

# WORDHORD

Fall 2016

Northwestern College  
English Department Newsletter

Volume 15, No. 1

## Dr. Keith Fynaardt *Afield on Sabbatical*

by Lucas Fratzke



When I asked Dr. Fynaardt what he had done during his spring semester sabbatical, he simply told me that he had sat in his recliner with his laptop, coffee, every album of Wilco (who he had the opportunity to see live), and worked on his novel: the English major's dream.

Dr. Fynaardt was awarded his sabbatical for the purpose of finishing a strong draft of his novel, tentatively titled *Dairyland*. As most of us can relate, when he began to revise his nearly-completed novel he proceeded to find things that bothered him; thus proceeded the endless cycle of revision that many of us have been caught in.

So he cooked. He treated his wife to a sort of sabbatical from making food as he took over. "We all gained weight," he told me, chuckling, reminiscing on all of the pies and desserts that he made.

Dr. Fynaardt has primarily written academic scholarship and nonfiction over the years; it is only recently that he has delved into novel-writing. After years of writing nonfiction, Dr. Fynaardt found that he could only continue to tell the truth by writing fiction. His novel follows the lives of a family of dairy farmers from California who are pushed to move to Iowa when suburban development encroaches on their land. The novel and their characters embody an underlying critique of the American Dream as they move East from the West. His characters struggle with personal identity and reflect on family, relationships, and cows as they leave their home in California and enter Iowa.

Dr. Fynaardt hopes to have his novel completed by August. He will be reading excerpts of the book during this semester's Deepsong on November 10th.

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# Crime Writing

**ENG 380.01 – Dr. Sam Martin**  
2-Credit Class / 1<sup>st</sup> Half of Spring 2017



**CRIME WRITING** is a workshop designed for anyone interested in detection, dead bodies, and dangerous storytelling. So if you're a fan of *Breaking Bad* or *CSI*, or if you want to read *Hound of the Baskervilles* for homework or plot your own "whodunit" mystery, then be sure to sign-up!

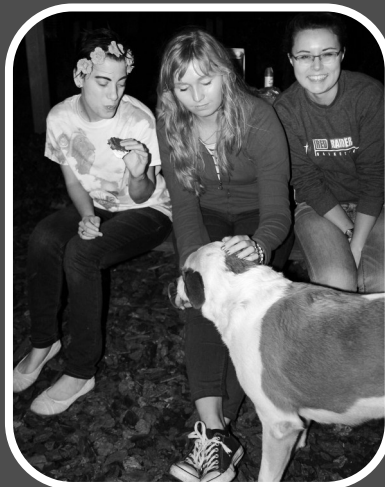
Workshop will consist of 1) a forensic analysis of the writer's main tools used to create convincing crimes and profile believable characters, 2) writing and critiquing our own stories, and 3) discussing classic and contemporary crime stories in light out of Christian tradition. We'll look at an array of crime stories from Sherlock Holmes to British-style "whodunits," P.D. James to *Gone Girl*, edgy urban noirs to psychological thrillers.

Though often downplayed as mere "genre fiction"—a literary escape from reality—at its best crime fiction is a creative way to face our world's sometimes sordid mysteries. Which means this is a class for writers unafraid of macabre discoveries and harrowing encounters. There will be humor and hope for redemption, yes. But—fair warning—this is a dark genre.

*There will be blood.*

## English Department Bonfire

On Thursday evening, September 8, English professors, students and Friends of English (FOE) gathered at the Fynaardt farm to enjoy a wonderful evening around their campfire.





## ENG 386 The Other America: Native American Literature, Tradition and Transformation

Spring 2017 Tuesday/Thursday 1:45-3:15 pm

Native Americans have maintained their cultural traditions under great pressure from missionaries, politicians and educators who have insisted that they abandon their heritage. These traditions have survived in part because they have proved flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of the People. So in addition to looking at “the old ways,” we will explore how traditions have been transformed within culture and in Native writing in response to contemporary situations.

