

WORD!

PRWR welcomes new volumes of poetry to its bookshelf

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Harrison's *Reck* takes on climate change and disaster

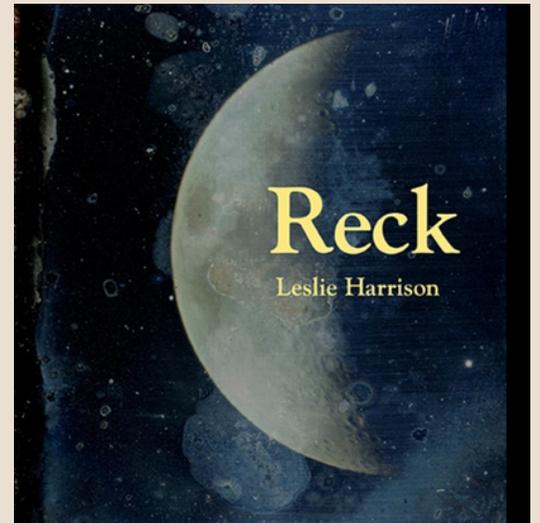
by Daniella Bacigalupa

Through a magical ambience of nature, shipwrecks, space, and some of the planet's little creatures (bees, mice, and cicadas), professor **Leslie Harrison's** newest book—to be released in March 2023—speaks to all who are alarmed by climate change, pandemic, and war.

But it speaks in a voice uniquely Harrison's.

"Leslie has a strong and distinct voice," says Jon Miller, director of the University of Akron Press, the book's publisher. "You could take the name off her poem, and you would know it was one of hers."

The title of Harrison's new book, *Reck*, means to take notice of, pay attention to;



to be alarmed, troubled, distressed by. The book's poems come out of Harrison's many obsessions and interests, which guide her writing. These include the moon, science (i.e. physics), nature, and shipwrecks.

"I regret not taking more physics

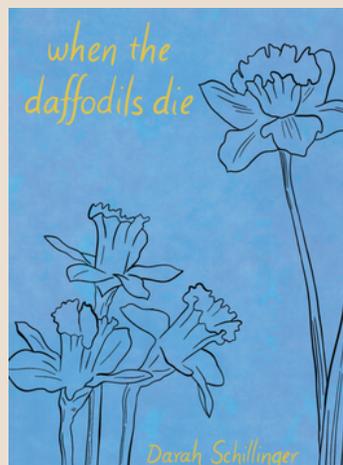
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First-year PRWR student publishes poetry book

by Ariel Crank

First-year PRWR student **Darah Schillinger** started writing stories in middle school. But it wasn't until she took a creative writing class as a freshman at St. Mary's College of Maryland that she discovered how much she enjoyed creating poems.

Several creative writing classes and a publishing internship followed, and now that same publisher has released Schillinger's first chapbook of poems, *When the Daffodils Die*.



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On-stage storytelling leads PRWR alum into new consulting career

by Ariel Crank

"Come with me," her friend said. "I'm nervous about being on stage. Let's both do it."

So begins the story of how **Carol Moore ('09)** became a public speaking coach, communications consultant, and a regular performer on the live storytelling circuit.

That night when all this began, Moore joined her friend at City Winery in Washington, D.C. for a night of storytelling hosted by the district's chapter of The Moth, a nonprofit organization that hosts shows in cities across the United States.

"I was doing my best to be supportive," Moore said, "because she was nervous. It wasn't until I saw the stage and the crowd that the roles reversed; she got super excited, and I got super nervous. All I kept thinking was, whose idea was this?"

Each participant had five minutes to tell a story. Moore's was about guy she had met who had made her feel really special and hopeful—until his girlfriend began texting her. Some 200 people listened.

"I'd never made so many people laugh before," Moore said, "nor had I had that many sets of eyes looking back into mine. Toward the end of the story, no matter who I looked at in the room, that person was connected to me. And I remember thinking what a weird



←
PICTURED:
Carol Moore honed her storytelling chops at events in restaurants and breweries.

