Welcome to the fifth edition of the creative writing newsletter. I hope you enjoy these stories about the creative writing program and its alumni.

I am pleased to announce the establishment of the Jenifer and Marshall Gile Fund Creative Writing Fund. This fund will be used to support creative writing students and program activities. The Creative Writing Program wishes to thank Jenifer and Marshall Gile for their generosity in supporting our program.

Reminders:

Please send us information on your lives and careers that you would like to share with alumni in future newsletters, along with copies of any journal or book publications for our alumni library, and please notify us about any new or forthcoming publications. We are always interested in hearing from you. I suspect you might be surprised by how frequently the faculty give each other updates on alumni. We take pride in your achievements, and continue to be interested in what you are doing. If you have any suggestions for articles for the newsletter, please send those along too.

We also continue to try to raise enough money to endow the Gladys Schmitt Student Enhancement Fund, so please consider contributing to the Fund, sending checks payable to Carnegie Mellon University to Jim Daniels/English department/Carnegie Mellon University/Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Thanks.
With graduation looming around the corner, a whole new batch of Creative Writing students will be forced to go head-to-head with the arch-nemesis of every aspiring writer—employment. Since the odds of paying the rent off of that new novel you’re working on are slim to none, most seniors are understandably nervous about the lack of appealing alternatives.

“I didn’t want to teach high school and I didn’t want to go on and get an MFA,” says Dan Arp, a 1998 graduate of CMU’s Creative and Professional Writing programs and aspiring fiction writer. “I thought those were my two options.” It seems that Arp has found a third alternative, as he is now teaching fiction at Pittsburgh’s High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), a specialized arts magnet high school that attracts teenagers from all over the Allegheny looking to get serious about their crafts at a young age. “I would not have taken a regular high school teaching gig. I don’t really think that I would enjoy teaching basic English curriculum,” he reflects, “But at CAPA, I’m teaching the exact thing that I love to do.”

Students at CAPA spend their mornings doing their broader, basic high school curriculum, then in the afternoon everyday for 3 hours, students meet with their artistic teachers to pursue their passion. Teachers get relative freedom about designing the curriculum, which includes an emphasis on college-style workshops, while still trying to lead students in the right direction with a more academic approach to their discipline. The literary arts department at CAPA is currently made up of 4 members, 3 of which are Carnegie Mellon graduates. In addition to Arp, the fiction teacher, CAPA also employs Kristen Kovacic, a 1985 CMU grad as a poetry teacher, and Maureen McGranaghan, a 1999 CMU grad as the playwriting teacher.

All three teachers had very distinguished careers at Carnegie Mellon and were consistently recognized at the Adamson Awards. Arp won 1st prize for Fiction in 1997 and 2nd prize the following year. Kovacic won the Poetry award in 1983 and 2nd prize in 1984, along with the Fiction award in 1984 and the 2nd prize in 1985. McGranaghan won the Poetry Award in 1998, and was also awarded for her Academic writing three years in a row.

McGranaghan was a student in the bachelor of humanities and arts student while at CMU, and is currently in her first year teaching at CAPA. “I wanted to use my skills professionally while keeping up with my own creative work,” says McGranaghan, who is a playwright and fiction writer, “In many ways, the job at CAPA is the perfect situation because it allows you to teach and focus on the craft while at the same time actually teaching what it is you do, as opposed to having to teach English.” Kovacic stresses that the school makes a point of employing people in the arts program who are not just professional teachers, but who are in fact practicing what they preach. “What performing arts schools are designed to do is provide an introduction to the discipline of doing your art everyday. A regular teacher, who has so many other obligations wouldn’t be able to do that,” says Kovacic.

While her afternoons are spent teaching eager minds, McGranaghan still finds time to work with the Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre as well as work on her new novel. “I think we benefit a lot from teaching students who are really committed and interested and enthusiastic,” says McGranaghan after her first few months. “You’re putting into practice the things that you know and you care about. It’s directly related to what you do, where as most jobs you can do keep them totally separate.” It seems it’s a rewarding experience for both students and teachers, so its only a matter of time until arts high schools completely take over. Then your future sons and daughters will be able to write you under the table and probably get a $2 mil advance book deal by the age of 17. At least then you’ll have someone to support you while finally putting the time you want into your writing.
Many younger-generation Pittsburghers may not be aware of the city’s rich and often dark history. But Michael Scotto and Michael Chemers have set out to bring what’s been buried by time to the surface with their film *When Tyrants Kiss*.