In studying the oral and written literatures First Nations people have created, we’ll start with Native ideas regarding the nature and power of language for imagining the world; we’ll also confront the difficulties presented by reading an originally oral “literature” in textual form. We’ll talk about the central importance of place to Native identity and also raise the questions presented by the very notion of Native identity—what does it mean to be Indian, is there such thing as an “authentic” Indian and who decides—and what is the proper way to refer to Indians/Native American/Indigenous Peoples/First Nations/The People in the first place? Such questions of identity arise, of course, from the changing face of Native America as they have intermingled and inter-

married with Whites and adapted, for better and for worse, to the White Man’s ways. Not surprisingly, we’ll take special interest in Native American responses to Christianity. Some of our authors—Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie especially—will confront us with the painful realities of Native life on and off the reservation today.

Readings will include Origin stories and Trickster tales from the Dineh (Navajo), Pueblo, Kiowa and Lakota/Dakota/Nakota (Sioux), as well as the Windigo stories of the Annishanabe (Ojibwe), the as-told-to biography of Black Elk, and the Navajo Nightway ceremonial. In the interest of laughter, we’ll consider NDN humor as a response to colonialism. Building on this selection of traditional literatures, we’ll read N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, *Black Elk Speaks*, Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*, Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, selections from the writings of Vine Deloria Jr., and Sherman Alexie’s *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. We will also view *Smoke Signals*, the film adaptation of Alexie’s book. Plans are also in the works for a class field trip.

English Department Bonfire



# Imagining & Becoming Teachers of English

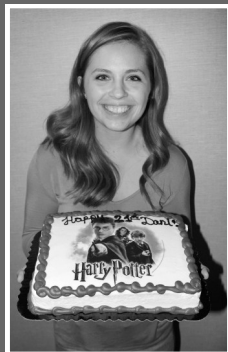
by Marie Jeppesen

When given the opportunity to attend a professional conference, many students ignore the invitation due to anxiety over missing class and falling behind. Fortunately, many junior and senior English Teaching majors took the risk and dove into the invigorating and life-affirming Iowa Council of Teachers of English conference (ICTE).

We pulled into the Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston, IA late Wednesday night, October 5. As we were waiting for our room keys, Erin Vande Vegte, NWC '16 English Teaching alum, jumped from behind a door and surprised everyone. In her hands was a Harry Potter birthday cake: Danielle Cupp, a senior ET major, turned 21 that Wednesday, so Ms. Van Es and Erin decided that a surprise party was necessary.



Professor Van Es with Erin [Brasser] Vande Vegte



Danielle Cupp

These sort of English-based relationships are a big part of the ICTE experience. As we were gathering ideas for building literacy and fawning over the keynote speakers, we made connections with people who love reading and writing as much as we do. "I absolutely LOVED being around our kind of people for a few days," said Senior Nicole Montgomery. Nicole was given the opportunity to lead a breakout-session at this year's conference. Her presentation, "Through Their Eyes: Teachers Understanding



Nicole Montgomery with her book of poetry entitled "Through Their Eyes: Teachers Understanding Students Through Poetry."

"Students Through Poetry," was based on an honors project she completed under Dr. Martin's supervision last spring. The session examined actual responses from ninth graders at MOC-FV High School to questions about high school struggles and how their responses led to her book of poetry.



Back Row: Savannah Sheets, Danielle Cupp, Erin [Brasser] Vande Vegte and Professor Kim Van Es; Front Row: Nicole Montgomery, Victor Mena, Whitney Jorgensen, and Sharla De Bruin

Also leading a breakout-session at ICTE were Professor Kim Van Es and me, Marie Jeppesen, Junior English Teaching major. Our presentation, "Cohesion in Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union,'" illustrated the parallels between Martha Kolln's tools of sentence cohesion and a campaign speech given by Obama in 2008.

Other students who attended were Malory Bjork, Sharla De Bruin, Whitney Jorgensen, Victor Mena, Savannah Sheets, and Carissa Tavary. They listened to amazing keynote speakers, such as literacy guru Donalyn Miller, and teachers leading breakout sessions.

(Continued on page 8)

# Literary Salon: Three Authors

Spring 2016 was a semester of words, wisdom, and lots of strong coffee shared among students Nicole Montgomery, Lydia Steenhoek, and Trevor Delamater. As part of directed studies and honors research, these students got together with Dr. Martin weekly for a “Literary Salon,” in which they exchanged new creative work with one another, making suggestions and spurring each other toward better work. As the semester came to a close, Trevor and Nicole printed chapbooks of their poetry—Trevor’s spanning his experiences in the Middle East and Minnesota and Nicole’s imagining the inner lives of high school students—and Lydia produced the first polished chapter of a graphic novel about a girl who sees ghosts and other freaky things.

