with each other better than others.

But then of course you remember people that you did that with as well, you know, individual people that said, “I want to do more of this. I want to know more of this. I want to understand more of this. I want to make something together.” And in particular, in those classes where people were making poems or stories, or even an academic paper, that thing that you make, and wanted to collaborate on it with me, those are very strong memories, too, that sort of leaning into something.

Nate: For those of us who haven't read your first book of poems, *Bright Mirror*, tell us about the collection and what you are working toward now.

PP: You work on something for a really long time when it's a book, and certain things fall away and it changes over the years. You keep coming back to it. You keep, in my case, trying to find the thread that weaves it together because the lyric poem can be so singular--like a story, you know? I think it took me a long time to find the thread for that book. What was it that bound these things together? Some lyric poets don't feel the need for that at all, and would even find that statement to be undermining the project of the lyric poem, but I think that we are creatures who want story and song together, and that those epics that did that, that is still deep within us.

Table of Contents

A Conversation with Prof. Perrin
by Nate Castellitto
pages 1-2

A Call to Advocacy: A Review of
The Overstory
by Audrey Blunt
page 3

Devotional: Paul's Philippians
by Nate Castellitto
page 4

Work in Progress: "Thumb Doll"
by Ana Sakore
page 5

Senior Profiles
pages 6-9

A Note from the Chair
by Dr. Kerry Hasler-Brooks
page 10

Writer Talks: Ep. 3, John Poch
page 10

Alumni Spotlights:
Maggie Shive, Rachel Sulonen,
Charmaine Lim, and Ian Tan
pages 11-13

End of Year Celebration
page 14-15

Publishing and Internships
Opportunities
page 16

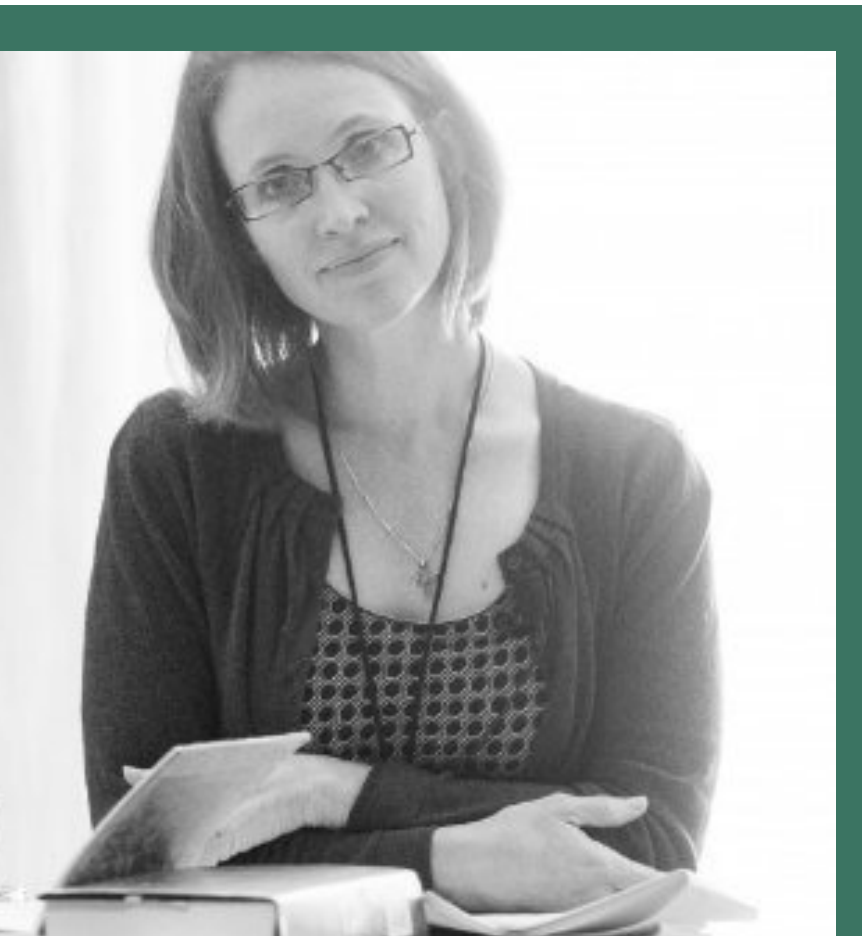
“We know that each human being is eternal and that civilizations will die.”

