

October 25, 2016

ISBN: 978-1-9405961-4-3

\$17.95, paperback original, French flaps  
5½ x 8½, 184 pages

Distributed to the trade by John F. Blair,  
1-800-222-9796, blairpub.com  
e-book: 978-1-9405961-5-0

National print, radio, and  
online publicity and reviews •  
Author tour: New York, Boston,  
Washington D.C., Philadelphia,  
Pittsburgh, and multiple  
North Carolina cities • Social  
media and author website,  
clarebeams.com •  
Reading group guide  
and Goodreads giveaway

**Lookout Books**, a literary imprint housed in the Department of Creative Writing at UNC Wilmington, made history when its debut book, Edith Pearlman's story collection *Binocular Vision*, won the 2011 National Book Critics Circle Award and was named a finalist for the National Book Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the Story Prize. The press aims to bring attention to works by emerging and historically underrepresented writers, as well as overlooked gems by established authors.



**Lookout Books**

Department of Creative Writing  
UNC Wilmington  
601 South College Road  
Wilmington, North Carolina 28403  
[lookout.org](http://lookout.org)  
Emily Smith: [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu)  
[facebook.com/lookoutbooks](https://www.facebook.com/lookoutbooks)

a haven for books that matter

**“As if, by a rare sort of magic,  
Alice Munro and Shirley Jackson had  
conspired together to imagine a female/  
feminist voice for the twenty-first century  
that is wickedly sharp-eyed, wholly  
unpredictable, and wholly engaging.”**

**—JOYCE CAROL OATES**, author of *The Lost Landscape*

**“A richly imagined and impeccably crafted debut.”**

**—KIRKUS** (starred review)

**“Beams is an expert at providing odd and surprising details  
that make her stories come alive, and the result is a powerful  
collection about what we need from others and, in turn, what  
we can offer others of ourselves.”**

**—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY**

**“Clare Beams’s invigorating stories are brave, inventive, lyrical,  
and just a little bit nasty. Read them now.”**

**—SAM LIPSYTE**, author of *The Fun Parts*

**“An elegant and assured debut, packed with confident  
prose . . . Smart, savage, and compulsively readable.”**

**—MEGAN MAYHEW BERGMAN**, author of *Almost Famous Women*

---

**THE LITERARY, HISTORIC, AND FANTASTIC COLLIDE** in these wise and exquisitely unsettling stories. From bewildering assemblies in school auditoriums to the murky waters of a Depression-era health resort, Beams’s landscapes are tinged with otherworldliness, and her characters’ desires stretch the limits of reality. Ingénues at a boarding school bind themselves to their headmaster’s vision of perfection; a nineteenth-century landscape architect embarks on his first major project, but finds the terrain of class and power intractable; a bride glimpses her husband’s past when she wears his World War II parachute as a gown; and a teacher comes undone in front of her astonished fifth graders.

As they capture the strangeness of being human, the stories in *We Show What We Have Learned* reveal Clare Beams’s rare and capacious imagination—and yet they are grounded in emotional complexity, illuminating the ways we attempt to transform ourselves, our surroundings, and each other.

**CLARE BEAMS’s** stories appear in *One Story*, *n+1*, *Ecotone*, the *Common*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and have received special mention in *The Best American Short Stories 2013* and *The Pushcart Prize XXXV*. She is the recipient of awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, and currently blogs for *Ploughshares*. After teaching high school English for six years in Falmouth, Massachusetts, she moved with her husband and daughter to Pittsburgh, where she teaches creative writing at Saint Vincent College and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. This is her first book.

**Review copies available upon request: [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu).**



Department of Creative Writing  
University of North Carolina Wilmington  
601 South College Road  
Wilmington, NC 28403  
910.962.7401  
lookout.org  
a haven for books that matter

For immediate release  
Available in bookstores October 25, 2016  
*We Show What We Have Learned* by Clare Beams  
Fiction / Short Stories  
5.5 x 8.5, 184 pages  
Paperback original with French flaps, \$17.95  
ISBN: 9781940596143  
Review copies available upon request

## Lookout releases *We Show What We Have Learned*, a story collection by Clare Beams

WILMINGTON, N.C.—On Tuesday, October 25, Lookout Books will release its seventh title, *We Show What We Have Learned*, a debut story collection by Clare Beams, whom Joyce Carol Oates calls “wickedly sharp-eyed, wholly unpredictable . . . a female/feminist voice for the twenty-first century.” As imaginative and compelling as they are emotionally resonant, these stories blend the fantastic, the historic, and the literary to capture the complexities of what it means to be human.

