"ALUMNI, LINDSEY BRODECK, wins first place in Grist’s Imagine 2200 Climate Fiction short story contest!"

Like her character, Talli, Lindsey has far too much to accomplish to leave this planet! We caught up with her last month to get all the details of this latest accomplishment, as well as to discover what life after her MFA looks like!

"I am someone who believes that fiction has the power to create different ways of seeing and sense-making, and in the case of speculative and climate fiction, the power to radically reimagine our future. Recently, I’ve become increasingly drawn to the sub-genres of solarpunk and hopepunk. As their names suggest, there is a growing push for science fiction writers to think beyond dystopias. I want to give readers tangible ideas of what a climate-just future could look like, and create resilient characters living in flawed, but hopeful worlds. Before my MFA, I graduated from Whitman College with a degree in Biology-Environmental Studies. I find a lot of similarities between creative writing and biology. Above all, both disciplines require powerful observation skills.

Back in January, my MFA thesis advisor, T. Geronimo Johnson, alerted me to Grist’s Imagine 2200 short story contest. I was beyond energized and excited to write a story with the criteria they were looking for, and I was especially drawn to the solutions-based nature of the prompt. I’m hopeful that my story “Afterglow” communicates the need to think creatively, and on multiple levels. What can we do right now in our communities? How can we change our relationship with nature, and how does language factor into that relationship? What is our collective vision for a just and regenerative world, and how can we get there?"
Why did you enter the writing life? Why did you pursue your MFA? "Before I was a writer, I was a voracious reader. I was one of those elementary school kids who would read a Harry Potter book in a weekend and then pay the price with a terrible headache the next day. Writing sprung from this love of words quite naturally.

Today, I enjoy all different types of writing, from journalism to nature writing to poetry. However, speculative fiction will always hold a special place in my heart. While at Whitman, I took several creative writing classes that were workshop-style and pretty rigorous. I absolutely loved them. As my time there drew near, a growing part of me wanted to take this passion of mine and give it a real shot. I’m so thankful for OSU-Cascades’ low-residency format, as it allowed me to move back home and work while pursuing my love of creative writing.

What have you been up to since you finished your Master’s? I am currently a speech-language pathology graduate student at the University of Washington. I start my clinical rotations this quarter, which are a mix of pediatric and adult evaluations. I’m really happy that I’ve settled on speech-language pathology, as I am fascinated by communication in all its forms, and have always known that my chosen career path would be one that prioritizes empathy, compassion, and helping others reach their full potential. I’ve been in Seattle for close to a month now. I’m loving living in a city for the first time in my life.

What advice do you have for current grad students? Internalize that writing is rewriting. If you have something still in its first, or second, or third draft, it is not anywhere near being ready yet. But that’s probably not news to anyone reading this, as the professors in our program tell you that right off the bat! Writing is a craft, and it takes dedication. “Afterglow” was only fifteen pages, but I had at least ten drafts of it before submitting it to Grist. As Chris Boucher says, only submit something once it feels bulletproof.

What is your writing practice? My writing practice is both regimented and flexible, as I make an effort to write daily, but not always during the same time or in the same way. It took me a while to realize this, but I’ve learned that I am often most productive late at night. When I’m really pushing to get a project going and generate a lot of pages, I aim to write at least a thousand words a day. As my novel in progress – which grew from my thesis – becomes closer to being finished, I am trying to incorporate as much editing as possible into my writing practice too.

Where do you envision yourself in five years? I see myself working in an elementary school as a speech-language pathologist, and still very much writing. Currently, I am working on a sci-fi novel set in the same universe as “Afterglow.” Hopefully in five years, I will have more short stories published, and my biggest writing dream is to have my novel published as well.

