

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM

*2021 Newsletter*



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**Dr. Daniel P. O'Connor**  
Interim Dean, CLASS

**Dr. Ann Christensen**  
English Department Chair

**Alexander Parsons**  
CWP Director

**Giuseppe Taurino**  
Associate Director

# *From the Director...*



Fellow Writers,

To state the obvious, this note comes to you after a year in which we've all been weathered by the pandemic's glare. I'm definitely grayer and in need of a good coat of varnish to reclaim a little luster. Maybe preceded by exfoliation with 100-grit sandpaper. I hope that you sit reading this having been spared too much trauma and loss and, perhaps, having found some emotional refuge and artistic growth in those quiet and solitary patterns and routines we all adopted.

In the CWP we tried to look for opportunity within the abrupt constraints visited on us. Because, I mean, is there really a choice? We did well at adopting a virtual existence, no matter the awkwardly syncopated conversations and our Luddite leanings. In watching our faculty and students and working through admissions and recruitment, I thought about the nature of the CWP's character and how much of it we owe to the writers who pass through here and, in fact, all of those who have helped build our culture. People have a way of lingering, part of the patina of memory and impression that informs the culture of those who remain. And you could argue that it's when a culture is under stress that it reveals its core identity, which is what I saw this year.

In this light, I want to give credit to our students—particularly those in their first year—for their ebullient and durable character. We had students who were or became Slack™-meisters, surfed and starred in virtual readings and discussions, hop-scotched the hybrid/flex/synch/asynch platforms, won national writing awards, published books, and in general showcased the humor that is so symbolic when resisting that swarm of looming social, cultural, environmental, and logistical bums against which we array ourselves. In the midst of this they and many others volunteered to talk to new recruits. This generosity of spirit and enthusiasm was moving and inspiring and played a large part in the makeup of our incoming class, who reflect these same qualities. I'm pleased to say that we'll welcome 20 talented, humor-advantaged and fully funded writers, a financial high-water mark in the history of the CWP; they are also our most diverse class and testament to the fact that we are firmly ensconced as a top tier PhD and



MFA Program and fortunate to enjoy a reputation that reflects our culture of inclusion and good vibes.

We will continue to need said vibes and humor, as anyone in Houston who experienced the power outages, ruptured pipes, ceiling icicles, and Cancun-centric memes will attest. To this end, in the wake of the latest Gulf Coast weather-related disaster, the faculty and friends of the CWP established a standing student emergency fund to provide quick grants when, not-so-hypothetically, your plumbing explodes and you are trying to study for your exams while sitting in a car in a strange parking lot attempting to hook a decent Wi-Fi signal.

In more program-specific weather patterns, we welcome the beneficial and moderating arrival of Brenda Peynado, her shiny new kiddo, Soledad Anais, and writer, partner and mensch Micah Dean Hicks. Brenda joins the fiction faculty and will soon teach us the wonders of VR and the Oculus. I'm not sure what this means for the CWP, though it may involve light sabers at future faculty meetings. Brenda previously taught at Central Florida State and earned her PhD at the University of Cincinnati and her MFA at FSU. Her first collection, *The Rock Eaters* (Penguin Books, 2021) is receiving wonderful reviews, though *Bon Appetite* has yet to weigh in.

On the subject of faculty, books, and awards, it seems to be monsoon season. We were delighted to see the National Book Critics Circle award Francine Harris their 2021 NBCC Award for Poetry for her collection *Here is the Sweet Hand* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020). The Guggenheim Foundation named Roberto Tejada a 2021 fellow, in support of the completion of his new collection *Carbonate of Copper*, while Erin Belieu published her fifth poetry collection, *Come-Hither Honeycomb* (Copper Canyon Press, 2021) and her work was profiled in *The New Yorker*. Kevin Pruffer was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters and published *The Art of Fiction: Poems* (Four Way Books, 2021), while Amazon designated Chitra Divakaruni an Author of the Month. Happily, alum James Davis May

(MFA '07) was named a 2021 NEA Fellow, as was current PhD candidate Joy Priest ('25), while alum Tony Diaz (MFA '94) and undergrad alum Bryan Washington were inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters alongside Kevin.