- C.S. Lewis

So even if we're working in a form, like the lyric poem, we still want story. I would say that the second bullet poems that I'm working on, I have a clearer sense of the narrative. One of the things I'm going to be doing next year is teach the Aeneid, which I feel totally unqualified for. It might take me a long time to come up to speed.

I love that quote from C.S. Lewis where he says, “We know that each human being is eternal and that civilizations will die.” So I've been thinking about that as I think about this idea of a book, about the founding of a human being, in light of the founding of a civilization. I guess I'm thinking a lot about it in relationship to motherhood, but also kind of mother-land. This idea of building—what does it mean to be founded? What does it mean to be a Foundling? I.e. not have parents. Those are just sort of themes that are swirling around and they're kind of finding each other and finding images and the poems that I've written since *Bright Mirror*, which was in 2016.

Nate: When you write, do you find yourself responding to your literary heroes?



PP: Absolutely. You just put it in exactly the way I would put it. I feel like my writing is a response to the people that I've come to know as a reader and writer. There are so many.

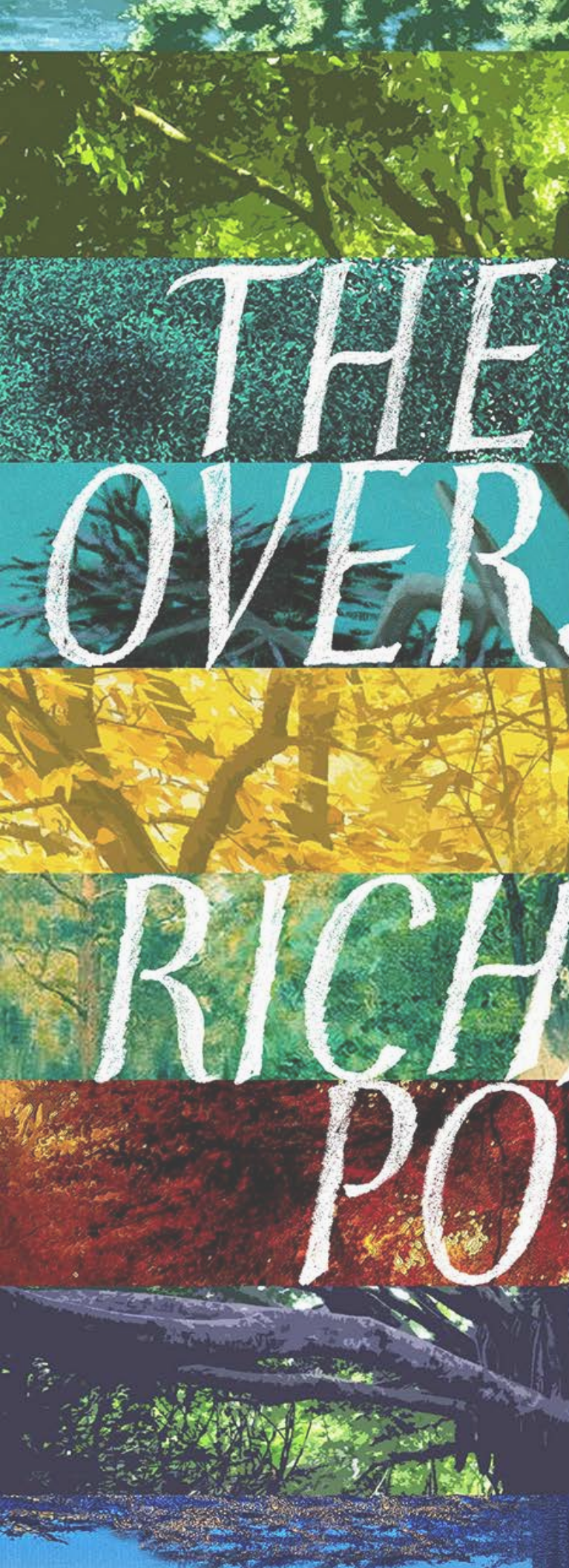
Gerard Manley Hopkins is a big one. He was a late 1800s British poet. He wrote “God's Grandeur,” “Pied Beauty,” “Carrion Comfort,” and “Peace.” He's one. Also Osip Mandelstam. I read a lot of him, especially during Covid-19 [lockdowns]. I read his autobiography and his poems. I had read his poems before, but I just read more of them, and it was interesting to feel shut in, locked in by this, pandemic, this plague, and then to kind of read about his imprisonment, and the way his imprisonment happened, it was these concentric circles kind of closing about him until death. So I felt those concentric circles that were totally less consequential than his, and that was part of why reading him was such a blessing because of the perspective that it gave me in my circumstances. But yes, when I read these poets, but not just poets, I just want to respond with love. Almost like amen: you know, in church, that call and response. The songs have been that for me. Many writers have given me a sense of wanting to either chime in with them or respond to them.