On May 6, the group presented their research and creative works at the Old Factory. The evening was filled with laughter, baked goods, and of course, caffeinated beverages! Each writer presented their research and shared some of their work with everyone, and the night closed with a short question and answer time. The collaboration proved successful in forming three pieces of creative work that can go on to be sent to publishers, used in classrooms, or expanded on in the future.



From left to right, Nicole Montgomery, Lydia Steenhoek, Professor Martin and Trevor Delamater



**Nicole Montgomery**  
English Teaching '17

In the midst of my research, I sent an anonymous survey to freshmen at MOC-FV. In response to ‘something most of my peers don’t know about me,’ one student wrote: “I have had a lot of fights and struggles with my parents in the past. Looking back, it may have just been my fault.” I composed this poem based on that student’s perspective.

## *House Fire*

This house awaits  
a spark—  
the tensions and mistrust  
like a gas can, waiting  
breathing, begging  
to ignite and explode  
its purpose.

It can’t *not* burn,  
  
the conditions too perfect,  
the combustion  
just a misspoken word away.  
I inhale, and with the push  
of exhaled breath,  
words spark—  
set things off.

The room, tinder-filled  
with a dozen disagreements—  
a lifetime  
of feeling oppressed—  
begins to burn,  
smoking

as the house goes up  
in flames.

The rushing wind  
of your anger  
bellows  
as we sit back  
and watch the house  
engulfed, roaring with our  
careless words.

The skeletons in  
our closet cackle,  
filling our lungs  
with putrid air, staining  
our clothes  
with the lifelong reminder  
of our failure  
to nurture  
this relationship.

As plastic-threats burn,  
toxic fumes  
sting our eyes, singe

our mouths,  
and make us cough.  
I have to find a way  
out.

So I back up—  
flames licking  
at my feet—wishing  
I could take back  
those words: extinguish

this arson  
with kindness.  
  
but I have no choice now.

I walk out,  
house blazing  
behind me.  
Everything I love  
inside—years  
of memories,  
old photographs,  
our letters.

Flames flick frightening  
shadows  
in your eyes, and I  
remember all the times  
I’ve burned you.

But with the exchange  
of another apology,  
we rub salve  
on our wounds, search

this ash-pile  
for old nails,  
straighten  
them out, and  
pound  
them into  
promises with which  
we will build  
another home.

# Literary Salon: Three Authors



**Trevor Delamater**  
Writing and Rhetoric '16

Here is a poem Trevor wrote based on an experience he had while spending time in the Middle East.

## *Shakiel the Sari Seller*

I drink the chunky orange soda, thrust into my hands because I am his guest here, sitting under the sparkling glow of two or three dozen sequined saris, their green like tropic shallows, lady slipper's bell violet-blue and the ocean trimmed in full yellow sun. Shakiel, the stocky tailor from Karachi, speaks in this kaleidoscopic light, his voice a slamming poet's.

"In the Pakistan, it's hard  
to earn money," he says. "It's not enough  
for a family. I can eat,

wear clothes, but I cannot  
make my house, make  
money for my child."

His ebony eyes warm, widen with sadness and peer into mine—an earnest pup's stare. I open my lips, fiddle with my fingers, and fail to dredge up some wise word. Shakiel has started talking again, so I simply nod.

"Right now,  
I don't have child.  
Whenever Allah gives  
me a child,

what will I do for them?  
Pray for me, my brother,"  
he grips my hand.

Shakiel is our neighbor. Walking from *Bait al Nahkl*, the Palm House, I see him sitting alone under the shop's thrumming air conditioner or pulling saris for an abaya-clad Omani and her daughter. When he sees me, he waves,

*flower buds popping  
open in spring—*

*his eyes  
when they catch me*

Some days his words are too much, though. His sari shop a prison run for his Indian boss because there is no money in Karachi. I cross the street some days as I pass by, and slink behind parked cars so Shakiel won't see me. I don't have the patience to be his only ears those days—to hear him say,

"I am the Pakistani, I have  
experience, I have everything  
any country has, but I have not  
peace. If I have peace in my country, you  
—world—have nothing.