“It’s very difficult to sit at Pizzeria Uno at Homestead and look around at this yuppified paradise, this sort of shopping utopia and think, ‘this is the site of the bloodiest labor riot in the history of America,’” says Chemers.

But how many people actually do think about that while enjoying a nice slice of deep dish pizza? Both men fear that the number is very small. Although the Homestead riots are not featured in the film, Chemers and Scotto attempt to bring other aspects of Pittsburgh’s history to the foreground in their 1930s detective drama.

*When Tyrants Kiss* begins with the mysterious “suicide” of one of Pittsburgh’s most prominent chemists. During the investigation that follows, Detective Sam Harris and his sidekick Angel Parks, a one-armed catburgler, uncover a conspiracy revolving around The Black Legion, an off-shoot of the Ku Klux Klan.

Although the film was written by Chemers, a post doctoral fellow in the History Department, the idea for the story came from the silent partner in this project, Danny Josephs, business manager of the English Department. Josephs acts as producer on the film, handling the budget and the meals. The entire film is “not-for-profit exercise,” in other words, people are paid in food.

When Josephs asked Chemers who he wanted to direct the film, Chemers only knew one person involved in film at CMU. The two met in the Fall Semester 2003, when Scotto signed up for a class that Chemers was teaching. Together Josephs and Chemers reviewed Scotto’s work. “Even though we found he’s still just a baby, nevertheless he’s got a tremendous talent. And then we discovered that he had a genius for organization as well,” Chemers explains.

At just 20, Scotto is in his senior year at Carnegie Mellon, majoring in Creative Writing and English. He has extensive experience with the student organization, Filmmaking at Carnegie Mellon, where he is currently acting as president. His interest in films developed at an early age. “As I kept reading about filmmaking and memoirs of screenwriters, I started to realize that as a screenwriter you have very little power and it’s very hard to get what you’ve written onto the screen faithfully translated and so I got into making films.”

But his passion for filmmaking takes a backseat to his passion for Pittsburgh. Scotto wears a permanent mark of devotion: on his right upper arm there are...
The film is currently in pre-production, during which a number of eager assistants are doing hours of research on the dress, speech, and condition of the city at that time. The story is a work of fiction, but the backdrop in Pittsburgh will be as accurate as their budget of $30,000 will allow. They’re looking for realism on a minute scale, even down to the filth that collected on the buildings. “What Mike (Scotto) discovered, which you could never know from the pictures and the archival files, is that it was wet. This grit, it wasn’t just dry, it was slimy… And that’s something that we’re going to try really hard to recreate,” says Chemers.

Their project is extremely ambitious. With any period piece money is a major issue. Scotto and Chemers hope to manage their limited budget by relying on donations and applying for a grant from the Center for African American Urban Studies. They are also receiving support from the Carnegie Mellon English Department.

Scotto and Chemers intend to begin shooting the film in black and white on digital video in May and finish the first week of June. Before that time, they have 14 slots open for crew members and 5 major roles to fill. There is also a large supporting cast of extras to enhance the feel of Pittsburgh at that time. [Chemers wants extras to be missing teeth and limbs to show the dangers of factory work at that time.] Once they have wrapped filming, Scotto and at least two other people will begin the arduous task of editing.

The ultimate goal for this project is just to get the film made. Scotto and Chemers intend to screen When Tyrants Kiss at CMU upon completion and distribute the film to anyone else interested in seeing it. Of course they have plans to send it off to various film festivals, but recognition is not a priority.

Neither man has any desire to become a “big-time” Hollywood filmmaker. “I have a friend who I knew in Seattle who wrote the most delicate beautiful plays that I have ever read: like lace, like snow flakes falling. One day he said to me, ‘you know what, I’m gonna go down to LA and pursue this thing that’s come up… So he went down there and he wrote a movie and I went and saw it and it was terrible. As far as the screenplay awful, the characters were unmotivated there were giant holes in the plot, the dialogue was absolutely appalling. And that movie was Jurassic Park III.”

“If that’s success, then keep it.” Chemers says, laughing. “I can’t believe I just said that!”

