On February 6th, the Lewis & Clark community was lucky enough to welcome Robert Hass, a poet of great eloquence, clarity, and force, whose work is rooted in the landscapes of his native Northern California. Widely read and much honored, he is also an essayist, translator, and activist on behalf of poetry, literacy, and the environment. Most notably, in his tenure as United States Poet Laureate Hass spent two years battling American illiteracy, armed with the mantra "imagination makes communities."


Hass has also been awarded the MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship, the National Book Critics’ Circle Award (twice), and the 2014 Wallace Stevens Award. He is a professor of English at UC Berkeley.

Hass began his reading with praise for the late William Stafford, a beloved member of the Lewis & Clark community for many years. After this tribute to L&C's poetic legacy, Hass began his first poem, a tumultuous rollercoaster of language that included widely known phrases such as "Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers" and "She Sells Seashells by the Seashore." Hass recruited the audience to join him in a call and response for this fun exercise in language and sound, quickly creating an inclusive community that set the tone for the rest of the evening.

Hass soon showed his full range, sharing new, unpublished poems that chronicle death in each decade of life, honoring the sudden passing of his nephew. Though drastically different in tone from his opening poem, these poems carry the same precision of language and sound, moving the audience in ways some of us could not have expected.

The evening concluded with a question from Professor Mary Szybist, the Morgan S. Odell Professor in Humanities and Hass's former student at the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. She asked him to speak to his suggestion that “It is good sometimes for poetry to disenchant us.” To this, Hass said that poetry should be used as alternative knowledge, a fitting declaration as it is safe to say that each member of the audience left feeling fundamentally altered in some way.
A Reading with Paul Merchant

On February 26th, Paul Merchant returned to the Lewis & Clark Campus to read from his newest collection, Bread and Caviar (2016).

Merchant, the previous director of the William Stafford Archives here at Watzek Library, introduced his poems by saying, “One writes when one has nothing more to say.” It becomes clear after listening to Merchant’s work, complex reimaginings and translations of ancient poems in Greek, Latin, and Welsh, that he experiences anything but a lack of things to say. His inventions and renditions of canonical poets and thinkers such as Horace or Chladni help readers develop a sense of the imaginative life in the past. Bread and Caviar is a testament to the newness and complexity of Epistles, Merchant injects something new, while remaining loyal to the greats that came before him.

Merchant said (with a mixture of reluctance and pride), that he seems to “spend most of my poetic energy on the living present” (which is produced when we return to the past and insert our own, modern imagination amid the myths and stories that live there).

On March 20th, Professor Jerry Harp sat down with students, faculty, and community members in the campus bookstore for a book warming party. Professor Harp shared poems from his new book, Spirit Under Construction. After reading, Professor Harp answered questions from the audience. He was kind enough to allow us to include one of the poems from this new collection. “History and Sun” is a poem thirty years in the making, thirty years well worth the wait.

Spirit Under Construction: A Book Warming With Professor Jerry Harp

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Creative Writing at LC

Our fiction and poetry writing courses, led by Paul Toutonghi, Don Waters, Mary Szybist, and Jerry Harp, remain as strong as ever. After a semester of hard work and countless revisions, this year’s batch of young writers shared original works with the LC community at the Manor House. In celebration of this accomplishment, students of Mary’s advanced poetry course met at her house for their final period, to share a few last poems and reflect on a rigorous and rewarding semester.

This year, many students submitted original work to various publications. Shani Berenholz’s (’18) poem, “Rereading my journals: a series of thoughts,” was accepted by the Indiana Review online for their undergraduate section, and Jonah Sylvius’s short story, “Trout Fishing with T.S.,” was published in Meat for Tea: The Valley Review.

Approaching the age my father died, I’m learning again to orient the world as I did when I was a child.

Front page, various photos of students, and book cover art.
The Writer’s Voice
The New Yorker’s Fiction
so to lighten the mood, Will listens
dows often feels like being inside a cave,
company. Being indoors with no win-
will be working for eight months in a sailboat warehouse
consider other animals in the poetry and letters of Keats.
Karen Gross along with leading students
on the fall program to London and Glenelg,
highlight of 2017-18 for Karen Gross was
first year out of
Angeles to begin graduate school at
weeks on the water. Will has been writing poems
long days. Will has been writing poems
writing poems to a journal, and coached sailing on the weekends
free time she has been writing, reading,
Sammie Weiss (’17) has been working
and the Social Machine”
the summer of 2017. It subsequently
received the Monroe K. Spears award, which is
given annually by that journal to an essay that is “marked by clarity, economy and felicity of expression and by elegant and discerning inter-
pretation.”
Mary Servert published a series of stories in Pongshokrus magazine and gave readings at Yale, Caltech, and UC Irvine this past spring.

2018 Jerry Baum Award Recipient, Eva Gellman

This year's recipient of the 2018 Jerry Baum Award is Eva Gellman for her paper entitled “The Unknown World: Examining Attempts to Claim the Past as Our Own in Edward P. Jones’s The Known World.” The paper focuses on questions provoked by the nature of the neo-slave narrative and explores how Jones challenges his reader to engage with a fictional representation of the trauma and violence inflicted throughout America’s slave his-
tory. The paper examines the ways in which Jones forces his reader to struggle with a desire to claim and somehow repair the atrocities of the past, while consuming a narrative that prevents us from do-
ing so. Through an in-depth analysis of Alice, one of the slaves on Jones’ fictional plantation, Eva's paper suggests that Jones' work forces the reader to grapple with what it means to be a participant in the consumption of traumatic histories, and consider a world that cannot be "known" to us in the ways we may desperately crave.

The Jerry Baum Award was established in 2007 by the Department of English, alumni, family, and friends in honor of beloved profes-
sor R. Jerold (Jerry) Baum. The recipient is a se-
ior whose senior-seminar paper addresses the relationship between literature and history and is recognized as outstanding by the English faculty. A $250 prize accompanies the award.