Pakistan has everything,  
but peace, no.  
*Insha 'Allah*,  
everything will be better."

And yes, God willing, everything will be better, but someday I lose the heart to affirm his hope, so I sneak past his shop with a guilty gulp. Today, though, I sit with my hand clasped in his, fizzy orange chunks between my teeth, saying,

"*Na'am*, yes, I will pray  
for you," and yes,  
I'll pray my Christian prayers for the burly  
Pakistani who promises me,  
"Visit me in my country, in my home,  
and no one will hurt you,  
and I will protect you and

no one  
will hurt you  
in Karachi!"  
Laughing, I answer,  
"*Insha 'Allah*, my friend."

*Insha 'Allah*.

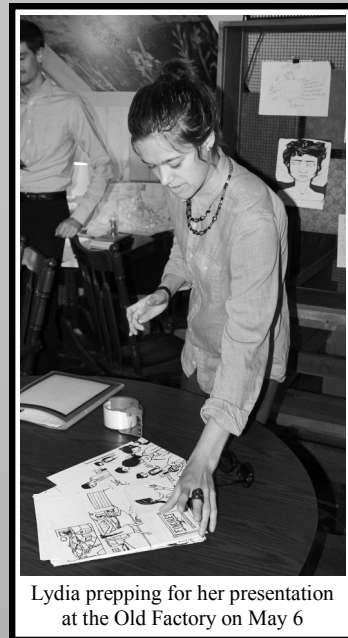
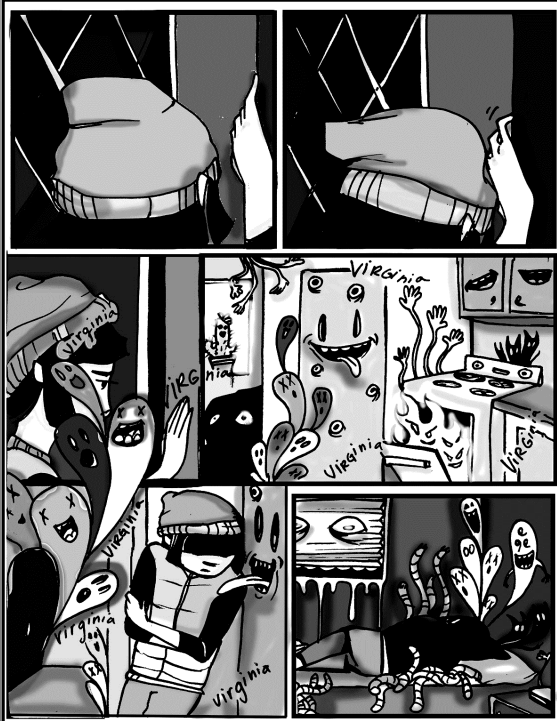


# Literary Salon: Three Authors



**Lydia Steenhoek**  
Writing and Rhetoric '16

Here are samples of Lydia's artwork included in her graphic novel.



Lydia prepping for her presentation at the Old Factory on May 6

## Becoming Teachers

Continued from page 4)



From left: Marie Jeppersen, Carissa Tavary and Whitney Jorgensen

Several NWC students appreciated a short, informal talk given by Loan Nguyen titled “Developing Safe and Brave Spaces for Marginalized Youth.” She spoke passionately about how we as teachers need to be aware of the under-represented students in our classrooms and how we need to acknowledge that every part of their identity is important, even if they are still searching for what exactly that identity is. Specifically, Nguyen put emphasis on learning and implementing appropriate pronoun usage in the classroom for those students who identify as gender queer or non-binary.