If you would like to assist with the film in any way please contact Michael Scotto at MSCOTTO@ANDREW.CMU.EDU.
Students circled around Alan Topol as he sat in an oversized rocking chair; the scene was reminiscent of “story time” and, appropriately, Topol shared his story of success through perseverance with intent listeners. Topol visited the Gladys Schmitt Creative Writing Center in November, to give a personal account of his experiences with fiction writing and the publishing process. Topol’s story is more complex than most, having sharp career turns and gradual highs and lows publishing his fiction. But he eventually found his career path and his book went to the top. He is the best selling author of Dark Ambition and two other spy novels—Spy Dance and Conspiracy. Topol’s books are considered among the best in his genre, with themes of political deception and suspicious characters driving his plots to the very last page. Surprisingly, Topol started his flourishing writing career at the Carnegie Institute of Technology as a chemistry major.

While Alan Topol’s college education does not seem to bring him any closer to his dream of fiction writing, he soon made a change in his education, switching his major from chemistry to engineering. Although Topol’s major was not in the humanities, he continued dreaming of writing fiction, taking as many liberal arts electives as possible. He also gained writing experience by publishing a column in the Tartan on geopolitical affairs, and soon convincing Professor Stein to privately tutor him in creative writing, as no such major existed at the time.

After Topol graduated with his engineering major from CIT he made a third drastic change in his career plans—he decided to attend Yale Law School, a change which Topol believed helped his fiction writing. He explains that “if you’re going to write fiction, you benefit from doing something else. Meet people. Have experiences. Write about where you’re working and living.” Today Topol is a working as a partner at a successful law firm in Washington D.C., Covington & Burling, and his day job helps to inspire his writing.

But like Topol’s career, his publishing success is the result of many difficult decisions and hard work. He struggled for many years, unable to find a publisher. Topol tried approaching publishers by himself and through hired agents, neither of which worked. Topol now advises students who are likely to encounter the same difficulties that “you can’t get depressed; instead you must have perseverance and thick skin.”

“IF YOU’RE GOING TO WRITE FICTION, YOU BENEFIT FROM DOING SOMETHING ELSE. MEET PEOPLE. HAVE EXPERIENCES. WRITE ABOUT WHERE YOU’RE WORKING AND LIVING.”

Topol refused to abandon his writing and continued talking with agents and mailing out manuscripts. Eventually he found the agent he needed. Topol advises prospective writers that they also “should find an active agent who’s in the business and who will work with you.” Topol’s agent reviewed Topol’s plot outlines and character sketches and was able to offer Topol critical advice that assisted him in publishing his book. Topol believes that a writer “should always be open to suggestions in writing (his) fiction”, but Topol also believes that the author should have final authority on his books.

Topol’s personal story about his divergent career path and his struggle with the publishing industry provided creative writing students with honest advice about the field of writing and ways to achieve personal success. As Junior creative writing major, Matt Freeman reflected, “His desire and drive are something to be emulated by aspiring authors: even if you are initially rejected, don’t give up because the next submission may be published, and could potentially be the next bestseller.”
Connie Amoroso is passionate about words. As a little girl, she would read anything she could reach; and now, as a creative writing senior, she is a prolific poet and the latest recipient of the Gladys Schmitt Creative Writing Scholarship.

Last Wednesday, February 25, Amoroso was recognized in an intimate ceremony in the Gladys Schmitt Creative Writing Center in Baker Hall. Though Amoroso officially received the award last November, the reception was a chance for her instructors and fellow students to honor her.


“I am honored to recognize a student who I’m sure will go really far,” Bannan said, passing the torch from one successful writer to another.

Sharon Dilworth, an associate professor of English and creative writing, also spoke, presenting Amoroso’s biography and citing her involvement and achievement in the creative writing department.

Amoroso, a Pittsburgh native, was a member of her high school newspaper and submitted her application to Carnegie Mellon online, just 20 minutes before the deadline. When, to her surprise, she was accepted, Amoroso found her home in the University’s creative writing department. She has flourished; she now coordinates much of the department’s Adamson series, a year-long program of guest lecturers, assists English professor Gerald Costanzo with the Carnegie Mellon University Press, and is currently working on her senior honors thesis — all this while working part-time at a local pizza place.

Connie Amoroso is only the second recipient of the Gladys Schmitt scholarship. Named after Carnegie Mellon’s first creative writing instructor, the $2800 stipend is awarded by current department heads. There is no application — Amoroso was surprised to find her student account suddenly credited — and the winner is chosen based on outstanding participation and achievement.

Carolyn Elliot, a creative writing junior, shares a poetry workshop with Amoroso, and attests to her colleague’s talent and dedication. But it is Amoroso’s kind character that Elliot notes first:

“Everybody is friends with Connie,” she says. “She’s extremely friendly, very cool.”