In anticipation of in-person classes, Roy G. Cullen is being nattily outfitted with everything from new windows and drywall and roof to, yes!, new carpeting. No longer will Donald Barthelme's wryly distraught memo apply: "The Committee notes that no world-class Department can be expected to function adequately while to-ing and fro-ing over said carpet, whose blotches, stains, irruptions, and rips tend to induce depression and gloomy thoughts." We shall henceforth freely to and fro, light of heart and deeply appreciative of the gifts from our supporters that made both the renovation—and even purchase of furniture—a reality. This is a shared space that is testament to broad and deep community support, from which we will host readings, panels, symposia, colloquia and other gatherings with fancy Latinate designations. I like to think that those whom we've lost—Adam Zagajewski, Karl Killian, Glenn Cambor, Tony Hoagland, Stanley Plumly, Marion Barthelme, and Polly Koch, to name a few—would be pleased to see this space and the health of the CWP as an ongoing testament to all that they contributed, as an expression of so much of what they held dear, one that endures. This is, of course, a small comfort in the face of too much death, but that doesn't make it negligible. I would also like to thank the inestimable Cate Marvin (MFA '97) and Christopher Bakken (PhD '99) for their work establishing a memorial page for Adam Zagajewski where those he inspired can contribute: <https://www.rememberingaz.org/remembering-adam-zagajewski>. Thank you, Cate & Chris.

No doubt we're moving into another year of uncertain weather patterns, but we'll do so with the optimism, cheer, and strength that we give to each other, inspired by those who came before us, renewed by those who will carry on after.

Wish great wishes for the coming year,  
Alex

# *Program News*

## Sustaining the Writing Life

Made possible through a generous anonymous gift to the Creative Writing Program, and our community partners, the Sustaining the Writing Life program was created to provide meaningful professionalization that would help to support our graduate writers' literary careers, provide real benefits for our community partners, and build out our program with useful, non-teaching-related fellowships.

During the 2020-21 academic year we partnered with three organizations: 9th Wonder, Inprint, and Writers in the Schools (WITS) Houston. In addition to the invaluable professional development our SWL fellows received working with each organization, these partnerships freed up additional teaching assistantships (SWL fellows exchange their University TAs for equivalent, fellowship-based funds) used to recruit terrific students we would've otherwise lost to competitive programs.

In addition to 9th Wonder, Inprint, and Writers in the Schools (WITS) Houston, this year we welcome our newest partner, Grackle and Grackle, which was founded by UHCWP alums Miah Arnold and Raj Mankad. We also remain in conversations with additional partners for next year and beyond. We are excited for the opportunities these partnerships have already delivered and look forward to the brilliant possibilities on the rise.

Please take a few moments to read about last year's fellows' experiences. If you're interested in learning more about, or contributing to, the Sustaining the Writing Life program, please reach out to us at [cwp@uh.edu](mailto:cwp@uh.edu).

Looking forward.  
Giuseppe

For the past two years, I've worked as a creative and copywriting intern at 9thWonder, a marketing agency with an office in Houston. Over the course of my internship, I wrote the advertising copy that appeared in corporate blog posts, newsletters, radio spots, magazine ads, and direct mailers. I've worked with a variety of different local, national, and international brands. I've also had several truly wonderful mentors that took the time to teach me about how to write effective advertisement materials.

While I'm grateful for all of this professional experience, I think what made my internship so invaluable was that it provided me with a testing ground for the kind of life I'd like to have after graduation. Before joining UH's Creative Writing Program, I worked as an adjunct instructor for two years after wrapping up my master's program in English lit. I loved (and love) teaching, but adjuncting simply wasn't a sustainable way for me to make a living. On top of their being little room for professional advancement, hours of grading left me so mentally exhausted that I had little energy left to do anything besides make dinner and watch *The Golden Girls*—I certainly didn't have the juice needed to write. In that way, my fellowship at 9th Wonder has lived up to its title—it has provided me with a template for sustaining the writing life.

Through my internship at 9thWonder, I've found a job that feels fulfilling without consuming my entire life. After graduation, I'll be working as a copywriter full-time, but I'm also hoping to teach community creative writing workshops or tutor English through the local library. And, after work, I'll be finishing up my novel draft.