“Clare Beams has a gift for illuminating one character’s most private moment, causing the impact to transform the fates of many,” writes Ursula Hegi, author of *Stones from the River*. “She navigates the tightrope between inner and outer reality. The range of her stories is astonishing—funny and devastating, suspenseful and mesmerizing.”

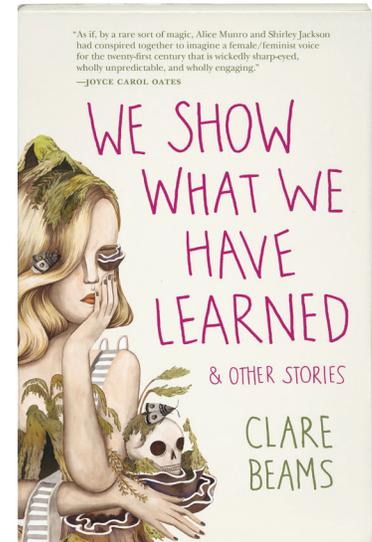
From bewildering assemblies in school auditoriums to the murky waters of a Depression-era health resort, Beams’s landscapes are tinged with otherworldliness, and her characters’ desires stretch the limits of reality to delight, surprise, and provoke: Ingénues at a boarding school bind themselves to their headmaster’s vision of perfection; a nineteenth-century landscape architect embarks on his first major project, but finds the terrain of class and power intractable; and a teacher comes apart, literally, in front of her astonished fifth graders.

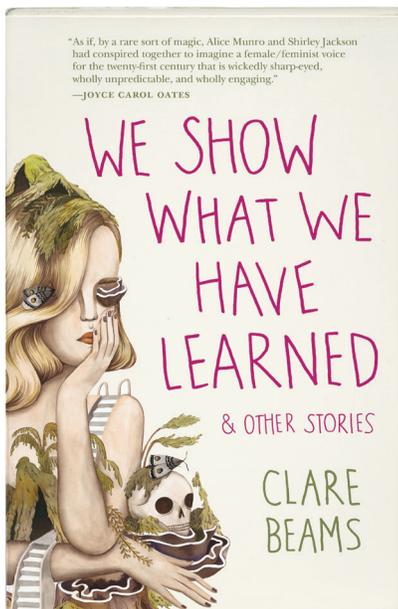
Four of the collection’s nine stories are set in schools, where Beams’s characters navigate the mercurial space between girlhood and adulthood. Of her stories she says, “Their concern with the shaping of selves has a lot to do with my time in the classroom.” Beams, who taught high school English for six years in Falmouth, Massachusetts, now teaches creative writing at St. Vincent College and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. “Many of their settings owe a great deal to my roots in New England,” she continues, “a place where I think the past is never fully past—you’re always stumbling across parts of it.”

The title story was reprinted in *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2011*, and others appear in *Ecotone*, *One Story*, the *Common*, and the *Kenyon Review*. Beams, who studied at Columbia University School of the Arts and Princeton University, has also received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference.

Lookout Books grew out of collaboration between The Publishing Laboratory, UNCW’s teaching press, which offers creative writing students the opportunity to learn the publishing process by apprenticeship, and *Ecotone*, the department’s award-winning national literary magazine. The imprint’s debut title, *Binocular Vision: New & Selected Stories* by Edith Pearlman, won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Matthew Neill Null, author of the imprint’s fall 2015 novel, *Honey from the Lion*, recently won the Joseph Brodsky Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

*We Show What We Have Learned* is distributed to the trade by John F. Blair of Winston-Salem, N.C. Ordering information is available at [blairpub.com](http://blairpub.com). For publicity requests, contact Emily Smith at 910-962-7401 or [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu).