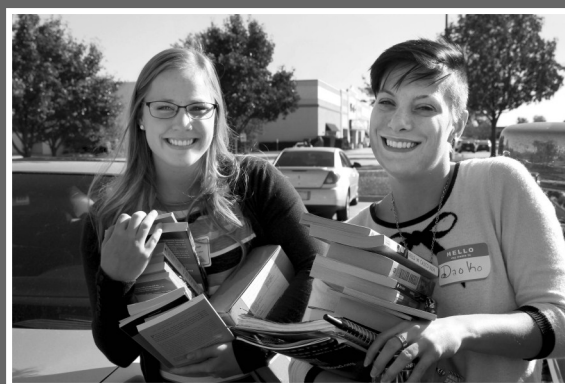


Victor Mena and Nicole Montgomery at one of the ICTE sessions

Bjork, a junior English Teaching major, said, “Without this experience, it would have been harder for me to look into the future and actually visualize myself in my own classroom.” It is easy to be so caught up in our college courses that we forget the career for which we are preparing. The ICTE Conference reminded us why we joined the English Department in the first place. We want to share our passion for reading and writing with others. We want to build a brave and safe environment that allows kids to grow in their skills and opinions. We want to empower the next generation to be people who can make a difference in the world. In essence, we want to be teachers.”