Nate: Will you teach in the future?

PP: I'm teaching online for Messiah this summer, and then I'm doing three month-long classes that are on location for a concentrated period of time with different populations, not in the same place.

One is a study abroad program in Italy which Messiah participates in. Another is a seminary, and I'm going to be teaching the Psalms with people who are studying to become Anglican priests. And then one is a post residency at a high school. So I'm covering a wide landscape, but what I like about it is first of all, still [having] contact with students for concentrated bursts of focused time and then going back to writing. And maybe I haven't timed it well. I could learn that it will be disruptive, but we'll see. We'll just have to try, you know.

--Thank you, Professor Perrin, for your wise counsel, accessible expertise, and brilliant sensibility. We wish you all the best in the next stage of your career and life.



BOOK REVIEW

A Call to Advocacy:

Richard Powers's *The Overstory*

by Audrey Blunt ('24)

Gen Z is the least opinionated generation alive. We are statistically the most empathetic, open to new ideas, and politically neutral of the current populous. These can all be great qualities, but what about some causes that demand that we take a firm stance?

The Overstory introduces the reader to 'radical' environmental activists, who are unabashedly opinionated and ready to enter into conflict over their beliefs. Richard Powers poses that there are some causes worth fighting for, and his intricately detailed novel weaves together the passions of eight individuals who could not be more different on paper. An actress, a video game designer, a college student, and a professor are just a few of the heartfelt characters whose willingness to fight for forest life unites them at the end of this epic tale.

As a student in the midst of a heated sociopolitical climate, reading *The Overstory* was a breath of fresh air. It seemed to speak into a truth of the human condition that is so often overlooked, but so necessary to our growth and healing as a society – that our passions and desire to speak out are a good thing, they've just often been sorely misdirected. Powers asks that we, the next generation, direct our voice and mental energy towards a cause that matters - preserving the complex and mysterious life all around us. *The Overstory* is an elegant, rich, and imaginative 500-page walk through the woods, that will leave you wanting the real thing. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.





I Press on to Make it My Own: A Devotional from Paul's Philippians

By Nate Castellitto

Looking back on the past semester, academic season, and, especially for seniors, the past three or four years, there may be quite a bit that comes up. I remember good times spent with friends and peers, invaluable insights gained, and my share of lessons learned. With those memories also come a hint of longing. I wish I could have a few decisions back, and each semester that goes by urges me closer and closer to adulthood. If you're anything like me, that realization is daunting. Either you feel you're not ready for the next stage of life, or you would rather remain in the freedom that college offers.

In my most recent moments of reflection, Paul's letter to the Philippians has offered a clear perspective. In chapter three of the epistle, Paul considers his faith and the work left to be done in his walk with Christ. He says, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14 ESV).

Now, Paul isn't saying he never looks back. It's important to consider where we, like Paul, started. This ought to direct our attention to what we've been given (or not been given) in order to truly give thanks and learn. Paul's message to the Philippians is about a present and future-focused mindset. "Straining forward to what lies ahead," believers are appointed to think and work "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ." For those of us about to graduate--and, eventually, the rest of us--plenty of kingdom-work lies ahead. As we remember the lessons learned and good times spent together, and prepare to make this momentous leap, may we push ahead with zeal and fire for one another.

Author's Note



This poem and the accompanying watercolor are part of an original short story cycle that explores diverse genres - story, poems, watercolor, song - as a means of processing memory.

by Ana Sakore ('25)

Thumb Doll

My home was a snow globe

Jostled, shaken

Up and packed into brown

Boxes ready to move

On. I couldn't

Stop searching for the doll

Red nesting doll, smaller

Than my thumb

My seven-year-old finger found

In the empty corner only

The cracked base

Where eight dolls would

Have stacked into one



2022 Graduating Seniors



Rebecca Wenger

English w/ Teaching Certification
TESOL Minor

Highlight at Messiah: Relishing those moments of reading in the sun.

Future Plans: To teach English at a public school.

Words of Wisdom: Listen to the greats and the littles - they both have much to teach.



Courtney Smith

English w/ Writing Concentration
Biochemistry

Highlight at Messiah: Rainy, autumn afternoons reading *The Lord of the Rings* in British Literature with Professor Perrin.