Which writers influenced your writing? For “Afterglow” in particular, I was heavily influenced by Emma Marris’ Rambunctious Garden, Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Braiding Sweetgrass, and Donna Haraway’s Staying with the Trouble. As a whole, my literary universe is one that also includes Octavia Butler, Kazuo Ishiguro, Han Kang, Ursula K. Le Guin, Jeff Vandermeer, Margaret Atwood, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Claire Wahmanholm. Interviewed by Imke Wernicke

"You are correct about one thing. The Heliogen language is certainly difficult to translate into our own. English speakers inherited a language of imperialists, one that objectifies and capitalizes on virtually everything it comes into contact with. The language of the Heliogens is far different. Their language emphasizes the connections between us, not the arbitrary boundaries intended to separate us. Heliogens even have a pronoun for everyone, and everything. And that pronoun is ‘se’. A Heliogen would never say, ‘It is flying through the air,’ because they recognize the similarities we share with other animate beings as being far more important than our differences. ‘Se’ is the ultimate form of respect, expressing the connection we- or should I say ‘se’ - share with all others. This bee, se pollinates our flowers; the flowers, se give us nourishment and beauty. Our words are just as important as our actions. They shape our mind, our way of seeing, our sense-making.”

excerpt from: Afterglow Lindsey Brodeck

For the full story visit: https://grist.org/fix/imagine-2200-climate-fiction-afterglow/
COMMUNITY: Welcome Fall '21 Students

With the way things stand, we have to wait a little longer to actually commune face to face, hence we thought it would benefit the community to introduce the new students, hopefully making them feel welcome. We'll feature current students next month to really bond the community before residency.

Christopher Robb
Passionate, driven, persevering. San Diego, CA Genre: CNF

What are you grateful for? I’m grateful for my health, family, lifetime of adventure, ability to understand the human condition and articulate it through art. The gift of music. Who in the literary world has left an impression and why? Charles Bukowski, Hunter S. Thomson, Steven King, Clive Barker…the list goes on. I could name all the greats of literature and philosophy, but these four helped shape my rebellious spirit. Who is your favorite artist? What do you appreciate about the artist? I’ll go with music for simplicity’s sake. I love Chopin’s Nocturnes. I have tried to learn the piano twice just to imitate him. Do you have a writing practice? If yes, what is it? I have several writing games I play everyday. One of the best ways to get into a writing mood is to make it stress free. I do this by free writing my journals. Nothing is too taboo. If it is and I become uncomfortable, I just delete. Usually, I surprise myself and find the heart of my day. What is your favorite smell? Sound? Tea tree oil is calming and does wonders for my anxiety. Nagchampa incense always takes me back to Pacific Beach. Tibetan bowls, weeping guitars, birds chirping, rain hitting tin, and the guttural sound of Tom Waits’ throat.

Kim Johnson
Personable, gregarious, creative. Eugene OR, Genre: Fiction

Who in the literary world has left an impression and why? James Baldwin has continued to have lasting impressions on me based on his expansive writing and literary activism, from fiction to non-fiction. What are you excited about? I’m excited to dedicate my time in the MFA to learn and grow in my foundation of literature, deep and critical reading skills, and to learn from my classmates and instructors. Who is your favorite artist? What do you appreciate about the artist? Kadir Nelson’s artwork are some of my favorite because of his physical capturing of the varied Black experiences. Lauren Hill from her first solo album. What is your favorite smell? Sound? I love the smell of oranges and the silence of the nighttime when the crickets and small noises can finally be heard. If you could spend the day with someone, anyone dead or alive, who would that be and why? Maya Angelou would be someone I would enjoy meeting with to learn her lessons on life and growing as a writer later in life, pushing boundaries.

Samantha Verini
Curious, thoughtful, indecisive. Berkeley CA, Genre: Fiction

Who in the literary world has left an impression and why? I think every author I’ve read has left some impression on me. Gary Paulsen gave me a sense of adventure, independence, a connection to nature and the wilderness. Neil Gaiman gave me comfort when I felt lost, and reminded me that good people hide in the shadows, too. Mary Oliver made me love poetry and love the idleness of my life. I have bits and pieces of all of them in a big patchwork quilt in my head.
favorite of any that I’ve ever read or seen performed. Second, because I’d love to know more about his life, his inspirations, the people he wrote for and the people he wrote about. Third, to finally put an end to all of those “Was Shakespeare a Real Person” or “Was Shakespeare Actually Multiple People” theories. 