Amoroso receives this praise humbly and appreciatively; when Dilworth presented her with an Amazon gift certificate, Amoroso hugged her instructor and effused thanks, demonstrating her famously warm nature. But even in her moment in the spotlight, the poet is intently focused on the thing that has always driven her: her writing.

“The bottom line is: I love what I do,” Amoroso says. “Maybe this is all I can do, but it’s all that I want to do.”
Six years out of CMU, Greg Marcks’ career as a filmmaker looks promising. His feature film debut, 11:14, is set for nationwide release this spring. The movie, starring Academy Award winner, Hillary Swank (Boys Don’t Cry) and Rachael Leigh Cook (She’s All That), follows the separate stories of five seemingly unrelated characters whose lives collide in one incident at 11:14 pm.

Marcks arrived in Hollywood in 2001 and within a year he had begun shooting his first feature length film. But how did he do it? Marcks explains, “I think it’s two thirds perseverance and one third luck, with talent mixed in there somewhere.” Whatever the equation, Greg Marcks has found the formula for success. It wasn’t always easy for Marcks though. After completing graduate school at Florida State University, he moved to Los Angeles to get his big break. The adjustment was difficult. Marcks recalls, “I had been a student my entire life (and suddenly)... there’s no teacher giving you feedback. You have to become your own critic.” During this time he worked temp jobs to pay the bills, while writing what would become his first film.

Once completed, Marcks sent the screenplay to eight people in the business, mainly those who had approached him after he won a Student Academy Award for his short film, Lector (2000). He soon signed with a manager who sent his script out to over 40 different production companies to buy, but only on the condition that he be hired as the film’s director. He admits, becoming a director, “was my ultimate goal and this script... was a means to an end.” Unfortunately, even though there was interest in the film, none of the production companies would agree to his terms. Marcks refused to sell his script and give up his role as director. This decision cost him his manager.

But Marcks’ luck hadn’t run out. He was soon approached by an agent who had received the script. Together they worked to produce the film independently. They sent the script to talent within the agency and by chance, it happened to land in the hands of Hillary Swank. She was impressed and after meeting with Marcks in New York, she signed on as both an actor and executive producer on the film.

With one major star in place the film came together quickly. Marcks finished cast-
ing and began shooting in the summer of 2002. Marcks recalls, “By Hollywood standards it was a really fast process: I met my agent in January 2002 and we were on set shooting 7 months later. At this point I’d only been out of grad school for 3 years.”

“I’M SLOWLY GETTING BETTER. BUT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF WRITING AND THERE ARE SO MANY AREAS THAT YOU CAN IMPROVE ON. YOU JUST DON’T REACH A POINT WHERE YOU THINK, ‘ALRIGHT, I KNOW HOW TO WRITE NOW.’”

The first day on the set was a shock for Marcks. He discovered many people from off the street curiously milling around his location. “When I saw that, I had a jolt to my nervous system because I realized all of this was my fault. I had blocked the street and all these trucks were there and it was all because of me. It was a strange moment when I realized that I was the genesis of this sprawling production.”

Once inside and away from the prying eye of the public, Marcks had no trouble assuming his role as director. He felt that it was much like his previous work on student films, aside from the big name celebrities playing the roles he had written. But egos did not get in the way of his small production. Marcks believes, “that ego is a luxury that only large budgets can afford.” He goes on to say, “I was very fortunate all the actors were very professional, humble and easy to get along with. It made any nervousness that I might have had about working with people with such established reputations fall away.”

As writer and director on the film, Marcks enjoyed an unusually large amount of creative control all the way up to post-production. Since the film wrapped in 2003, he has had less input on the final version, but this is standard practice in Hollywood. Marcks explains, “post-production is where your level of control sloughs away. It becomes a game of give and take, but ultimately the final say goes to the producers.”

After the dust settled, Marcks’ life slowed down. He works as a freelancer while waiting for his film to be released. “I have my own company, but that basically just means that it’s me, a phone, a computer and some pieces of paper that say that I can’t be personally held accountable.” He’s currently in talks to rewrite a script for Dreamworks, but he also has some ideas for future projects of his own, including a pitch for a heist movie and the film version of Bayou Wolf, a screenplay he wrote during his senior year at CMU.

Despite all of his early success, Marcks feels that he has a lot to learn. “I still feel ‘Alright I know how to write now.’”