Photo courtesy:
Lisa Helfert

and magical gift that moment was."

Moore won third place that night. Since then, she has performed with the Story District troupe at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and at the Lincoln Theater.

She also honed her storytelling chops at events in restaurants and breweries, and recently told tales at the National Storytelling Festival in Tennessee. It's a wonderful feeling, she said, that comes with pursuing a new art form she discovered and fell in love with at an unexpected time of her life. This new art form connects to what she learned about storytelling in her PRWR courses.

For example, as a performing storyteller, Moore must be efficient in word choice and in choosing what to say. But the stage is different than the page. When asked how her work as a storyteller has improved her communication skills, Moore said, "You have to learn how to be distinct. You learn how to connect with people in a short amount of time." Moore, on average, has about

eight to ten minutes to perform. That time limit shapes her story and forces her to consider her content and words. It is also important, Moore said, for a storyteller to decide what kind of experience they want the audience to have and why. People listening need to feel something.

"You don't want to lose people," she said. "It should feel like a journey. Begin with the end in mind, and don't perform for yourself."

So far, Moore has chosen to tell true tales or personal narratives. She aims to have people in the audience feel as if they are at home listening to a friend or having a chat over a cup of coffee.

When she consults with people who want to become better public speakers, she offers tips, such as, "Think about if what you want to say will matter, if it has a purpose. Would you want to hear what you want to say? If you don't have something to say, don't. ... Speak to add value. Authenticity is rare

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On-stage storytelling (cont.)

these days.”

She also encourages her clients to reflect on what makes them relatable, and to focus on why they know what they are talking about, whether they understand it enough to share it, and whether they are prepared to share it in such a way as to make an impact on the audience.

When asked about applicable insights she picked up as a PRWR student, Moore recalled a creative writing workshop with Professor Michael Downs.

We did an exercise,” she said, “in which an author stays silent while receiving feedback for their work by their peers. He taught me how to bleed on the page. I then realized I was using humor to facilitate my vulnerabilities. And I understood that in order to be impactful, you have to open up.”

She has applied this insight to her performance storytelling. She wants her stories to be raw, real, and scary.

Making an impact is part of her coaching philosophy, too, because, she said, in a changing and expanding world, the ability to speak well is more necessary than ever. Her favorite part of coaching people is to witness her clients’ awareness and self-confidence grow. For example: “Verbal clutter, I count it,” Moore said. She records how many times each person says words such as um or like, and to watch that number decrease brings her a great sense of joy.

Marquel Melton (PRWR ’09) signed up as one of Moore’s



← **PICTURED:**
Carol Moore

Photo
courtesy:
Story District

clients. When Melton began working with Moore, he was a public defense attorney. He found what he struggled with most was being concise with his words.

During weekly training sessions with Moore, Melton worked on pronunciation exercises, vocal projection, and slowing down. Now, as a private defense attorney who represents victims of crime, he has found that his communication with judges has improved. Clearer arguments, he said, result in better outcomes for clients.

“There’s always a way to connect with a stranger,” he said, “or someone who you’ve known for a long time. There is always some way to relate.”

When Moore prepares for a show, she tailors her story toward the kind

of audience she knows will be there. “The Moth is a place more for a date night, like happy hour,” she said.

“There are shows that are hosted by organizations that are virtual. In Tennessee, I performed for a very excited crowd—it was its fiftieth anniversary, one of the oldest storytelling festivals. There is one show each year in which they bring out new storytellers.”

Regardless of her audience, Moore gets nervous before performing. “But I’m grateful for being nervous,” she said. “It means you care.”

PICTURED: Moore at the 2022 Women’s Storytelling Festival →

Photo courtesy:
Jessica Robinson



Reck (cont.)

when I was young,” Harrison wrote in an email. “But that is one aspect of poetry I deeply love—that I have some sort of permission to read a lot about whatever interests me.”

“I’m still very interested in climate and disaster (and climate disaster),” said Harrison.