Three things you do everyday: Basically, I need three things to get by: a sense of organization, lots of sunlight, and emotional support. I’m a needy, sentient houseplant.

Susan Hettinger  
Curious, irreverent and optimistic  
Olympia, WA   Genre: Fiction

What are you grateful for?  The beauty of the world, the richness of our lives, the people around me. Also coffee. What are you excited about?  The possibility that I might help formulate the next version of this questionnaire. Who is your favorite artist? What do you appreciate about the artist? A local cellist named Gretchen Yanover. Her music transports the listener to a place of feeling. Three things you do everyday: Drink coffee, three times. Do you have a writing practice? If yes, what is it? Daily. First thing in the morning. With coffee. What is your favorite smell?

Luke Gonzales  
Open-minded, inquisitive, relaxed  
Temecula, CA   Genre: Fiction

What are you excited about? I am excited about the future. After being in a sort of limbo for two years, things are finally starting to take focus and I feel like I am taking steps towards the future that I want, both in my professional and personal life. Who in the literary world has left an impression and why? Rick Riordan. Percy Jackson was the first big book series that grabbed my interest; the combination of the Greek mythos and the modern world was so fascinating and novel to me at the time. He is the one who really sparked my love for the literary world and inspired me to venture into the world of fiction. Three things you do everyday: Play Magic: The Gathering. Enjoy time with my friends. Make progress on my personal reading, currently it’s Words of Radiance by Brandon Sanderson. If you could spend the day with anyone, who would that be and why? Hirohiko Araki. The stories he has weaved in his mangas over the year are definitely a huge inspiration in the way that I think about fiction and served as the gateway to exploring an entire world of Japanese story-telling. I would love to pick his brains and learn about the way he thinks about stories and what actually goes into planning a work that releases so frequently and requires a rigorous work schedule.

Tava Hoag  
Adventurous, weird, curious  
Clinton, MA   Genre: CNF

Who in the literary world has left an impression and why? Joan Didion, because of the way she approaches writing and how there is this level of truth in her observations of this world and herself that I don’t think we see often enough. Do you have a writing practice? If yes, what is it? I try to write 1000 words a day about anything I want. It’s very freeform and I often don’t know where it will go or if it’s even any good, but it gets me practicing skills that I had previously let fall by the wayside. What is your favorite smell? Sound? My favorite smell is pine or fall leaves after it rains. My favorite sound is crunching through those fall leaves. Favorite book, film, or artwork? Favorite fiction book, The Time Traveler’s Wife. Nonfiction, Joan Didion’s Slouching Towards Bethlehem.
Ari explained that her prose piece speaks 'in a silly way to the idea that 'joy is possibly dangerous, a prerequisite for pleasure”.

Below is an excerpt from the project referred to as "Kitchen Scraps”.

"I see the Cookie Monster" by Ari Blatt.

I see the box of opened cookies in the pantry, and I am confident my partner is testing my resolve. Yesterday, I told him the rest are for you. There were three left. Last box we ate much too fast, in large part because I was home a lot and needed those chocolatey sugary morsels. Sometimes I want chocolate—I told Will—and sometimes I need chocolate, and I know the difference. I’m not out of control, you see. This time was different than what happened with the last box, the last three cookies were all his.

But today’s a different day. My morning’s field work went rougher than planned and I find myself homebound on a dreary day with an aching neck. Three cookies sound pretty good. Three cookies might ease the ache. Three cookies might turn the howling wind and ceaseless rain into something much more pleasant.

But I made a promise! I distract myself with teamaking and am feeling pretty cozy and tell myself I just want to know, that’s all, not devour, no, no. So, I peer into the pantry again through the cracks of its’ sliding doors. There is the box, just as I left it (I pat myself on the back). I reach in. I slide off the box’s wrapping, and lo and behold, all there is inside are crumbs. It is a crumbly day indeed. I throw the packaging into the trash receptacle. I am done being tested. I pick up one of two of the last nectarines and have never tasted something so sweet, so juicy.

Untitled Work by Tava Hoag.