October 25, 2016

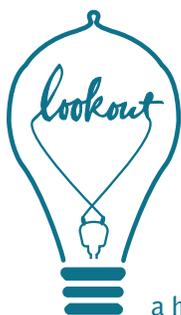
ISBN: 978-1-9405961-4-3

\$17.95, paperback original, French flaps  
5½ x 8½, 184 pages

Distributed to the trade by John F. Blair,  
1-800-222-9796, blairpub.com  
e-book: 978-1-9405961-5-0



CLARE BEAMS's stories appear in *One Story*, *n+1*, *Ecotone*, the *Common*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and have received special mention in *The Best American Short Stories 2013* and *The Pushcart Prize XXXV*. Beams is the recipient of awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and currently blogs for *Ploughshares*. She teaches creative writing at Saint Vincent College and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.



## Lookout Books

Department of Creative Writing  
UNC Wilmington  
601 South College Road  
Wilmington, North Carolina 28403  
[lookout.org](http://lookout.org)  
Emily Smith: [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu)  
[facebook.com/lookoutbooks](https://www.facebook.com/lookoutbooks)

a haven for books that matter

## Selected Praise

“Stunning and brilliant. Clare Beams has a gift for illuminating one character’s most private moment, causing the impact to transform the fates of many. She navigates the tightrope between inner and outer reality. The range of her stories is astonishing—funny and devastating, suspenseful and mesmerizing.”

—URSULA HEGI, author of *Stones from the River*

“These amazingly inventive stories reveal an imagination rare in its command and courage. In gorgeous prose that thrills, instructs, and thoroughly inspires, Clare Beams obliterates the ‘dividing line between possibilities and impossibilities,’ showing how our passions can rule with reality-bending magic.”

—CHANG-RAE LEE, author of *On Such a Full Sea*

“These stories are at once spooky and lush, eerie and deeply felt, ghostly but also vibrantly alive. Clare Beams is a magician, and each of these stories is a muscular, artful haunting.”

—CAITLIN HORROCKS, author of *This is Not Your City*

“A collection of quiet and unnerving stories where everything is just *slightly* off-kilter, where the world feels *just a little* wrong. A teenaged boy becomes infatuated with an older woman at the fraudulent health spa run by his mother; a WWII-era bride grows frantic when her groom insists she make her wedding dress out of the parachute that saved his life. These stories are angry and odd, and I loved them.”

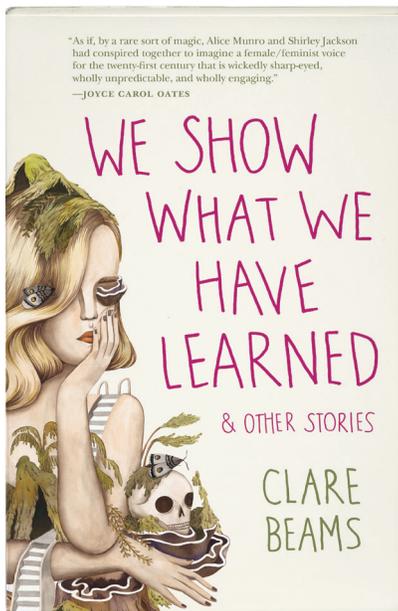
—AMANDA NELSON, *Book Riot*

“The stories in *We Show What We Have Learned* skew from the historic to the fantastic, but at their heart is Clare Beams’s uncanny eye. Whether she’s depicting a plague doctor, school teacher, or a bride in a World War II parachute wedding gown, Beams’s characters are as complex as the situations they navigate. A writer of assured talent, Beams’s debut proves her place in the pantheon of modern short story writers.”

—RACHEL RICHARDSON, *Hub City Bookshop*

“Imagine two great masters of the short story, one realistic and one a bit surreal, but both with a sly sense of humor and a feminist heart, had a book baby. Let’s say . . . Margaret Atwood and Megan Mayhew Bergman? Then they had to go somewhere for an hour or two, so they let Stephen King babysit the book baby. . . . That book baby would grow up to be *We Show What We Have Learned*, and you’d want to marry it. This is a terrible analogy featuring anthropomorphized books, but you get what I mean: Beams’s collection brings to mind some of the greatest and most imaginative contemporary literature yet is wholly original.”