“Shipwrecks, which inform *Reck*, are still a part of that. Physics and astronomy, especially quantum mechanics, are a persistent obsession.”

Her moon fascination led to “Parable of the moon,” a poem in *Reck*, which led to ampersands.

“It might be my favorite poem in the book,” Harrison said. “In part that is because it broke something open for me structurally—it was the first poem I wrote with the ampersands and so it was the beginning of a lot of what this book is doing in some ways.”

The poem, reads in part:

& I am rock unlit dark and I am envy
& the moon has no hands
& you do not care about the moon
& you question my attachments ...

The ampersands are a visual element, but also aural. “Sound is and always will be incredibly important in poetry,” Harrison said. “It is, in some ways, poetry’s defining characteristic. My poems tend to have a lot of real things in them, lots of visual information, and, increasingly, a fair bit of science.”

When she is writing a “real poem” (as opposed to a draft),

Harrison has a strong reaction—sometimes needing to leave her desk and walk away for a while.

“Having a new book coming out is a terrifying thing,” said Harrison. “It is like you’ve poured everything you know and are—all the elements of craft, thought, music, emotion, attention—into a book that took years to write and then everyone gets to read it. You’re standing out there naked and alone and people will or will not read it, will or will not like it, will or will not understand what you’re trying to do.”

Diane Seuss, whose poetry book *frank: sonnets* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2021, contributed a blurb for *Reck*’s back cover. “Many poets observe and enact beauty,” writes Seuss. “Harrison channels beauty’s DNA, its elemental design, and its wreckage, and through the sheer force of imagination, its unlikely resurrection. *Reck* wrecked and reckoned me.”

In *Reck*, beauty and love transcend despair: despair of war,

climate change, and the pandemic. Each poem gives a glimpse into Harrison’s experience during a time in which everyone suffered, and everyone grew—together, but separately.

University of Akron Press will publish *Reck* in hardcover and paperback copies (\$30 for hardcover; \$16.95 for paperback).

Harrison’s *Reck* will launch at the bookfair for the annual conference of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), March 8-11 in Seattle, Washington.

Harrison published her first book, *Displacement*, in 2009, three years before she joined the English department faculty at Towson University. In 2017, Harrison’s second book, *The Book of Endings*, was a finalist for the National Book Award.

“I will be eternally grateful for that,” Harrison said. “But I try not to think about it. My job is to write the next poem and the one after, to bring everything I have and know and can learn to the paper, to write true and maybe beautiful things.”



PICTURED:
Leslie Harrison

Photo by
Joe Portolano

Student publishes poetry chapbook (cont.)

"Daffodils die usually in mid-April," Schillinger says, "so they don't get to really see the blossoming experience. They're usually gone by the time spring is in full bloom. And I think that is kind of the point. They're bringing spring almost... They're showing us spring is coming. But they don't get to see spring."

Schillinger, then a rising college senior, worked in the summer of 2021 as an intern at Yellow Arrow Publishing, a Baltimore based non-profit that provides women the opportunity to publish and share their work.

She proofread and wrote marketing copy for chapbooks. That same summer, Yellow Arrow issued its annual open call for manuscript submissions.

↓ **PICTURED:** Darah Schillinger launched her new book at Baltimore's Bird in Hand Cafe and Bookstore



"At that time, I had only been there for a month," Schillinger says. "I had no experience putting together a poetry book." But she did have a phone full of poems in the Notes app.

She started organizing. She mainly wanted to prove to herself that she could do it, rather than aiming towards publication.

"I found that I write a lot about nature," Schillinger says. "I write a lot about the human body. Feminist things are always a part of my work. So, I realized I could incorporate all of that into one overarching theme."

She selected all of the poems that fit those subjects, laid them out in a document, and chose the strongest.

Schillinger began with fifteen to seventeen poems but the final version of *When the Daffodils Die* consists of thirty-two. For two months she continued to write about what she saw in nature, or what was happening in her life. When she submitted the chapbook, it involved a mix of both older and new poems.