Hunter Gilson

Like many of us, I've spent a lot of time on dating apps in the past year messaging people who live just a few miles away from me, but who I will likely never meet. Conversations with strangers on the internet, in theory, should have unlimited potential for variety. But most tend to go in the same direction.

*What kind of music do you listen to?*

*Do you have any pets?*

*What do you do for work?*

*I'm a writer, I sometimes say. And then, because it's hard to explain what that means to people who aren't artists themselves, I'll add, I work with an organization called Writers in the Schools.*

You work with WITS? I did WITS! And, suddenly, people in their twenties and thirties are telling me, in detail, about the WITS writer who came to their classrooms in 5th grade. They're ten years old again, remembering the haiku they wrote, or the story, or the play. Maybe it's just the excitement of a connection, however slender. But I like to think it's something deeper. Writing, in many ways, is fundamentally about play. Risk, experimentation, failure, and success. A WITS program provides children with space to play and create what, for the most part, is lacking in the rest of their academic lives. And the benefits provided by that space of artistic play are powerful enough for adults to immediately recall it twenty years later.

I interviewed for the Sustaining the Writing Life Fellowship at Writers in the Schools because I wanted to learn about the operations of an arts nonprofit. Over the nine months of my fellowship, I have gained invaluable professional experience. During my time in Programs, I have learned how WITS forms and maintains partnerships with schools and community organizations, interviews and trains writers, and delivers its unique programming to students across the city. I have met writers, teachers, students, and nonprofit professionals committed to accessible arts education. Above all, I have gained a much broader and more defined sense of why such work matters.

Most WITS students will not become writers, although I hope that many of them will. Some may never even write creatively again after their WITS program is complete. But, at least in my view, the writing isn't the point. It's the permission. The permission to play, daydream, experiment, and imagine. Both children and artists can tell you that creation brings a unique (but not always pleasant or pretty) satisfaction. Encouraging and building that crucial part of the self in a WITS classroom strengthens it against life's competing demands. Working with WITS over the course of my fellowship has opened many doors for me professionally. But encountering first-hand the full scope of WITS programming has also changed the way I think about both the practice and the pedagogy of creative writing. I would highly recommend this fellowship opportunity to any and all writers interested in the impact of our discipline outside of the university.



Sonia Hamer



I assumed that if I was lucky enough to get into an MFA program, I'd be spending my years in the program teaching in a university environment. I'm a writer who is not interested in pursuing a university teaching career, but I assumed teaching would be the only available funding option. When making my MFA decision, I had a conversation with a then-current UH student who told me about the CWP's new Sustaining the Writing Life Fellowships, assistantships providing participating UH students access to funding and professional development via alternative, non-teaching positions in the broader Houston literary and creative communities. None of the other schools I was deciding between had any similar funding opportunities whatsoever. I accepted UH's offer of admission later that same day.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, I have been the UH CWP fellow at Inprint. It goes without saying that this has been a year where life and work have looked different than ever before, and while the impact to Inprint's typical operations was no exception, I believe I gained that much more experience by joining the Inprint team at such an unprecedented time. I started my fellowship virtually in August 2020, about two weeks before Inprint's 2020-2021 programming season was set to kick off. The tail end of the prior season had of course been impacted by the pandemic as well, but this new season was the first in which all community programs had been designed to take place entirely online for the duration of the year. That is, beloved, long-standing programs were launching in new and untested ways, and from day one, in this context, the team at Inprint fully welcomed my input and involvement in areas of work far beyond the logistical and administrative scope of traditional non-profit internship roles.

Throughout my time at Inprint this year, I was able to support the full suite of Inprint's community programs, including the 40th anniversary season of the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, the Inprint Cool Brains! series for young readers, Inprint's full roster of community Creative Writing Workshops, Inprint's 2021 Poets & Writers Ball, and much more. I gained invaluable, firsthand exposure to the ins and outs of nonprofit development, communications, marketing, and general organization management. I got involved wherever was needed, from packaging hundreds of books for season subscribers, to developing tracking and analytics mechanisms for a nationally expanding virtual Inprint audience, to working with members of Inprint's Board and Executive Committee to strategize about the donor experience components of a virtual gala event—and many projects in between.