For those future screenwriters out there Marcks has a few words of advice: “Be open to learning. I think when I was student I was kind of arrogant, thinking, ‘I already know how to do this,’ when I really didn’t. I’m still muddling through a lot of the stuff Sharon [Dilworth] was teaching me back when I first started studying screenwriting.”

Although Marcks sees Carnegie Mellon as the antithesis of Hollywood, he stills owes a small portion of his success there to CMU. “What I did get out of Carnegie Mellon academically was a really strong writing background which Hollywood desperately needs.”
Danielle Pieratti, class of 1999 wrote poetry and non-fiction while an undergraduate at Carnegie Mellon, often using her Italian family and travels as a source for inspiration. She then became a member of the M.F.A. program at Columbia University, where she concentrated on poetry. Here she speaks of the writers and experiences at Columbia who have shaped her work. Here Jane McCaffery interviews her on her experiences in graduate school.

JM: Can you talk about your experience as a writing student at Columbia? What were the strengths of that program? Who did you study with? How were the other students? And how did your poetry change during these past few years?

DP: My experience at Columbia was incredible. The uniqueness of the Columbia program is due to the influence of its two major poets—Lucie Brock-Broido, the head of poetry, and Richard Howard. While you’re there you really feel as though you’ve been absorbed into this enigmatic family with two somewhat opposite and utterly complementary figures as parents. I feel so lucky to have been part of that environment. I owe so much to Lucie and Richard.

While I was at Columbia I also got to study with a number of amazing writers. I had workshop with Mark Doty in my first semester and in the following two years I had classes with Ed Hirsch, Marie Howe, Frank Bidart, Liam Rector, Alice Quinn, Richard Locke, Alan Ziegler, Kimiko Hahn, Marie Ponsot, Linda Gregg, Nicholas Christopher, Brad Leithauser, and Richard Howard and Lucie Brock-Broido of course. There are many I’m forgetting. In particular Alice Quinn runs a class called Poets on Poets in which contemporary writers come in to lecture on poets from different time periods. There’s a new instructor each week, so there’s a lot of opportunities to encounter established writers.

My classmates at Columbia were continually inspiring, challenging, discerning, supportive—I could go on.... We were a pretty diverse group which made for a wonderful workshop environment. And in particular I was really impressed with the level of discussion in workshop right from the start. I learned a lot from my classmates about delivering focused and clear criticism, which is now a skill that I really value. I also made a number of close friends at Columbia—some of us still workshop about every two weeks or so. We all agree that we really miss being in the program!

It’s hard to say how my poetry changed, though I know it has. Probably the easiest way to put it is that it’s a lot more dynamic, more charged now. Hopefully more sophisticated. I still try to write in a way that’s intuitive and not too intellectual or difficult, but the leaps are larger and more dimensional.

JM: Can you tell us about the teaching position you have lined up for next term?

DP: Hopefully I will be teaching as an adjunct professor at SUNY Oneonta in the spring term. The two classes I’m lined up to teach are Introduction to Literature and Poetry Workshop. It’s a
great opportunity for me and I’m very excited, especially since I’ve been given a lot of leeway to design both classes, so I had fun writing my course descriptions and picking out books. I thought a lot about my time at CMU, and what I read there that really influenced me. I was particularly glad to have been given such a good foundation in non-fiction at CMU, because I definitely want to include it as part of my literature course. It seems like a lot of programs are still a bit behind in that area.

“I THINK AT SOME POINT WRITING POEMS AND WRITING NON-FICTION TURNED INTO THE SAME THING FOR ME—THEY’RE BOTH JOURNALISTIC, LARGELY INVENTED, ANECDOTAL, CRAFTED.”

JM: What poets are you reading now? Which poets have been most influential for you during the past few years?

DP: Hmmm. Always a tough question. Well right now I’ve been going through a lot of stuff that’s on my bookshelves that I never got the chance to read. I was just enjoying some Franz Wright poems this morning actually. And I would like to read more Robert Creeley. I tend to be a little scattered as far as what I have and haven’t read. There’s a lot of staples that I know I’m missing, and yet I tend to go back to the same writers over and over. I really love John Berryman—the masked vulnerability he gets from writing in character really resonates with me. Also Louise Glück, W.S. Merwin, Eugenio Montale, Mark Strand, Wallace Stevens, Whitman, Roethke, always Rilke. And I read a lot of new poets as well. The Columbia program is really thorough in providing a strong background in poetry. Unfortunately I’m not so thorough in my reading. There’s so much I was introduced to there that I have yet to really examine.