—MARY LAURA PHILPOTT, *Parnassus Books*



October 25, 2016

ISBN: 978-1-9405961-4-3

\$17.95, paperback original, French flaps

5½ x 8½, 184 pages

Distributed to the trade by John F. Blair,

1-800-222-9796, blairpub.com

e-book: 978-1-9405961-5-0



CLARE BEAMS's stories appear in *One Story, n+1, Ecotone, the Common, the Kenyon Review, Hayden's Ferry Review, and The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and have received special mention in *The Best American Short Stories 2013* and *The Pushcart Prize XXXV*. Beams is the recipient of awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and currently blogs for *Ploughshares*. She teaches creative writing at Saint Vincent College and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.



## Lookout Books

Department of Creative Writing  
 UNC Wilmington  
 601 South College Road  
 Wilmington, North Carolina 28403  
[lookout.org](http://lookout.org)  
 Emily Smith: [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu)  
[facebook.com/lookoutbooks](https://www.facebook.com/lookoutbooks)

a haven for books that matter

## From the Author

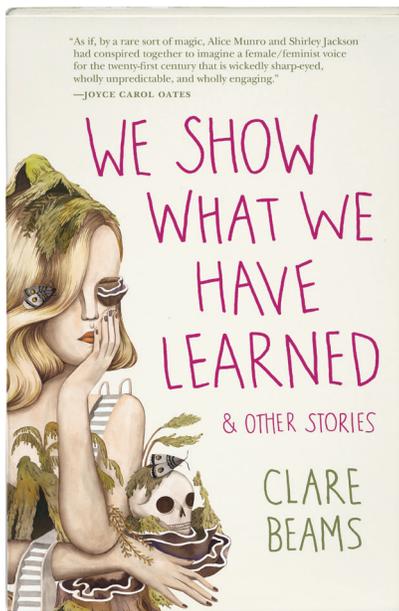
**THE WORLD HAS ALWAYS HAD A WAY OF LOOKING**, to me, like many worlds at once. In the house where I grew up—a sometime boarding house built in the 1730s, in Newtown, Connecticut—it wasn't always clear what century you were in. Old tree trunks supported the ceiling in the dirt-floored basement. The wide, irregular floorboards in the oldest part of the house were made of American chestnut, extinct since the blight of the early 1900s. They creaked and sprung a little underfoot and recorded the different weights of each member of my family, so that from upstairs I could tell with certainty who was walking down there. Back behind the falling-down barn, we unearthed old spirit bottles in beautiful sea glass shades—cobalt, translucent green—from some long-ago person's secret tipping, and once a partial porcelain doll's head, missing its chin and part of one cheek. I couldn't have lived in that house, in that whole historic town, without thinking about all the people who had lived there before me, wondering about the ways my life overlapped with theirs. Time, I learned, was shift.

People, too. When I grew up and began teaching high-school English—in a different old New England town, this one in Massachusetts—I saw students become different people entirely in a year, or in a day. You can see this kind of transformation anywhere, but there's something about teaching that concentrates it and makes it unmissable. Perhaps because everything happens faster to a ninth grader than it does to an adult. Perhaps because the whole project of teaching is to create change, since that's what growth and learning are. As a person whose job it was, suddenly, to shape others, I began to think more about the ways we do that daily, all of us, sometimes in ways we don't intend. Sometimes with results almost too strange to be believed.

On a December morning in 2012, six months pregnant with my daughter, and partway through writing the stories that would become *We Show What We Have Learned*, I was working at my desk when I saw the name of the town where I'd grown up scroll across my news feed. Then again, again. The place where I'd done all that dreamy wandering around in time was now attached to events that seemed impossible, and to faces I still can't quite bear to look at. Newtown had a new layer. My empty-nester parents had moved to New Hampshire a few years earlier, and I didn't know any of the people who were lost. But it was a fraught entry into parenthood—feeling my daughter wriggling inside me while I watched the President stand on the stage of my high school's auditorium to address the community that had lost all those children.