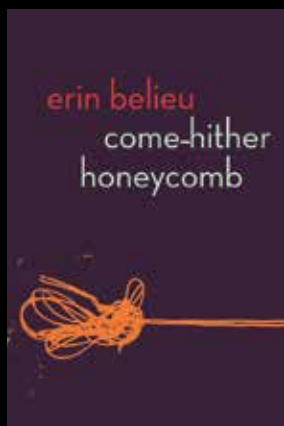
I am pleased to say that I will be continuing in the UH CWP Inprint fellowship role for the 2021-2022 academic year. As Houston and the broader country (and world) begin to return to non-virtual life, I look forward to the chance to be part of the Inprint team during an exciting, more "traditional" season of in-person community programs and events. That being said, I'm so grateful for the learning and development opportunities that Inprint and this strange, distanced working year gave me. Being able to observe and participate in the process by which a respected nonprofit like Inprint responded to this pandemic year with agility, creativity and resilience will be a professional experience I will never forget. I anticipate drawing on the immeasurable learnings from that experience for years to come.



*Katie Milligan*

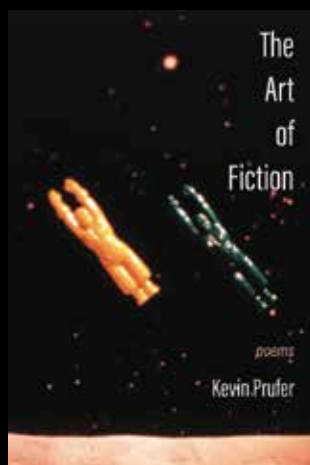
# Faculty News

Erin Belieu published *Come-Hither Honeycomb*, her fifth collection of poetry with Copper Canyon Press, in Feb 2021. Poems from the collection appeared in places such as the Academy of American Poets' *Poem-A-Day*, the *New York Times*, *Narrative*, and the *Kenyon Review*. *Come-Hither Honeycomb* also received a long form review in the *New Yorker* and a starred review from *Library Journal*. She's presently at work co-editing an anthology (TBA shortly) with the poet Carl Phillips and is at work on a collection of craft essays to be published by Copper Canyon in 2024.

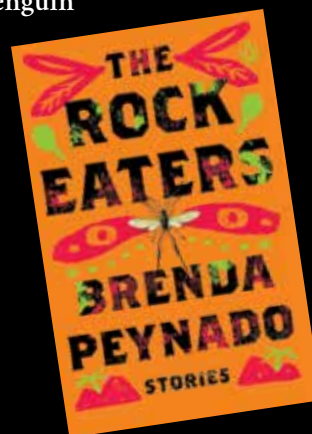


Francine J. Harris' *Here is the Sweet Hand* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) won the 2021 National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry.

This past year Audrey Colombe (PhD, 1999 and currently an associate professor on CWP faculty) worked online like everyone else, suddenly and completely, also accompanying the CWP graduate students learning to teach online. (So many teaching portals, so much deteriorating eyesight.) Still, wonderful work was done—humbling to see, honestly. (The undergrads in creative writing at UH are more impressive every year; recommendations went out last winter for MFA applications; many students were accepted by nationally renowned programs.) There is also her book coming out later this year, *Creating an Undergraduate Literary Journal: A Guide for Editors and Advisors*, (Bloomsbury Academic, London) which is rather self-explanatory and comes from years of working with undergrad editors, most recently at Glass Mountain. Next year, '21-'22, is sabbatical time, i.e. writing time.



Brenda Peynado's debut, *The Rock Eaters*, a genre-bending short story collection featuring angels perched on rooftops, basement ghosts teaching love, alien arrivals, Latin American superheroes, and Latina girlhood was published in May with Penguin Books.



Kevin Prufer's got a new book called *The Art of Fiction: Poems* (Four Way Books). It's just out and has gotten great advance reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal* (Editors' Pick), and *The Paris Review* (also an Editors' Pick). He's also got a little letterpress chapbook coming out this summer from Sting & Honey Press. It's called *I Had Wanted a Happier Ending*. And the Spanish edition of his 2008 book *National Anthem* was just published in Madrid by Bartleby Editores, translated by Luis Ingelmo with a Foreword by Pablo Luque Pinilla. They're calling the book *Himno Nacional*. Very new poems are showing up here and there, in *American Poetry Review*, *New England Review*, *Southern Review*, *Adroit Journal*, among others.