Future Plans: Penn State's Ph.D. program in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology.

Words of Wisdom: Pay attention to even the smallest things - everything matters and is worth being written about!



Rosey Jones

English w/ Writing Concentration
Communication

Future Plans: Moving to Brooklyn, working, and doing more creative writing!

Words of Wisdom: Take as many opportunities as you can to apply your English major skills in different spheres of life and different professional fields. Marketing, communications, publishing, social media! If you don't like it, now you know, and if you do, there's something new and cool you can look into doing more in your future.



Fiona Agnew

English w/ Teaching Certification
Biochemistry

Highlight at Messiah: I have loved the process of starting the English club on campus

Future Plans: Teaching high school English in central or western Pennsylvania

Words of Wisdom: Listen well to others and ask many questions



2022 Graduating Seniors



Grace Hogue

English w/ Creative Writing Concentration
Criminal Justice and Public Relations Minors

Highlight at Messiah: The inspiration to write a poem about my Mom.

Words of Wisdom: It may be difficult to get started, but write, no matter how rough it is at first. Don't give up!



Josh Murray

English w/ Teaching Certification

Highlight at Messiah: Presenting my senior thesis from Dr. Smith's Literature Seminar.

Future Plans: Teaching! Maybe being a professor someday?

Words of Wisdom: Get to know your professors. They REALLY care.



Matt Jenkins

English w/ Writing Concentration
Philosophy
Biblical and Religious Studies

Highlight at Messiah: I knew I would love this major my first semester after the 201 final where we were serenaded by Dr. Smith.

Future Plans: Attending Duke Divinity School in the Fall for a Master of Divinity (MDiv)

Words of Wisdom: Whatever it is you decide to write, make sure you love writing it.



Sierra Archer

English w/ Writing Concentration

Highlight at Messiah: Having the chance to grow alongside my peers.

Future Plans: I plan to return home, continue to learn, and become an author.

Words of Wisdom: Keep empathy close, especially when doing what you love!

2022 Graduating Seniors



Jenna Becker

English w/ Writing Concentration

Highlight at Messiah: Telling jokes in class and humor was my way of breaking away from my shyness. I became comfortable with others and myself. This lightened some of the pressure or tension after reading or discussing heavy topics. I love making other people laugh!

Words of Wisdom: Have fun and do not be afraid of new genres. The various workshops expanded my craft. I loved trying new things like formal poetry or newspaper writing



Kristjan Urich

English w/ Professional Writing Concentration

Highlight at Messiah: "Director Order" - Professor Christopher Markley

Future Plans: Job hunting or graduate school

Words of Wisdom: Have fun! but not too much . . .



Elora Kemper

English w/ Literature Concentration
Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance
Studies Minor

Highlight at Messiah: Having Professor Helen Walker described Elora's poetry as a combination of J.R.R. Tolkien, Poe, and Ursula K. Le Guin was a suprising, yet flattering experience.

Words of Wisdom: Please avoid labeling yourself exclusively as an "English major" because that language only limits your boundless potential. Writers are conglomerates of all sorts of disciplines.



Rachel Hungerford

English w/ Writing Concentration

Highlight at Messiah: Creating a short podcast for Dr. Hasler-Brook's Young Adult Literature course - I convinced my group mates to do a book that I really loved and had so much fun talking about it with them.

Future Plans: I eventually plan to go into book publishing

Words of Wisdom: Have conversations with your professors—not just about class topics! You will form rewarding relationships (and maybe find ideas for future projects).

2022 Graduating Seniors



Corrine Reed

English w/ Writing Concentration
Public Relations Minor
TESOL Certificate

Future Plans: I have no set plans for the future yet, but excited to see where God leads me.

Words of Wisdom: I hope you participate in everything, from sporting events, to union dances, even movie nights with your roommates. This season will go quicker than you think so enjoy every moment.



Ravi Ahuja

English w/ Literature Concentration
Philosophy Minor



Highlight at Messiah: Close reading my first poem in Dr. Smith's English 201 and feeling so affirmed about my switch to the English major

Future Plans: Teaching eventually! Looking for copywrite/editing jobs for the near future

Words of Wisdom: Take what you do seriously, not yourself

Clara Yu: English w/ Writing Concentration

Ned Kuczmynda: English w/ Writing Concentration

Madison Myers: English w/ 7-12 Teaching Certification



“There are far,
far better
things ahead
than any we
leave behind.”