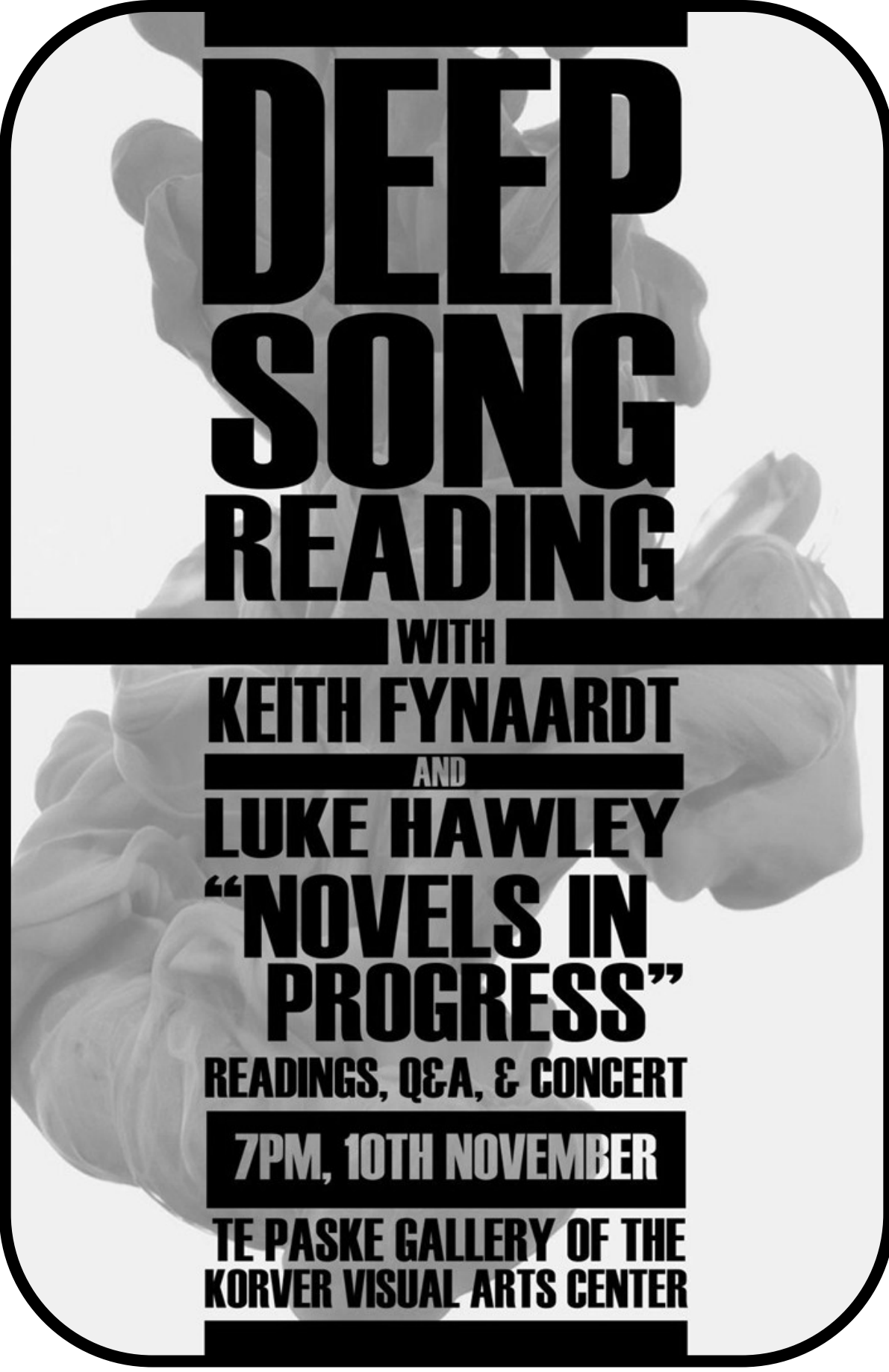


Donalyn Miller, author of *The Book Whisperer*, was an ICTE keynote speaker who did not disappoint. She is pictured here with Dr. Callie Friesen, who presented a break-out session about support for first-year teachers.



NW 2016 English Teaching graduate Erin Vande Vegte and senior English Teaching major Sharla De Bruin haul books to their cars on the last day of the ICTE conference.





**DEEP  
SONG  
READING**

**WITH**

**KEITH FYNAARDT**

**AND**

**LUKE HAWLEY**

**“NOVELS IN  
PROGRESS”**

**READINGS, Q&A, & CONCERT**

**7PM, 10TH NOVEMBER**

**TE PASKE GALLERY OF THE  
KORVER VISUAL ARTS CENTER**



## Book Review by Oluwayemisi Ayeni (Writing & Rhetoric '20)

### *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma

*The Fishermen* is a modern day Cain and Abel story narrated by Benjamin, the youngest of four brothers. It is Nigerian writer Chigozie Obioma's award-winning, debut novel. Obioma, who will visit Northwestern in Spring 2017, currently serves as an Assistant Professor of literature and creative writing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Author of another novel, *The Native Hurricane*, he has won the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work and has been nominated for the Man Booker Prize and the Guardian First Book Award.

There is a lot to admire about Obioma's debut novel, *The Fishermen*, including its rich symbolism. For instance, the number four in the novel symbolizes peace, stability, order and completion of justice. Benjamin, the narrator, is one of four brothers, and their lives were relatively peaceful. However, one day, on their way back from fishing, the boys are given a violent premonition by the town madman. The eldest, Ikenna, heeds the madman's words and it slowly drives him insane.

Another aspect of the novel I found interesting was Obioma's use of the character's names. In Nigerian culture, people are given multiple names that are supposed to describe their character. For example, my name, Oluwayemisi, means "God has blessed us with this child." Ikenna, the eldest brother in *The Fishermen*, means "God's Strength," which is ironic because Obioma slowly degrades his character down to nothingness. "The prophecy," we read, "like an angered beast, had gone berserk and was destroying [Ikenna's] mind with the ferocity of madness . . . until all that he knew, all that was him, all that had become him was left in disarray. To my brother, Ikenna," Benjamin says, "the fear of death as prophesied by Abulu [the madman] had become palpable, a caged world within which he was irretrievably trapped, and beyond which nothing else existed."

As the novel moves on, Ikenna gets weaker and weaker in mind, body and soul. Slowly he dissolves into an unstable chaotic being, becoming increasingly paranoid that one of his brothers will kill him—hence the parallels critics have made to the Cain and Abel story. Though the biblical link is key to the novel, Obioma also invites readers to make connections between Ikenna and the Nigerian government and how Nigeria is run. In Nigeria, elected officials have been known to take countless bribes and misuse funds, which leads to division, which in turn limits what these officials can do because they are no longer working together as a well-oiled machine. Ikenna's breakdown mirrors the breakdown of an effective form of government in Nigeria due to corruption.



Be sure to read *The Fishermen* for yourself. It is available for checkout at DeWitt. Chigozie Obioma will give a Deepsong reading Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in TePaske Art Gallery. He will speak in Chapel on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 10am.

(Continued on page 9)

# Alumni News

**Allison Mulder, Writing & Rhetoric 2016** had her story “Decay” published in *Crossed -Genres* in November 2015. A story she wrote in Dr. Martin’s class, “Collecting Jessup,” has been by accepted by Orson Scott Card’s *Intergalactic Medicine Show*. “THE ZOMBEE PROJECT 3.0” is forthcoming in *Escape Pod*, a short fiction podcast. The launch will be part of their Artemis Rising event - a month celebrating women and non-binary authors. Allison is also slush reading for the magazine *Strange Horizons*, a highly ranked magazine in the sci-fi, fantasy short fiction world. Her job is to sort out promising submissions to send up the line to the editor. You can follow her writing exploits at [allisonmulder.wordpress.com](http://allisonmulder.wordpress.com).