Bayou Greenways Park recently opened. North of Interstate 10 and west of Studewood, it is part of a larger 172-mile project with parks around Brays, Buffalo, Greens, Halls, Hunting, Sims and White Oak Bayous as well as the West Fork of the San Jacinto River. The Greenways section features Martha Serpas' poem "Category Five." (The poem appears in parts on metal signs throughout the walk.) Cheryl Beckett, professor in graphics art here at UH, created the installation.

You can read about the project here: <https://thedailyhoustonnews.com/bayou-greenways-park-opens-this-week-as-part-of-the-master-plan-for-greening-houston/>



Thanks to the imagination of Cristina Paoli, one of Mexico's premier book designers, Roberto Tejada's forthcoming collection, *Why the Assembly Disbanded*, appeared in 2020 from Periferia in Mexico City as a limited-edition artist's book composed of four separate but interconnected works housed in a fitted encasing: a volume of poems with a companion photo essay assembled by Tejada from black and white archival images, and booklets with color photographs by Connie Samaras (*Edge of Twilight*) and by Rubén Ortiz Torres (*The Past Is Not What It Used to Be*). A copy is housed at University of Houston Libraries Special Collections, and a standard bound edition of the book will be published by Fordham University Press in spring 2022.

He has taken part in several online conversations, lectures, and readings: with writer David Levi Strauss for FotoFest Houston Creative Conversations/digital ("Co-Illusion: Dispatches from the End of Communication"); with photo historian Elizabeth Ferrer at the Whitney Museum of American Art ("Latinx Photography in the United States"); in Reyerson University's Distinguished Speaker Series ("Overturning: A Latinx Arts of Refutation"); with Miami-based multimedia artist TYPO for Color Talks (Public Art of the University of Houston System); with Anna Deeny Morales at the University of California at Berkeley (Holloway Reading Series/EL GRUPO); and with poet Carla Faesler (*Retrofuturismos*, Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City).

Tejada is a 2021 recipient of The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Poetry.



photo credit - Ben Corda

Peter Turchi completed a new book of essays, tentatively titled (*Don't*) *Stop Me if You've Heard This Before*. He also wrote the liner notes for *Creosote Flats*, a Sonoran-desert inspired album by his son, Reed Turchi, which features a portfolio of photographs by Mark Klett.



He was featured on NASA aerospace engineer Ryan Mcgranaghan's podcast "[Origins: Explorations of Thought-leader's Pivotal Moments.](#)"

# Student News

Nick Almeida's (PhD, Fiction) *Masterplans*, a chapbook of stories, will be out in the fall of 2021 as judge Steve Almond's selection for the grand prize of the *The Master's Review's* inaugural Chapbook Contest in fiction. His essay, "A Brief History of Stars," is forthcoming in *Pleiades*.



Pritha Bhattacharyya (PhD, Fiction) has a story forthcoming in *Ecotone Magazine* and received a Tennessee Williams scholarship to attend the 2021 Sewanee Writers' Conference as a fiction scholar.



Ryan Bollenbach's (PhD, Poetry) chapbook manuscript *letters from a strange land* was a semi-finalist for the 2021 Tomáš Šalamun Prize. He has poems forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly* and *Inscape*, and two of his poems were recently discussed in episode 89 of *Painted Bride Quarterly's* podcast *Slush Pile*. Additionally, his poetry has recently been featured in *Tarpaulin Sky Magazine* and *Sink Review*.

Christopher Miguel Flakus's (MFA, Fiction) short story, "The Jazz Somnambulist," which was recently published in *New Square Magazine* (out of Dublin, the journal of the Sancho Panza Literary Society) was nominated for a Pushcart. In addition, his short story "Dead Mall" won the Sterling Clack-Clack prize in Fiction.

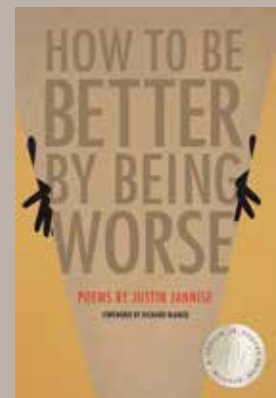


Joshua Gottlieb-Miller (PhD, Poetry) recently defended his dissertation, *Dybbuk Americana*, a manuscript of documentary poetry about Jewish identity in America. Multimedia work, including video, audio, and text, are forthcoming from *Grist* and *MAYDAY Magazine*, and hybrid writing from *Bat City Review* and *Talking Writing*. Most recently, his poetry has been published in *Rattle*, *Berru Poetry Series*, and *Brooklyn Rail*.