JM: What have you been doing other than getting your MFA degree at Columbia? What do you in summer?

DP: I actually have been trying to start a therapeutic horseback riding program with a friend of mine who lives on a farm in upstate New York. For the last two summers we’ve held riding programs where local, “at-risk” girls come to live at the farm and learn to work with horses. I also keep my own horse there and have recently moved upstate to be closer to the farm. I have a one bedroom apartment in a tiny town surrounded by cow farms and I love it. Country life is really inspirational for me.

JM: Do you still write creative non-fiction?

DP: Not much, unfortunately. I think at some point writing poems and writing non-fiction turned into the same thing for me—they’re both journalistic, largely invented, anecdotal, crafted. Also my prose writing has really gone downhill. I do hope to write more prose someday, it just doesn’t seem to be time right now.

JM: What are your plans and goals as writer and teacher over the course of the next few years?

DP: Well my plans are very original—I want to publish and I want to teach. Unfortunately I think just about every other writer on the planet wants to do the same. I guess the main challenge you have as a young writer is that it’s difficult to keep writing. My solution for that after college was to go to grad school. And my solution after grad school is just to try to organize my life in such a way that I have the time and the motivation to write. I think a lot of getting your MFA is about giving yourself the opportunity to devote the majority of your attention to writing, so that you can figure out what your habits are and develop a more disciplined routine. I feel like I have that now but it’s still precarious. That’s mostly why I moved out of New York City. In the future I would like to teach, and maybe get a doctorate in a few years—I still don’t have an English degree! Most importantly right now, I want to just keep writing. To keep stationing myself so I’ll run into situations that inspire me.
ADAMSON AWARDS
2004 RECIPIENTS

ALAN AND GLORIA SIEGEL
AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Graduate Student Category
First Prize
Sarah Fait

CHARLES C. DAWE MEMORIAL AWARD

For their project Bellwether, a literary journal.
Matthew Freeman
Rebecca Katterson

FILM INTERNSHIPS

The Family Friendly Programming Forum is a group of 48 major national advertisers who are taking positive steps to increase family friendly programming choices on television. Their main focus is the development and scheduling of movies, series, documentaries and information programs that are aired during hours when children and adults within a household are most likely to watch television together (8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.).

This year three CMU students have been selected as recipients of the Family Friendly Programming Forum Scholarships. Each will be awarded a $5000 scholarship. The scholarship money will enable them to accept an internship at a major studio this summer.
Debra Halpern
Dana Vinson
Joanna Penfold

NON-FICTION FOR ACADEMIC/SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

Honorable Mention
The Birth of Bohemianism
Karen Pelaez

DENNIS LEHANE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS. HE HAS WRITTEN SEVEN NOVELS, A DRINK BEFORE THE WAR; DARKNESS, TAKE MY HAND; SACRED, GONE, BABY, GONE; PRAYERS FOR RAIN, SHUTTER ISLAND, AND MYSTIC RIVER WHICH WAS MADE INTO THE RECENT FILM STARRING SEAN PENN AND DIRECTED BY CLINT EASTWOOD. BEFORE BECOMING A FULL-TIME WRITER, MR. LEHANE WORKED AS A COUNSELOR WITH MENTALLY HANDICAPPED AND ABUSED CHILDREN, WAITED TABLES, PARKED CARS, DROVE LIMOS, WORKED IN BOOKSTORES, AND LOADED TRACTOR-TRAILERS. HIS ONE REGRET IS THAT NO ONE EVER GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO TEND BAR. HE LIVES IN THE BOSTON AREA.

Speaker Dennis Lehane
Third Place
*Empire at Home and Abroad in Mansfield Park*
Jaclyn Madden

Second Place
*Amishicity*
Mark Egerman

First Place
*Selling “The Message”: The Commercial Roots of Rap Music*
Michael Scotto

NON-FICTION FOR POPULAR JOURNALS

Honorable Mention
*Masters of the Game*
Robyn Murphy

POETRY

Honorable Mentions
*Fevertalk*
Stephanie Bodnar

1st Place
*Thirst*
Gaurav Munjal

DONNA GREAR PARKER MEMORIAL AWARD
Debra Halpern

CMU PRESS PRIZE FOR POETRY
Poems by Jennifer Anttonen

ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETRY AWARD

Honorable Mentions
Poems by Lillian Bertram
Poems by Eliza Bishop
Poems by Tyson Schrader

1st Place
*Shrinkage*
Heather Di Prima

FICTION

Honorable Mention
*Josie*
Anne Jolis

3rd Place
*Tracey*
Robyn Murphy

2nd Place
*Warning Signs*
Connie Amoroso

1st Place
*From Office 23D -- The Smith Recruitment*
Michael Scotto

CMU PRESS PRIZE FOR FICTION
*In the Cool Dusk of Horses*
Allison Pottern
In the tradition of the movie *A Beautiful Mind* and the play *Proof*, New York playwright Alex Lewin has written a drama about the intense world of math geniuses.