"With poetry," she says, "you have to make sure every word is perfect. Especially with short poems, because you have to make sure that every word is what you mean. A lot of times I would put a word in that I might not have meant, or that didn't quite fit. So then I had to go in and revise."

For example, in her poem, "Marriage", about falling in

love whether with nature or a person, she had originally put for the last line: "rainwater falling / falling / and I fall / again and again / without you."

For her final draft, she revised "without you" to "with or without you."

"Just those two extra words," she says, "and it completely changes the meaning."

When more than a year later Schillinger received the email that Yellow Arrow would publish her manuscript, she was thrilled. Following the release of her chapbook, Schillinger gave a public reading at Baltimore's Bird In Hand Cafe and Bookstore. She picked poems of different qualities to represent the book.

"I tried to get the best variety of all the poems," she said.

Part of why Schillinger switched in college from writing prose to writing poetry is the time involved. Prose begins with a scene, she says, and need to be developed into something longer. Poetry allows her to explore one kernel, image or idea. "I can usually turn that into a poem," she says.

Over time, she has found that her perception of poetry has changed. She initially thought poetry was supposed to be flowery, full of metaphors, broad, and abstract. But by reading poets such as Sappho and bell hooks, she realized that with poetry, a poet is best talking about the big, abstract things using specific details.

"I thought poetry had to be one thing," she says, "and it doesn't."

Dedication to audience drives alum who fosters conversations about community infrastructure

by Ariel Crank

As an undergraduate discovering technical writing, **Anjelique Wilson** believed the field was about creating manuals and forms of instructional writing. When she took a PRWR technical writing course, that impression changed. She learned that technical writing is all about audience.

"I had never given my audience a thought before," Wilson says, "but almost all my (PRWR) classes focused on who I was writing for."

Wilson, a Fall 2022 PRWR graduate, now works as a technical writer for a non-profit involved in public meetings and communication, and what she learned about audience is essential. She spends much of her time helping people understand and talk about infrastructure proposals – complex information that has the potential to change their neighborhoods and lives. In her job with Assedo Consulting,

Wilson creates engagement plans that detail how conversations about planned infrastructure can work in a community. For example, Assedo developed an engagement plan to help people understand and comment on Prince George's County's efforts to improve its transit system. Engagement plans can involve public meetings, surveys, and advertisements among other communication methods.

The company, which is an African-American women-owned business, emphasizes community conversations that are "unpublic": face-to-face meetings where people talk to each other without engineers or government administrators

offering opinions.

These conversations help build trust, Wilson says. "A lot of the communities we serve are the communities that we are a part of."

What she loves most about her role with Assedo is that she serves as someone residents can relate to and talk with. Over many conversations, she can see how her work helps people to shape their communities.

One example involves Assedo's work with an effort to fix a road Baltimoreans have come to call

"A lot of the communities we serve are the communities that we are a part of."

"The Highway To Nowhere."

This mega-road, originally intended to be a highway that would connect two interstates, led to the demolition of homes and thriving businesses owned by Black people.

In its place: a below-grade faux six-lane interstate just over a mile long. In other words: a big ditch for cars tearing like a short scar through a West Baltimore neighborhood and dividing it.

Recently, Baltimore City applied for grant money through the federal Reconnecting Communities Act to fix the Highway to Nowhere, then hired Assedo to create the



↑ **PICTURED:** Anjelique Wilson

engagement plan.

What that means is that Assedo and Wilson are helping residents give input on how best to restore neighborhoods around the Highway to Nowhere. "The work centers (on) these communities being seen and heard," Wilson says.

This work matters, she says, because "underserved communities are used to meaningless efforts." As a writer, she believes she is responsible for how her audience receives information, and how people can apply it. In other words, technical writing has become a way to give people something meaningful.

So she circles back. To offer something meaningful to people, she has to know who they are, what information they want, and what information they need.

That concern for her audience leads to what has become the first question she always asks herself before she writes.

"I ask myself," Wilson says, 'who's going to read this?'"

