

► CAITLIN HORROCKS CONTINUED. ALSO, CHECK OUT AN EXCERPT OF HORROCKS' STORY "ZOLARIA" FROM HER COLLECTION *THIS IS NOT YOUR CITY*, INCLUDING A RECORDING OF HER READING.....2

► READ ABOUT ELLIOT DELINE, A TRANSGENDER NOVELIST, AND PREPARE FOR NEXT SEMESTER'S BIG READ WITH EMILY DICKINSON..... 3

# English Department *SUNY Fredonia*

## Caitlin Horrocks visits Fredonia

On November 7th, Caitlin Horrocks, author of *This Is Not Your City* (her debut collection of short fiction), brought Fredonia's 2013 Visiting Writers Series to a close with a craft talk, a reading, and sessions for questions and book signatures. In the weeks leading up to Horrocks' visit, many students had read her collection and discussed the eleven riveting stories in their classes; stories that had included tales of women such as one in her 127th life of reincarnation, one as a mail-order bride voiceless in her new country having not learned the language, and one as a wife to a man who bunches dogs and condemns them to pharma-

ceutical testing facilities. As for those who hadn't read the book beforehand, many picked one up after Horrocks had floored the audience with her recitation of "Zolaria," a 12-page story about a mother fearful of her childhood make-believe monster seeking vengeance on her children because of the sins of her past -- a 12-page story that Horrocks recited from memory! Indeed, students have become accustomed to visiting poets performing their work from memory -- but a fiction writer performing her lengthy story with barely any assistance from the text? It was a shocking, but pleasant surprise.

Continued on page 2



### *In Memory of Thomas Dean (1992-2013)*

SUNY Fredonia mourns the loss of Thom Dean, who passed away on November 2nd. He was an English major with a minor in Creative Writing. He was the Vice President of the Writer's Ring student group, a Student Ambassador with the International Education Office, a member of the Korean International Student Society, and a regular contributor to "The Fredonia Follower," a student-created, online satirical news blog.

On November 20th, the English Department sponsored an event in the Williams Center's Horizon Room where family, friends, students and campus community members came together to listen to a variety of readings, poems and other works in remembrance of Thom.

The Thomas Dean Memorial Fund has been established by the Fredonia College Foundation to honor his memory, which will support future generations of students within the English Department. Those wishing to contribute can contact the foundation at [\(716\) 673-3321](tel:7166733321) or contribute online at <http://go.fredonia.edu/ThomasDeanMemorial>.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to the family and friends of Thom Dean.

# Caitlin Horrocks continued (from page 1)

Horrocks is the fiction editor of *The Kenyon Review*, a well-renowned publication, and an especially prestigious role for such a young writer like Horrocks. She currently teaches writing at Grand Valley State University, and her stories and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Best American Short Stories 2011*, *The PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories 2009*, *The Pushcart Prize XXXV*, *The Paris Review*, *Tin House*, *One Story*, and more.

Horrocks centered her craft talk, part one of two discussions (the second being the reading), around character development in stories; in particular, two “commandments” of character development: (1) “thou shalt kill” and (2) “thou shalt not bear false witness against your characters.” By this she means that the characters of stories must have the capacity to kill some belief or expectation of their own, and that readers should see characters at their worst. In fact, Horrocks noted, “If our characters were always doing the very best they could we would have no stories... fiction... is all

about people making mistakes, not being their best selves, testing wills and inclinations against the boundaries of their lives.” Horrocks explained her methodology and encouraged others to be willing to let characters “come to harm, and to deliver it to them.” Only then will the pressure force a character to consider breaking their own rule.

**“If our characters were always doing the very best they could we would have no stories”**

With these as the main tenants of Horrocks’ process of character construction, one might think her stories would be filled with loud characters and loud moments -- and by this I mean eccentric characters with ostentatious or idiosyncratic voices and plots with shocking twists. Interestingly, many of Horrocks’ stories (in *This Is Not Your City* at any rate) are quite subdued. They are no less riveting and intriguing than “louder” stories (frankly, the quieter narratives are often more nuanced) but they have characters that, while not completely effaced, are seemingly quieter and more muted at times. This adheres to Horrocks’ tendency to write about people that are, as she put it, “held hostage by the circumstances of their lives.”