—C.S. Lewis



"Go in Peace"

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS

I am obsessed with the short story cycle. The genre is slippery. It exists perched, sometimes precariously and often boldly, between the unified whole of a novel and the individual pieces of a story collection. I am obsessed with the genre because it captures in its very form the simultaneous harmony and the tension that exist between the parts and the whole, the collective and the singular, the community and the individual. To borrow Edwidge Danticat's words in *The Dew Breaker* (my absolute favorite work of fiction!), it is a genre of the "broken and unbroken."

At the end of another semester - for some of you the end of the first year of college and for others the end of college itself - I am struck by the harmony and the tension of this moment. There is a sense of wholeness, of completion, of a job well done together, and yet there is a pulling away as we go our separate ways to read, write, work, play. There is a sense of sending forth and of holding on. I try to give voice to this very thing at the end of the semester in a kind of benediction I read aloud to my students:

May the peace of Christ go with you, out of this place. May you know truth, wield hope, create beauty, you readers and writers, poets and thinkers, world changers and friends. May you do your work well.

May you look with wonder at those around you, listen with care and curiosity as they tell you a story, laugh with abandon, cry with abandon, read with abandon, and write with abandon.

May you know the sacred all around you: in the field of purple flowers, the word well-chosen, the strange cracks along a wall, the rare midday nap, the quiet prayer of a gaze or a smile, the wild late night dance party, the words and deeds of your family and friends, the long struggle for justice, and the promise of peace and transformation.

May you find the face of God in brilliant acts of creativity, in moments of human connection made possible by good communication, in the brilliant students waiting for you to teach, in the stories you will read and write and share.

May you know love and receive it. Go in peace my brothers and sisters. Go in peace. Go in peace.

Listen now!



WRITER TALKS

Check out a new podcast from the Messiah University English program featuring student writers - and special guests - reading and discussing their original poetry and prose.

Episode 2:
John Poch, "The Llano Estacado"

Episode 1:
Nathan Hurley, "God Messaged Me on Facebook Today"



Alumni Spotlights: Digital Media



*Rachel Sulonen '18
and Maggie Shive '20
Podcasters*

bookexpertpod.wordpress.com
@bookexpertpod

Rachel and Maggie are both English graduates of Messiah (2018 and 2020, respectively) and we co-host *I'm Not The Book Expert... But She Is*, a podcast about reading. We each take turns in the role of the "book expert" and lead a discussion about a book or series that the other host is less familiar with. We like to joke and say it's really just an excuse to convince each other to read our favorite books! Our first season of the podcast was focused on four different duologies by different authors. The last few episodes will be released in the coming weeks, and we're looking forward to where the next season will take us!

What interests you about podcasting?

Our inspiration for this podcast came from the everyday conversations we had about what we were reading. The two of us really enjoyed going in-depth about our favorite books, and we thought it would be fun to share those conversations with others!

How did you get started, and where do you hope to go with the project?

We did a lot of planning before we started recording, but we also realized we would learn better hands-on and decided to just jump in once we felt ready. Right now we're focused on growing our audience and growing in our own skills as podcast hosts (and editors, and social media managers, and so on). We're not sure where this show will go, but we're open to exploring whatever that might be!

What makes digital media a great space for English?

When you create content in a digital space, you are, at some level, conveying information and telling a story. For our podcast episodes, we have to think about what exactly we want to talk about, and how we make that engaging for our listeners, especially if those listeners aren't super familiar with the books we're discussing. It's the same skills you use when crafting an essay or a short story, which makes it a great fit for English students.



Charmaine Lim '20
Blogger,
Bookstagrammer

charmainelim.com

@charmaine.readsnwrites

AHi! I'm Charmaine Lim and I graduated in 2020 with a Bachelor's in Journalism and a minor in Creative Writing. I've been blogging on and off since 2015 and started a Bookstagram (@charmaine.readsnwrites) two days after graduation, where I still post consistently.

What interests you about your project?

I've always loved books, so it felt natural that my digital media presence fell in line with that. Finding other people who feel the same way about books has been great, and I've made a lot of wonderful friends through this. It's also exposed me to books I wouldn't otherwise know about, and I'm grateful for that.

How did you get started, and where do you hope to go with your project?


I started in 2015 with my blog, where I posted book reviews and reading-related posts until incorporating writing stuff some time in 2018 or 2019. Since then, I've expanded it to include pretty much whatever I want.