HUNGRY?

PRWR student learns life lessons through writing case study about catering company

by Daniella Bacigalupa

A Towson University administrator wanted to hire a PRWR student to help write a business case study to be used in college business classes around the country. Mandy Wolfe submitted a writing sample and won the job. But she didn't know about start-ups, business models, or even how to write a case study.

How did she manage?

Instead of shying from the challenge, Wolfe leaned into the unknown and trusted what she had learned about writing.

"The PRWR program prepared me to write anything by instilling in me the idea that I could and should try," says Wolfe. "And more so that I should ask for money before I try. I wouldn't have probably pursued it if I hadn't had taken the Freelance Writing class, which taught me how to write something even if I felt intimidated."

So, to learn the structure of a case study, she read dozens of them. When she needed to learn about the history of HUNGRY—the catering company at the center of the case study—she interviewed the co-founders. As she wrote, she kept her audience in mind and always considered what students would want to learn next.

Wolfe was hired by Patrick McQuown, executive director of Entrepreneurship at Towson, to write the case study on HUNGRY. HUNGRY, a DC-based catering

company founded by two brothers – Shy Pahlevani and Eman Pahlevani – in Washington, D.C. in 2016, was set for a major expansion by March 2020—when the world shut down.

"It was an extinction-level event," McQuown said, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Yet the number



PICTURED:
Mandy Wolfe



Photo courtesy:
McDonogh School website

of HUNGRY's investors doubled between 2020 and 2021."

Like so many other companies during the first few months of the pandemic, HUNGRY needed to pivot – but how? The online platform catered to physical offices, which shut down when people started working

remotely.

This inspired McQuown to seek a writing student, giving each job candidate a prompt to describe a business pivot in a new way. Wolfe wrote:

"It's one thing to pivot when the market is volatile—to make a few changes to save your business. It's another thing to superabound in a crisis, reaching a level of success beyond adapting into thriving. How, exactly, did HUNGRY superabound during a global pandemic? Let's break it down."

That word "superabound" won her the job, and the sample became part of the case study.

If "superabound" seems unfamiliar, that's because it isn't common—any more. A mostly archaic word, superabound seemed fitting to Wolfe, who wanted to resurrect an unused word.

Superabound, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, means "to abound or prevail in great measure or to excess." A quick Google search shows that the word is found in books published between 1850-1920 (e.g. *An Essay on Medieval Economic Teaching* by George O'Brien, originally published in London in 1920.)

In the 23-page case study, titled "HUNGRY and the Pandemic Superabound," Wolfe details the

(continued on p. 8)

HUNGRY? (cont.)



PICTURED:
HUNGRY chefs.

*Photo illustration
courtesy:
Patrick McQuown
and Mandy Wolfe's
case study on
HUNGRY*

many ways that the Pahlevani brothers and CEO Jeff Grass applied business savvy techniques interwoven with ambition and intuition, and pushed HUNGRY to not only survive, but thrive.

Part of its success was in part due to loyal, celebrity investors such as Jay-Z, Usher, and popular comedian and actor Kevin Hart. A focal point in HUNGRY's superabound was a people-centered strategy in which the chef's health, safety, and income stability was a priority. Similarly, HUNGRY delivered free meals to residents who were at high risk for serious complications with COVID.

Wolfe appreciated the experience – from the interactive interviews that allowed her to learn from business experts, the camaraderie with McQuown, and the case study writing learning

curve.

Wolfe says one of the many highlights of this project was when the case study was taken for a test drive in a university business course, and she saw a student take notes in the margin and highlighting.

"I said 'ah ha!'" says Wolfe. "It's a real document to further people's learning!"

Since writing the case study, she says, "I feel much more confident about accepting writing projects that intimidate me. I never would have considered grant writing, for example, but now doors are opening, and I'm not going to close them out of a lack of experience or reluctance to try."

Wolfe, who graduated in Fall 2021, recently started a full-time position at a private school as the Digital and Social Media Manager, where she writes daily as a part of

her job.