With a more diminutive tone, the struggles are made all the more genuine and the reader can more adequately empathize with the choices of these troubled souls.

This quality of tone is even more impressive as many of her characters aren’t even likeable people -- good characters, bad people. Actually, it would be a disservice to reduce Horrocks’ characters to so binary of a dichotomy as “good and bad,” where it would be more appropriate to say that Horrocks writes characters that are human. If the reader doesn’t necessarily agree with a character’s decision, they will empathize with them. In “Steal Small,” the narrator is the girlfriend of a man who kidnaps dogs and sells them to pharmaceutical companies. She is distraught by his actions and by her own complicity, but when she gets the opportunity to release a batch of kidnapped dogs, she chooses to walk away and eventually sleeps soundly -- and the reader can’t help but empathize with her decision. In moments that Horrocks’ does employ shocking plot points, she quickly disarms the shocking component so that these plot

points are not the dominant showpieces of the story. If there is a shocking element, it is a necessity to the character or story, it is not used as a crux or what readers will focus on when they finish the story. This helps make Horrocks’ stories all the more authentic, complex, and relevant.

**“fiction... is all about people... testing wills and inclinations against the boundaries of their lives.”**

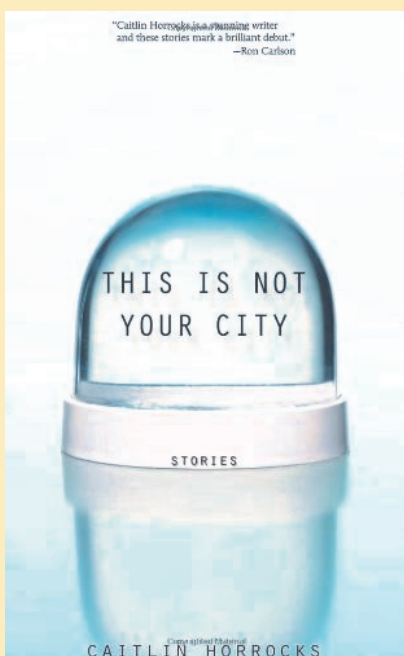
Horrocks had mentioned that the title *This Is Not Your City* was an aesthetic selection as “This Is Not Your City” was the only story with a titular quality in its name. But the title seems more encompassing than that: these are voices from characters at places in their lives filled with uncertainty. Whether they accept or reject their predicaments, with satisfaction or dissatisfaction, it is this attempt at reconciliation that makes the collection so poignant. Witnessing these voices through Horrocks’ performative reading of “Zolaria,” a reading that served as a booming outlet to amplify these quiet voices and tortured minds, provided a great deal of insight to aspiring writers and a fascinating look for those who enjoy stories in general.

By Jack Saxby

## An Excerpt of Caitlin Horrocks’ “Zolaria”

It is July and we are a miraculous age. We have been sprung from our backyards, from the neighborhood park, from the invisible borders that rationed all our other summers. We are old enough to have earned a larger country, and young enough to make it larger still. The woods between Miller and Arborview become haunted. Basilisks patrol the Dairy Queen. We are so beset by dangers we make ourselves rulers over them, and by July we are the princesses of an undiscovered kingdom. We make maps with colored pencils. Here be Dragons, I write across the square of Wellington Park, at the end of our street. Here be Brothers, Hanna writes across her own backyard, and we avoid them both. We are too old for these games, too big for this much imagination, but we are so unpopular that summer that there is no one to care. We have finished the fifth grade alive and we consider that an accomplishment. We have earned this summer.

The neighborhood has been emptying of children. There are bigger houses being built past Wagner, past the edge of the western edge of town. The house here, one story, one bathroom, have become a place to live after children or a place to move away from when they come. This year Hanna-Khoury-eight-houses-down and I are best friends, a thing I haven’t had before and won’t have again until I’m married, both of us twenty-four, an age my family will say is too young and I will be proud years later of proving them wrong...



[Listen to Horrocks read this excerpt by clicking this link](#)

# The novelist Elliott DeLine visits Fredonia

On November 5th, Elliott DeLine, a transgender novelist from Syracuse, New York, visited Fredonia and provided selected readings from both his novella *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* and his novel *Refuse*.