That play, *Twin Primes*, won Stage 3 Theatre’s 2003 Festival of New Plays and premieres at the venue next week.

Artistic director Don Bilotti describes the show as a “psychological spine-tingler in the vein of Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles.”

“(Lewin) has combined two genres -- the thriller genre and the science genre -- and he made the two fit together real well.”

Brilliant mathematician Linda Ruether has spent her career trying to solve the twin prime conjecture. When an 18-year-old genius figures out the answer, Ruether is overcome by the temptation to gain fame. The play has some strong language.

Bilotti, who is directing the show, said the audience was on the edge of its collective seat during a reading of the play last fall.

*Twin Primes* has some factual basis -- the twin prime conjecture is real and has not been solved. But the solution Lewin presents is plausible, Bilotti said.

However, audience members who aren’t math whizzes need not fear they won’t understand the show, Bilotti added.

“I’m not a math person, I’m totally brain dead when it comes to math, and I followed it. The playwright made his invention really understandable.”

*LEWIN’S PLAYS HAVE BEEN PERFORMED IN LOS ANGELES, PITTSBURGH AND NEW YORK AT THE SAMUEL FRENCH OFF-OFF BROADWAY ONE-ACT FESTIVAL AND AT THE WORKSHOP THEATER CO.*

Maryann Curmi is playing the lead, while Tim Bressler, 17, is the genius. Terry Richardson is an attorney, and Mike Clarke is a mathematician.

Bilotti said he and the cast are enjoying the challenges of staging a play that’s never been produced. “It is such a risk, it is such a gamble. We have no idea how this will play.”

*Bilotti said he and the cast are enjoying the challenges of staging a play that’s never been produced.*

*While a senior at Carnegie Mellon University, his screenplay *Weeds* won the Scenario Magazine/Writers Guild of America Student Screenplay Competition and was published in the winter 1998 issue of Scenario.* He is a former staff writer for Premiere magazine.
Greetings from Honduras—dubbed by O. Henry, “the land where time is redundant.” In my first six weeks here I’ve encountered legions of eager visa-seekers and a tranquil community of Mennonites; I’ve battled floods in my bedroom and termites in my bathroom; I’ve hiked through a cloud forest, done tequila shots with the Ambassador, and—forgive me, New Yorkers—I’ve eaten a Honduran bagel. (It was definitely round and mostly bread-like. And it sort of had a hole in the middle. Beyond that, I don’t think H&H need fear any competition.)

I live in the capital, Tegucigalpa, in a hilltop house surrounded by seedling palm trees and hibiscus bushes and encircled by 10-foot walls topped with razor wire. I have a view of the city that is especially beautiful at night, when lights blanket the hillsides. It’s not quite as beautiful in daylight—Teguc has an odd sort of charm, with winding narrow streets and the occasional horse cart stopping traffic at an intersection, but overall the city is not noted for aesthetics.

This is my first tour in the Foreign Service, and I’m working in the consular section of the embassy as nonimmigrant visa unit chief. I interview applicants, adjudicate visas, and handle problems and inquiries from Hondurans and Americans alike. The complexities of immigration law keep my job lively, and the pace never slows. Outside of work, I’m taking karate (more of a challenge in Spanish), keeping up on my writing, and trying to figure out how many things I can cook with the chilis that grow by my front door.

So the welcome mat is out at the Casa de Val, and I have plenty of room for guests. There’s not all that much to do in Teguc itself, but Honduras has beautiful beaches, mountains, and Mayan ruins— and though I haven’t tried it yet, I’m told the diving is excellent. And if you decide to visit, please bring me a bag of bagels.

Adios,

Val
**JANE BERNSTEIN:**

I’ve been on academic leave. In the fall, I was finishing a book. In February, I’ll be leaving for my Fulbright to Israel. I’ll be traveling, writing, and teaching a graduate seminar in creative writing at Bar-Ilan University, which has the country’s only creative writing program.