A fraught entry into a fraught business, as it turns out. Wonderful, but fraught too. When my daughter was born a few months later, I couldn't stop touching her skin. Peering into her face. Terror coils inside a love that big.

The stories in *We Show What We Have Learned* aren't about these parts of my life, not exactly. I'm not really that kind of writer—I write fiction for the work and the joy of inventing things, and because while I love my life, I love escaping it too. In my writing, I'm often chasing the breathlessness I had when I read in childhood, when stories and words felt limitless, when all the magic of an impossible turn could come any minute. I think that's why these stories span so many different eras, and why the characters in them confront such extremes, such strangeness. These extremes and strangeness are not my life—but then they aren't quite separate from it either. They're its shadows, stretched and distorted. *We Show What We Have Learned* would be at home in the classroom where I taught English, in the room where my daughter slept as a baby, on the Newtown Main Street that the news cameras made famous, in the house where I grew up. In ways I never planned, it takes its life from the lives I have lived in these places.



**October 25, 2016**

**ISBN: 978-1-9405961-4-3**

**\$17.95, paperback original, French flaps**

**5½ x 8½, 184 pages**

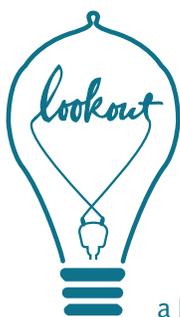
**Distributed to the trade by John F. Blair,**

**1-800-222-9796, blairpub.com**

**e-book: 978-1-9405961-5-0**



**CLARE BEAMS**'s stories appear in *One Story*, *n+1*, *Ecotone*, the *Common*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and have received special mention in *The Best American Short Stories 2013* and *The Pushcart Prize XXXV*. Beams is the recipient of awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and currently blogs for *Ploughshares*. She teaches creative writing at Saint Vincent College and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.



## Lookout Books

Department of Creative Writing  
 UNC Wilmington  
 601 South College Road  
 Wilmington, North Carolina 28403  
[lookout.org](http://lookout.org)  
 Emily Smith: [smithel@uncw.edu](mailto:smithel@uncw.edu)  
[facebook.com/lookoutbooks](https://www.facebook.com/lookoutbooks)

a haven for books that matter

## Media angles and questions

Four of the nine stories in this collection take place in schools, “Hourglass” and “The Renaissance Person Tournament” being two examples. Why do you think you’re drawn to writing about teachers and students? What makes the classroom such a rich setting for fiction? What fascinates you about the liminal space between adolescence and adulthood?

You grew up in Newtown, Connecticut, and one of these stories explores the aftermath of a school shooting. How did your relationship to Sandy Hook inform the story “All the Keys to All the Doors”? Why did you want to explore school violence through fiction?

The stories range from the wildly fantastic to the nearly realistic, but all of them have strangeness at their core. How do you account for the strange turns some of these stories take? What do the surreal elements accomplish that more realistic fiction cannot?

The prolific author Joyce Carol Oates has called you “a female/feminist voice for the twenty-first century.” How do you react to that charge? Do you see this as a feminist book? In what way? What has been your experience of writing and publishing as a woman writer?

Several stories explore women’s bodies—transformed or manipulated in unexpected ways: a headmaster literally shapes his female students, a grandmother seems to be growing younger, a teacher begins to shed her body parts. Why is writing about the female body important to you?

A few of these stories feature mothers, women about to be mothers, or women wondering if they’re capable of motherhood. How has being a mother affected your writing?

The stories in this book are set in a range of time periods and locations—from the 1600s to the present day. “The Saltwater Cure” takes place in Massachusetts during the Depression, and “Ailments” follows a family and how germ theory shapes their communion rituals outside of London during the Plague. What role do history and place play in your writing? What kind of research was involved?

Lookout Books, the literary imprint of the Department of Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, is the publisher of *We Show What We Have Learned*. According to their mission statement, they seek out emerging and historically underrepresented voices. Can you talk about the experience of working with a small, independent press and what has made them uniquely suited to publish this book?

Your book tour will take you to some under-resourced schools in North Carolina as part of a grant from South Arts. What will you tell students about the arts, about the importance of writing, or about the role of writers?