KT Herr (PhD, Poetry) is delighted to join the board at Four Way Books. They have recently published reviews with *Tinderbox Poetry* and *The Rupture*, and have two poems forthcoming in the fall 2021 issue of *Anomaly*.

Justin Jannise's (PhD, Poetry) first book of poems, *How to Be Better by Being Worse*, was published by BOA Editions in April 2021. His manuscript was selected by Richard Blanco in 2020 as the winner of the 19th annual A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. Jannise was also the recipient of the 2021 Glasstire Greater Houston Art Writing Prize, for his essay, "True North: How Heights Boulevard's Sculpture Installation Saved Me in 2020." In the past year, Jannise also won the Pinch Literary Award in Poetry and *South 85 Journal's* Julia Peterkin Summer Literary Contest.



**Daniel Kennedy** (PhD, Fiction) had a story published in the spring '21 issue of *Arts & Letters*, and a story selected for inclusion in *Ghost Parachute's* flash fiction anthology. He also has a story forthcoming as an online feature at *The Carolina Quarterly*, an essay forthcoming in *New England Review*, and was awarded the University of Houston's Media and Moving Image prize (critical category) for his essay, "Relax Your Face, Clint."



**Madeleine Maillet** (PhD, Fiction) had her story "Mother Tongue" anthologized in *Best Canadian Short Stories 2020* and was awarded a nationally competitive 2021 Canada Council for the Arts grant for her writing.



**Erin L. McCoy** (PhD, Poetry) is a finalist for the *Missouri Review's* 2021 Miller Audio Prize. In the past year, she has also published four poems in *Narrative* and published her first short story in *Conjunctions*.



**Katie Edkins Milligan** (MFA, Fiction) has stories forthcoming in *Fiction*, *Tahoma Literary Review* and *North Dakota Quarterly*. She won the 2021 Inprint Donald Barthelme Prize in Fiction, and she will be attending the 2021 Tin House Summer Workshop.



**Joy Priest's** (PhD, Poetry) poem "Looking for the Beautiful Things" was published in the Academy of American Poets *Poem-a-Day* series in May. She also launched *The Atlantic's* "Inheritance" project with her poem "Ghosts in Schools" in February, and was named a 2021 National Endowment for the Arts fellow. Her debut collection *Horsepower* won the Donald Hall Prize for Poetry and was published by Pitt Poetry Series in Sept. 2020.



**Stephanie Pushaw** (PhD, Fiction) was one of ten fiction writers shortlisted for the First Pages Prize, which recognizes and supports emerging writers based on the merit of the opening pages of longer manuscripts. An early excerpt from her novel-in-progress, *Sanctuary*, was recognized as an example of work that "takes risks, offers moments of discovery from the first page, and leaves readers fascinated to read on." The 2021 contest received over 2,000 entries from 54 countries.



# Student News

Paige Quiñones's (PhD, Poetry) first collection of poems, *The Best Prey*, was selected by Tiana Clark as the winner of the 2020 Lena-Miles Wever Todd Prize for Poetry and was published by Pleiades Press in 2021. Her poems recently appeared or are forthcoming in *The Adroit Journal*, *Colorado Review*, and *Prelude*.



Stalina Emmanuelle Villarreal (PhD, Poetry) has a translation forthcoming from Nueva York Poetry Press called *Postcards in Braille* by Sergio Pérez Torres.



Ernie Wang (PhD, Fiction) had stories and essays accepted in *Mississippi Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Southern Review*, and *Story*. He will spend July in Oysterville, WA, at a residency with Willapa Bay AiR.



Lisa Wartenberg (MFA, Fiction) and her husband Rob had a baby! Baby Bennett was born early November 2020, a bit past his Election Day due date to ensure Biden/Harris had in fact won the election. Giggles and sleeplessness abound.



