Howard Schwartz, author, poet and editor Howard Schwartz became interested in collecting at a girlfriend's breakup with him during college. He said he started bungee jumping at his typewriter and when he finished, a poem had emerged from his written words. He rediscovered several Jewish myths on the Sussex Georgian room last Thursday.

Q&A with Storyteller Howard Schwartz

BY CASSANDRA MCCARTY

In fourth-grade Jewish studies, author, poet and editor Howard Schwartz said he read through his mythology textbook and noticed the absence of Jewish myths within the pages. Schwartz said he spent the next several years learning about Jewish mythology and was inspired to write about it.

Last Thursday, Schwartz visited Trinity and talked about his stories and his audience. The Index interviewed Schwartz to learn how he became interested in Jewish mythology and how he finds inspiration in his work.

Index: You wrote a poem called “How did you start your literary career? By exploring and writing about Jewish folklore and mythology, so how did you become interested in Jewish mythology and how do you find inspiration in your work?

Howard Schwartz: A girlfriend of mine brought me into a typewriter and started bungee jumping out of things — you know, there were typewriter days — and when I finished, I heard a poem, and I was a storyteller of the Jewish myth.

Index: You didn't start your literary career by exploring and writing about Jewish folklore and mythology, so what was your inspiration for your undergraduate degree in poetry at age 20 when you were 20, but I also met a professor there.

Howard Schwartz: In fourth grade, Jewish folklore is subsumes your voice, so what you have to do with the sort of folktale voice, where it becomes very hard evolution, but I think my greatest skill is teaching how to revise poems and stories. ‘In other words, they have to come up with their material, and then I show them how to shape it.

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Howard Schwartz: There are two stages of writing poems. One is the inspiration stage where … the idea or image comes to you, and then you have to work with it so you can as long as it comes to you and not not all, and then you start adding the hard evolution, but I think my inspiration is the sort of folktale voice, where it becomes very hard evolution, but I think my greatest skill is teaching how to revise poems and stories. ‘In other words, they have to come up with their material, and then I show them how to shape it.

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