This time under the stars was the first memory I sort of had that was my own. The four of us crammed together looking up under a big blanket at the sky above. Our parents left us to our own devices and this is when the magic happened, the moments it would pain me to forget. Moments I have carried with me for so long. We looked up, gasping all together and became enamored. The stars lit up the sky, casting a free show in the night. We scoured the dark for shooting stars desperate to make a wish, for what, I don’t know, perhaps, it was for more nights like this one. The four of us spent what felt like an eternity picking out shapes above. We told stories of daring knights, aliens, ghosts, and pirates. The stars took us everywhere that night and I felt alive.

Looking back, I know this was the first time I realized just how much the natural earth could give to us if we open our minds and pay attention. It gives us night skies full of twinkling stars that young kids dream, hope and wish on in the front of boats. It gives us mystery, wonder, and adventure. We whispered and laughed together bumping elbows, squirming in as the boat drifted along. I fell asleep curled under Dylan’s arm with Alfredo’s head on my ribs thinking time could freeze right here. I wanted to hug this moment, beg it to stay, that’s how good it was. I fought sleep as long as I could, listening to the water lap the sides of the boat, our parents laughing quietly together under the blanket of night. Then the stars blurred together, and I floated away to meet them.
OPEN CALLS

Kitchen Table Quarterly is seeking poetry, creative nonfiction, and artworks for its inaugural issue. We are a journal preoccupied with history: cultural, political, geographical, personal, and how each interacts with the other to mold our experience. Each body holds the histories of the bodies that came before it: mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and on and on and on. We are made of our hometowns, our elementary schools, our health scares, our religions, our ex-partners. We are made of the wars our nations fought in and the ones that drove us from our homelands. We are made of the cake we ate hoping to ease heartbreak and the soup that our fathers brought us for comfort when we were sick. We want an education. Give us your history.

Submit up to five poems, five artworks, or a standalone nonfiction piece of up to 4000 words (essays preferred).
Submission Period: September 1, 2021 - October 31, 2021
https://www.kitchentablequarterly.org/submit

Lucky Jefferson’s digital zine Awake amplifies the experiences and perspectives of Black writers. Theme for Issue 4: Odyssey
Despite being the first Black captain of your crew, you’ve been overlooked for promotions your entire career in the Space Force. One day, you finally receive your chance at your own expedition to the Outer Ring. After launch, your ship experiences technical difficulties and you find yourself plummeting four thousand kilometers off course. After awakening, you realize it’s been a few days since you lost connection with Mission Control. You stumble through iridescent foliage to discover a bustling city ahead of your own time. You are soon discovered and greeted by the inhabitants of this world—inhabitants that reflect your culture.

Now you have two options: figure out a way to return home or explore this planet and begin a new life. What are you going to do?
Poems, essays, flash fiction, creative nonfiction, and art should illustrate your decision.
Accepted authors will receive $15 for each accepted work. Issue 4 Deadline: November 7, 2021
https://luckyjefferson.submittable.com/submit/167135/awake-submission-a-digital-zine-for-black-authors

Eclipse Lit’s submissions are currently open for our second print issue: Recovery. Recovery can mean a lot of things, but for this issue we are focusing on abuse. Mental, physical, emotional or sexual abuse topics are accepted with appropriate trigger warnings. We want to help give a voice back to those who have been silenced by their abusers. Your words are your power. Proceeds of this issue will go to Laurel House, a domestic violence organization fighting to make a change.

We are looking for previously unpublished pieces. Simultaneous submissions are accepted.
Submission Period: October 4, 2021 - November 20, 2021
https://www.eclipselitsubmit.org/