Afterwards, he raffled off a copy of each book and then proceeded to sign peoples' books. Both of DeLine's novels initiate insight into the life of a fictional character, Dean, who identifies as transgender.

DeLine's first novel was published in April 2011 and is called *Refuse*. This novel is based off of the character Dean at the age of 22. DeLine's main website describes the novel

*Refuse* as "an urgent novel that speaks to the alienation of transgender youth and will ring true to many outsiders, over-thinkers, and underachievers. It tackles the pressing concerns of depression, suicide, unemployment, and discrimination, oscillating between irreverent wit and sincere confessions. A man-

ifesto, a transgender narrative, a coming of age tale, a satire, an homage to a musical legend, and a star-crossed love story, *Refuse* is a singular work of transgender fiction."

When asked a question about the dark and cynical resonance of *Refuse*, and its effect on the audience, DeLine responded: "I think that is beneficial to have darker stories so people can know that there isn't anything wrong with them if their lives aren't as positive as the stories that they read in other transgender themed resources."

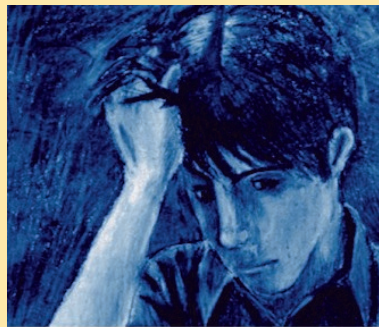
His most recent novella *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* is based off of the early life of the character Dean and

transitions between various parts of his early life and experiences. The chapters that DeLine read from this novella instigated laughter from the audience due to the witty and relatable experiences of the main character of the novella. Elliott DeLine's website describes *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* as "a

prequel to his critically acclaimed novel *Refuse*, Elliott DeLine's second book is about the prevailing myths surrounding bullying and abuse, and the hardships of being young and transgender without a community or a roadmap." DeLine noted that the premise of both of the novels were derived from personal experiences, but the novels were written with fictional characters.

The audience took advantage of the reserved time during the Q-and-A session and asked DeLine various questions including: his experience of self-publishing and if he had any tips for students who are investigating this form of publishing, the purpose and significance of time and pop culture in his novels, how the education system perpetuates and reinforces gender norms and whether or not he feels pigeonholed by being a transgender novelist. This event provided the audience with a chance to become more aware of what transgender people can experience. DeLine provided an accessible and safe environment for the audience to react to and take advantage of learning as much as they could.

— by Hanna Neumann



I Know Very Well  
How I Got My Name  
Elliott DeLine



## Emily Dickinson to be featured in The Big Read this spring

Reed Library is pleased to announce that this year's Big Read will feature the poetry of Emily Dickinson. From a total of nearly 1,800 poems written by Dickinson, SUNY Fredonia's poetry scholars have selected 28 poems that demonstrate her extraordinary ability to capture the essence of humanity through her imaginative, original writing. The Big Read will focus specifically on these poems, and a publication of these works will be available to local schools and public libraries.

Last year's Big Read, featuring Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, was received with enormous success. Reed Library printed the entire book in newspaper format, supplemented with illustrations from SUNY Fredonia's visual arts and new media department. Additionally, schools and public libraries created and participated in a number of events, including an original play written by Fredonia's own Ted Sharon.

Ted Sharon will be contributing to the Big Read once again this year, with another original work featuring a student cast. Reed Library is also thrilled to welcome our keynote speaker, Alex Socarides, whose recent book *Dickinson Unraveled* will inform her keynote talk in April. All Big Read events will take place during March and April 2014, and will be posted on SUNY Fredonia's web page at [www.fredonia.edu/bigread](http://www.fredonia.edu/bigread).

The Big Read is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency that supports and promotes artistic endeavors. For more information about local and nationwide Big Read programs, please visit [www.neabigread.org](http://www.neabigread.org).

— by Sarah Peace

In a recent Sigma Tau Delta Coffee Talk students discussed the process of adapting literature to film. They discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both, successful adaptations, as well as mediums that might be more effective like television or graphic novels.



Interested in joining Sigma Tau Delta next Spring? Recruitment will start towards the end of February