Wolfe graduated before finishing the case study, completing it later.

Business students at TU, University of Miami, Brown, and James Madison will learn about HUNGRY using her work.

"I knew nothing about start-ups," says Wolfe, "which it was about, and business models, which it was also about – business-to-consumer versus business-to-business models. And I had to teach myself, and then become the teacher.

Because it's a document written for students to learn at a university level. I was thinking, how can I, someone who knows nothing about business write a business case study as the expert of the topic?

"That's the power of a writer. Because they have to be so knowledgeable on not just writing, but literally everything and anything they decide to write about."

WORD! congratulates PRWR's most recent graduates

Fall 2022 alumni dish out PRWR experiences

Nyla Green

Technical Writing and Information Design

What was your biggest confidence booster while in PRWR?

I took web design my first semester, and I struggled! Coding a website was difficult, and I often found myself comparing my work to that of my classmates. Mine looked terrible in comparison. ... Dr. Lawrence gave me such reassuring feedback and actually took the time to point out things that I had done well. Since that was my first real project in the program, the reassurance made me feel like I actually belonged at a time when I didn't truly feel that way.

Why did you choose PRWR?

I researched a few master's programs, and PRWR was the only one that offered courses that didn't resemble something I'd already taken in undergrad. Professor Downs was also very helpful as he answered every question I had about the program before I submitted my application.

Describe your writing process with a single emoji?



I know it wasn't one of the questions, but I feel like the attached image describes my writing process a bit better. Hopefully it makes you laugh as much as I did :).



Kas Taylor

Creative Writing

What's next for you?

I have a full-time job as a teacher, but I love creative writing, so I'll be spending my free time working on a series of novels that were created as a result of my PRWR classes!

What was your biggest confidence booster while in PRWR?

I discovered that with a bit of planning and preparation, I am really dedicated to following through on completing a project

Why did you choose PRWR?

I've always loved writing creatively. I wanted a master's program that allowed me to focus on creative writing with classes that were in person, not online. PRWR had both of those things!

Describe your writing process with a single emoji?



(continued on p. 10)

Sherri-Lee Nunally

Writing for the Public and Private Sectors



What’s a lesson you value from your time with PRWR?

I have grown a lot by embracing the constructive feedback I have received about my writing from fellow students and professors. In each course, there has been an opportunity to see other viewpoints and

share experiences that are at times relatable or completely new. Writing can be a very personal journey, so I admit to being very sensitive to any criticism. In this program I have always felt respected in this environment and thus become very open to feedback now.

What’s next for you?

I have been an Administrative Assistant II for the Counseling Center at Towson University and just received a promotion as the Administrative Supervisor and Business Manager. I will be in a leadership role, supervising our administrative staff and continuing to manage the office responsibilities, including pursuing grants.

Why did you choose PRWR?

I started working at TU in 2019 and was ecstatic to find a Master’s program dedicated to writing, which has been my true calling since I was a young kid. Even though I was not at a traditional age to enter a master’s program, I thought it was serendipitous to find this program, which is the only one of its kind in the whole state and offered at my own workplace. It was a no brainer to apply.

Describe your writing process with a single emoji?



Anjelique Wilson

Technical Writing and Information Design



What’s next for you?

I'm still working to figure this out myself. We're often expected to have everything figured out after college but in reality, I'm allowing the opportunities I'm presented with to guide me. I know I want to pursue my love for writing in any field I'm employed in.

I'm enjoying my career as a technical writer but I do see myself entering the user experience (UX) tech writing field in the near future. The beautiful thing about writing is the simple fact that you can be a valuable asset at any company you work for. One thing is for certain though, I hope to retire as a creative

writer, which is something I thoroughly enjoy. I'm working on a dystopian novel now and I'm excited to see where it leads me.

Why did you choose PRWR?

I chose PRWR because I knew the program would help me refine my writing skills. Job hunting after undergrad was so challenging, and I wanted to become a more competitive candidate.

Describe your writing process with a single emoji?



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