Onyx Publications accepts submissions year-round for our quarterly online magazine, Etched Onyx. We are currently accepting works for our Winter contest edition which will go live in January 2022. Deadline is November 26, 2021. Entry fee $11
Contest awards are:
• First Place: $350
• Second Place: $150
• Third Place $50
• Three Honorable Mentions of $25 each.
All stories in the magazine are narrated and include an author interview in our bi-monthly Story Discovery Podcast. A new podcast show is posted every two weeks after the initial release of the online magazine. Etched Onyx is published in January, April, July, and October. Writers of accepted submission receive a portion of earning from any future anthologies that include their work. Submitted works must be previously unpublished fiction, nonfiction poetry or flash fiction. You may submit up to five (5) poems in one document/submission. All works must be under 6,000 words.
https://www.onyxpublications.com/Submissions
I learned about author Colson Whitehead in an undergraduate lit class. The course reading list was comprised of works that blur the lines between science-fiction, horror, and literature, among them, Whitehead’s Zone One (Doubleday, 2011). The blurb on the back of the book sketches a story about a zombie apocalypse and the quest to rid Manhattan of the undead. But there’s so much more going on in this work, enough to keep a class full of thirty-odd college students engaged in lengthy conversations over several class periods. By the end of the course, I had come to regard Zone One as a sort of tome, a reference guide to good writing that, to this day, sits near my desk, its pages dog-eared so I can easily find my favorite passages, the ones that drip with darkness and humor and that cast an unflinching eye on the nonsensical conventions of society. This book makes me think more deeply about the world and about storytelling.

Zone One is a multi-layered, character-driven narrative that follows the protagonist, known only by the nickname “Mark Spitz,” over the course of three days (wherein the zombie problem continues to grow exponentially). While Spitz describes a Manhattan in the midst of ruin, a larger story emerges through lengthy flashbacks that detail Spitz’s life before and during the early days of the zombie pandemic. Spitz also introduces us to a litany of complex characters, some as warped as the time they live in, some who suffer from PTSD, and others, like himself, who seem to shoulder the impossibility of their situation with sardonic humor and hearty stoicism.

The novel’s tension is tight. The action is described in deliciously gruesome detail, and the commentary on humanity is acerbic and, at times, heartbreaking. Readers may find themselves driven into contemplating the deeper meaning of the work as the author lays bare many ugly truths about our society—mainly racism—but also tribalism and the absurdities of our consumer-driven culture.

Unlike the current pandemic that seems to have only created more division among the human masses, Zone One’s global disaster acts as a great equalizer—a destroyer of infrastructure, a dismantler of group identity and religious and political affiliations because, among the living dead, there is no separation between them and us. There is only flesh and bone and guts.

-Jen Sparano
LOW RES MFA CASCADIANS!

OPEN CALL FOR Y'ALL, to submit, share, contribute.

I’ve been thinking about words a lot lately and what they mean. English is not my first language, so it’s a bit of a sport to research words for greater clarity. I wondered how “submission” and “to submit” relate to sharing one’s writing and discovered that “submission” or “to submit” were first used around 1350. From the Latin, ‘submittere’ meaning “to lower, or to yield.” While the phrase’s origins were unrelated to sharing one’s creative works, I think the concept still applies. Most people are hesitant to submit, surrender or offer something of themselves that might make them vulnerable. An imperfect or new work, for example. I think everyone in this community would agree that writing is an act of vulnerability and requires courage. With all of this in mind, moving forward, there will be no call for submissions, rather a call to share or contribute to our community. After all, practice makes permanence. I will leave you with one last thought, in German, the word ‘submit’ (überreich) can also mean ‘super-rich.’ I’m just saying :) 

So GO ON! Our theme for October is horrific, fantastical, freaky, and uncanny! We hope you’re inspired and ready to contribute. Please share one original piece of writing (any genre) that you’d consider sci-fi, fantasy, horror, freak-lit, or even the uncanny!

GUIDELINES:
OSU-Cascades Low-Res. student, faculty, and alumni original works are welcome. Selected submissions of low-stakes, new, or unfinished works will be featured in the following program newsletter.

Prose: 300 words max (excerpts from larger works welcome)
Poetry: No more than one page double spaced.

Email your work for submission by November 6th, 2021 to: wernicki@oregonstate.edu

sidenote: have you noticed how OSU’s color theme really embraces this autumn season? :)

-- and since you’ve read this far...if you have a suggestion for what we could call this monthly newsletter I would appreciate it. It doesn't feel right just calling it 'newsletter' (shoulders droop)