As for Bookstagram, I wanted to talk more about what I was reading and for a while, I did that on my personal account. But the desire to post daily led me to create a different account that I could dedicate entirely to reading so people wouldn't have to be bombarded with pretty book covers if they only wanted to see my face.

I'm not sure I really know what I hope this becomes. At the very least, I'd like it to be the eventual platform I have when I get to say that I'm a published author too.

What makes digital media a great space for English?

Many of the skills I use came from my Journalism degree. The things I used from my Creative Writing minor mostly revolve around how I approach critical reading and how I'm able to talk about story structure and character arcs. In general, I think the digital space is great for any passion you have.





*Jan Tan '18
Workshop Program
Leader*



wild-ink-publishing.com

I joined a publishing company early this year, Wild Ink Publishing. My director decided to start a program called Wild Ink Instructors that runs different writing or literature workshops by volunteers with teaching or writing experience. We are targeting Pre-teens, Teens, and Adult audiences. I decided to volunteer to join this program. Right now though, we've decided to postpone the program launch till sometime in summer to maximize registry numbers.

What interests you about your the Wild Ink Instructors project?

So I'm running "Creative Writing Workshop for Teens." I used to work as a RA/TA in the Young Writers Workshop during summers at Messiah, and I've greatly missed seeing the energy and passion that teens have for writing. It's invigorating to watch their imaginations spinning, and to hear what works have influenced their minds and hearts. So I hope to see something similar this year.

Where do you hope to go with your project?

I hope to move on to probably running another workshop later this year, but we'll see. I am also proofreading and editing for a couple of clients, and Wild Ink is pushing out a brand new Children's fantasy anthology, which I wrote two short stories for. One of them I'll talk about at length on my personal Wattpad account. Fun things!

What makes digital media a great space for English?

Digital media has been awesome for English because of the expanded availability and accessibility between students and teachers, and authors and readers. Small-time writers and editors now have a better chance of gaining attention for their works, their abilities, because of digital media platforms. There's definitely nuance and cons to be explored, but I think the world of writing and literature has ridden these waves well over time.



End of Year Celebration





Publishing Opportunities

Capulet Magazine

“Capulet Mag seeks the best in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art. This publication highlights the work of young women writers and artists of all levels. Capulet Mag empowers young women to share their creativity with Juliets everywhere. This magazine is a safe place for all who identify with the women experience to express themselves in a safe, inclusive community.” Submissions are currently accepted on a rolling basis.

Ember: A Journal of Luminous Things

“One of the foundational goals of Ember is to foster the next generation of great writers by providing them with excellent reading material now. We believe that people who learn to love reading at an early age are more likely to seek knowledge in science, technology, engineering, and math.” Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.

Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle

“Sigma Tau Delta Review (founded in 2005) is an annual journal that publishes critical essays on literature, essays on rhetoric and composition, and essays devoted to pedagogical issues. Manuscripts should not exceed 3,000 words, but exceptions will be made for essays of stellar quality. Critical essays must follow the Modern Language Association style guidelines as defined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (latest edition).” Submissions will be accepted between April 11 and May 9, 2022.

Sigma Tau Delta Review

“Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle (founded in 1931) is an annual journal that publishes literary non-fiction, fiction, and poetry. Prose manuscripts should not exceed 2,500 words.” Submissions will be accepted between April 11 and May 9, 2022.

Internship Opportunities

Digital Content Writer/Copywriter Spring/Summer Internship

“If you’re a talented and enthusiastic writer looking for an opportunity to refine your skills through real world experience, check out our digital content writing internship. As a JPL intern, you will be working at the intersection of creative storytelling, content strategy and user experience.”

2022 Summer Internship: Editorial

“Penguin Random House offers a 10-week paid, remote internship opportunity available in our adult, children’s, and corporate divisions. Interns are exposed to the publishing process and our business through panels, networking events, employee speaker series, and even lunch with our CEO!”

Social Media and Content Writing Internship

“Revolver Gallery exclusively buys and sells artworks of Andy Warhol and has the largest gallery-owned collection of the artists artwork in the world...We require the following: an excellent content writer who is self-motivated, autonomous, efficient, organized, articulate, very computer and internet literate, and very familiar with social media.”

Editorial Intern - Summer Internship Washington, DC or Brooklyn, NY

“Slate is looking for an intern for its Technology section, which encompasses science, health, tech, tech policy, and business, and includes the Future Tense vertical. The intern will be responsible for writing articles and assisting with editorial research. They must be organized, have a proven interest in journalism, and be familiar with Slate’s style of analysis and opinion.”