**GERALD COSTANZO:**

I am currently editing a book entitled *The White Shell Road: A William Peden Reader*. Peden was a writer of fiction, a Jefferson scholar, an editor, an educator (whose students included, during his lengthy career, Jim Lehrer and Bob Shacochis), and a journalist who reviewed for a great many periodicals—especially championing collections of short stories in a time when few trade publishers took an interest in them. The book consists of several of Peden’s short stories, chapters from one of his novels, a selection of his reviews, and some of his writings on Thomas Jefferson, all preceded by the best introduction I could muster (I believe it was a former student of mine, Jack Silbert, who first taught me to love the word “muster”; he also said in class one wintry Pittsburgh day and in that aphoristic style of his, “nobody can embrace the unembraceable” and each of us nodded in agreement). The book will be published by the University of Missouri Press, the press which Peden founded in the late 1950s.

**ANTHONY BUTTS:**

I am currently reading *Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness: Lessons from Meditation and Psychotherapy* by Mark Epstein M.D.; *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* by Elaine Pagels; and *Trying to be Human: Zen Talks* from Cheri Huber. I have recently finished my fourth poetry manuscript, entitled *Male Hysteria*. I am currently not writing because I am in the information gathering phase for my next manuscript.

**JIM DANIELS:**

My recent work includes *Flesh and Stone*, a collaborative project with the photographer Charlee Brodsky that combines my poems with her photographs. In addition, I have been working on a series of what I call “Brick Poems,” poems in all capital letters that space the words out like bricks in a wall. I just completed an essay for a book called *The New Working-Class Studies*, and have also become an associate editor for a new journal, *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas*, so I am continuing my interest in writing about work. My favorite new book is Stuart Dybek’s *Sailing with Magelene*, a wonderful collection of stories.

I’ve just finished reading *My Father’s Keeper*, an account of the lives of some sons and daughters of Nazi leaders. Somewhat predictably, they have borne great guilt and devoted their lives to the service of humanistic institutions and causes, or they have mewled and denied it all and have dedicated themselves to preserving their great family names.
SHARON DILWORTH:

My new novel, The Man on the Street, which I started over winter break, takes place in the East End of Pittsburgh. It is about a middle aged woman worried about getting older, considering infidelity and unsure of the life she has created. It has nothing to do with my own circumstance.

Inspired by my screenwriting workshop, I wrote a screenplay this semester (working on their schedule) tentatively titled George and the Wedding Party. It involves an interrupted wedding, a suicide, a disappearance, and a possible murder. I want to thank the students in this wonderful class for their enthusiasm and inspiration and for allowing me to grant myself an extension during Finals week when I was really stressed.

I’ve been reading some great books this spring: Kate Christensen’s The Epicure’s Lament, Michelle De Kretser’s The Hamilton Case, Adam Langer’s Crossing California.

HILARY MASTERS:

I’m currently assembling the acknowledgments and polishing the last details on a small-book length piece on the relationship between E.G. Kaufmann, the Pittsburgh merchant prince and builder of “Falling Water”, and the Mexican muralist, Juan O’Gorman.

Also, I’m about to sign a contract with SMU Press to re-publish my family memoir, Last Stands: Notes from Memory. This new book will have a foreword by Phillip Lopate and an afterword by me.

JANE MCCAFFERTY:

I’m currently working on short stories, many of which center around parenting in contemporary culture. I’m reading Pat Barker, and enjoying her, and also a book by Paul Fussel called The Great War in Modern Memory, which may inspire me to teach a class about literature and World War One.

TERRANCE A. HAYES:

I’ve finished, I think, my third book (WIND IN A BOX) forthcoming in 2005 from Penguin. Trying these days to keep my increasingly odd poems out of that book. By odd I mean collage-oriented structures; I mean, narrative bound by tone, elastic syntax... Nothing as fresh as I’d hope for yet.

Currently peeping a lot of first books by guy poets: [Consolation Miracle] by Chad Davison, [Thieves’ Latin] by Peter Jay Shippy, [The Room Where I Was Born] by Brian Teare, [Selah] by Joshua Corey, [Big Back Yard] by Matthew Teig—nothing that sticks to my ribs. The more interesting non poetry books I’m reading are: [Living to Tell the Tale] by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and [American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush] by Kevin Phillips. For obvious reasons.

Looking forward to the new book by physicist, Brian Greene, [The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality].
Danny Josephs, Vickie Makell, Kelly Delaney, and Stephanie Dickey discuss ways they can help the creative writing students.