**Jonathan DeReus, Writing & Rhetoric 2014** is a manpower officer in the Marine Corps Reserve. He is also working his way through his second year at Drake University Law School.

**Josiah Nelson, Literature 2007** graduated with an MFA in Screenwriting from Pepperdine University in May 2016. Freelance work continues to drop his way and he has meetings on various historical drama projects in process.

**Anne Philo Fleck, Literature 2011** has now written three books and is preparing her most recent manuscript for publication. She's also a concept editor and blogs about making a living as an artist at [notsostarvingartists.com](http://notsostarvingartists.com), as well as writing and editing scripts for Ghost Light Media. Anne lives in Iowa with her husband and their son. In her free time Anne likes to sew, knit, and garden.



## Book Review: *The Fishermen* (continued from page 8)

I also valued how Ikenna’s faith is portrayed throughout the novel. Over time, Ikenna refuses to go to church, and only goes begrudgingly when his mother threatens to give him the whipping of his life. He even stops fearing his father and his father’s wrath. His actions scare his brothers and they start to fear him even more than they fear their father. They start to believe that Ikenna is possessed by an evil spirit. Essentially though, the entire family is cursed from the time the boys are given the prophecy. That event is the beginning of the family’s tragic, downward spiral.

I enjoyed *The Fishermen* because it is a story about the meaning of family and the trials family members might go through to protect and avenge one another. I found it fascinating how this family reacted to the challenges put in front of them and how loyal they remained to each other in the end.

# Unplanned Story



June 1, 2012. Bahrain International Airport.

I was waiting in baggage claim with dampened hopes. Even though I wasn't kicking and screaming physically, I was inside. I was all set to stay on in Orange City, but one by one things just didn't work according to my plan. I wasn't ready to return home to Bahrain. I wasn't ready to be around people I had always known and a lifestyle I had moved on from. But here I was, waiting in Bahrain and nostalgically reliving my life in small-town Iowa. Every fiber of my being was upset about this change. Right there and then, I came up with an exit plan—*get through this first year of teaching then leave to get my Master's.*

Fast forward. August 22, 2016. Al Raja School.

I was standing in the middle of my classroom contemplating how I wanted to set it up for maximum learning. I stood there and thought about the students who were going to walk into my room in a week's time. I thought about how much I loved them and couldn't understand where all this love came from. I stood there thinking. . . . *Christine, you're starting your fifth year of teaching. I wouldn't have it any other way.*

My journey of teaching at Al Raja School, Kingdom of Bahrain has been the best-unplanned plans I have had. This school was actually started in 1899 by RCA missionaries, Samuel & Amy Zwemer, who came to the island with a mission to reach out to local children. That mission is still true and strong in our Al Raja community. I started my first two years teaching American Literature to grades 9 & 11. Since my third year, I have been teaching grade 11 American Literature, grade 12 AP Literature and grades 11 & 12 college prep. I have had the privilege of walking alongside the juniors and seniors of the school who want to graduate with stories worth remembering.

"Ms. Christine, may I talk to you about this problem I'm having with Fatima?" I smile and nod my head in anticipation of a dramatic friendship gone sour. *What's your story?* has been the theme of my classroom for the past five years. I chose this theme because of what my professors wrote within my story. More than a love for literature, my professors taught me much about life and myself. That lesson is something I practice—to care beyond the content I teach. I understand that I have these beautiful minds who anticipate learning about the Gettysburg Address, persuasive essays, fragments & run-on's, but what they don't anticipate is a discovery of self and an acquaintance with stories worth telling, their own stories.



Faisal researching on the 'thinking carpet'



Watching TED talk in class



Yusef performing song in class



Graduation night with Sarah

My mode of teaching is my own small way of connecting the people who shaped my story to the ones in the current chapter. Our stories take a course that we don't always anticipate, but I am grateful for how mine is turning out.