Adele Elise Williams (Poetry, PhD) has poetry published or forthcoming this year in *Bear Review*, *Guernica*, *Tammy*, *Cream City Review* and *Barzakh*. She is a finalist for a Helene Wurlitzer Foundation Residency (fingers crossed!) and scored the opportunity to teach a workshop for The Poetry Foundation this summer. She read for the Delgado Reading Series as well as Disconnection Hotline here in Houston and has recently been invited to read for Public Poetry of Houston.



Theodora Ziolkowski (PhD, Poetry) had work published in *New South*, *Rattle*, *Cimarron Review*, *Lake Effect: An International Literary Journal*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Dialogist*, and *The West Review*. A second edition of her novella, *On the Rocks*, was published in the spring, and her short story, "The Wooden Headdress," was selected for *Wigleaf's* Top 50 Very Short Fictions List, 2020.



# *New Students*

*2021 - 2022*

## Fiction

**Rosa Boshier, PhD**

BA, Mills College

MFA, California Institute of Arts

**Julia Brown, PhD**

BA, New York University

MFA, University of Houston

**Kartika Budhwar, PhD**

BA, Soka University

MFA, Iowa State University

MFA, North Carolina State University

**Iris Cronin, MFA**

BA, Brown University

**Leah Fretwell, PhD**

BA, Brigham Young University

MFA, Brigham Young University

**Madeleine Gaudin, MFA**

BA, University of Michigan

**Vanessa Golenia, MFA**

BS, University of San Diego

**Aaron Neptune, MFA**

BA, University of Virginia

JD, University of Denver

**Scott Repass, MFA**

BA, Texas State University

MA, City University of New York

**William Seelen, MFA**

BA, University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign

**Patrick Stockwell, PhD**

BA, University of Houston

MFA, New Mexico State University

## Poetry

**Maha Abdelwahab, PhD**

BA, DePaul University

MFA, University of Oregon

**Jari Bradley, PhD**

BA, San Francisco State University

MFA, University of Pittsburgh

**Sara Cunningham, MFA**

BA, Emory University

**KT Herr, PhD**

BA, Smith College

MFA, Sarah Lawrence College

**Maria Hiers, MFA**

BA, Florida State University

**Leisa Loan, PhD**

BA, Marymount Manhattan College

MFA, UNLV

**Ashley Zarlisht Niaz, MFA**

BA, University of Minnesota

**Weijia Pan, MFA**

BA, UCLA

**Jaxson Spencer, MFA**

BS, University of Purdue

# *Graduates*

## Spring 2021

**Despy Boutris, MFA Poetry**

**Barbara Drumheller, PhD Fiction**

**Hunter Gilson, MFA Fiction**

**Joshua Gottlieb-Miller, PhD Poetry**

**Sonia Hamer, MFA Fiction**

**Niki Herd, PhD Poetry**

**Onyinye Ihezukwu, PhD Fiction**

**Matthew Krajniak, PhD Fiction**

**Cameron Lehman, MFA Fiction**

**Carolann Madden, PhD Poetry**

**Sarah Robinson, MFA Fiction**

**Stalina Villarreal, PhD Poetry**

**Grace Wagner, MFA Poetry**

**Caitlin Weiss Orcutt, PhD Poetry**

*Inprint and the University of Houston's  
Creative Writing Program  
are pleased to announce the writing prize winners  
for 2020 - 2021*

**INPRINT ALEXANDER PRIZE IN FICTION**

Blaine Ely

**INPRINT VERLAINE PRIZE IN POETRY**

Paige Quiñones

**INPRINT MARION BARTHELME PRIZE IN  
CREATIVE WRITING**

Brendan Stephens

**INPRINT DONALD BARTHELME PRIZE IN  
NONFICTION**

Niki Herd

**INPRINT DONALD BARTHELME PRIZE IN  
FICTION**

Sonia Hamer and Katie Milligan

**INPRINT DONALD BARTHELME PRIZE IN  
POETRY**

Stalina Villarreal and Despy Boutris

**INPRINT MARION BARTHELME GULF COAST  
EDITOR'S PRIZE**

Nick Rattner

**ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS PRIZE**

Despy Boutris

***CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!***

**JUDGES**

**MARION BARTHELME AWARD**

Jennifer Grotz (UH Alum)

**POETRY**

Adrian Matejka

**FICTION**

Kevin Canty

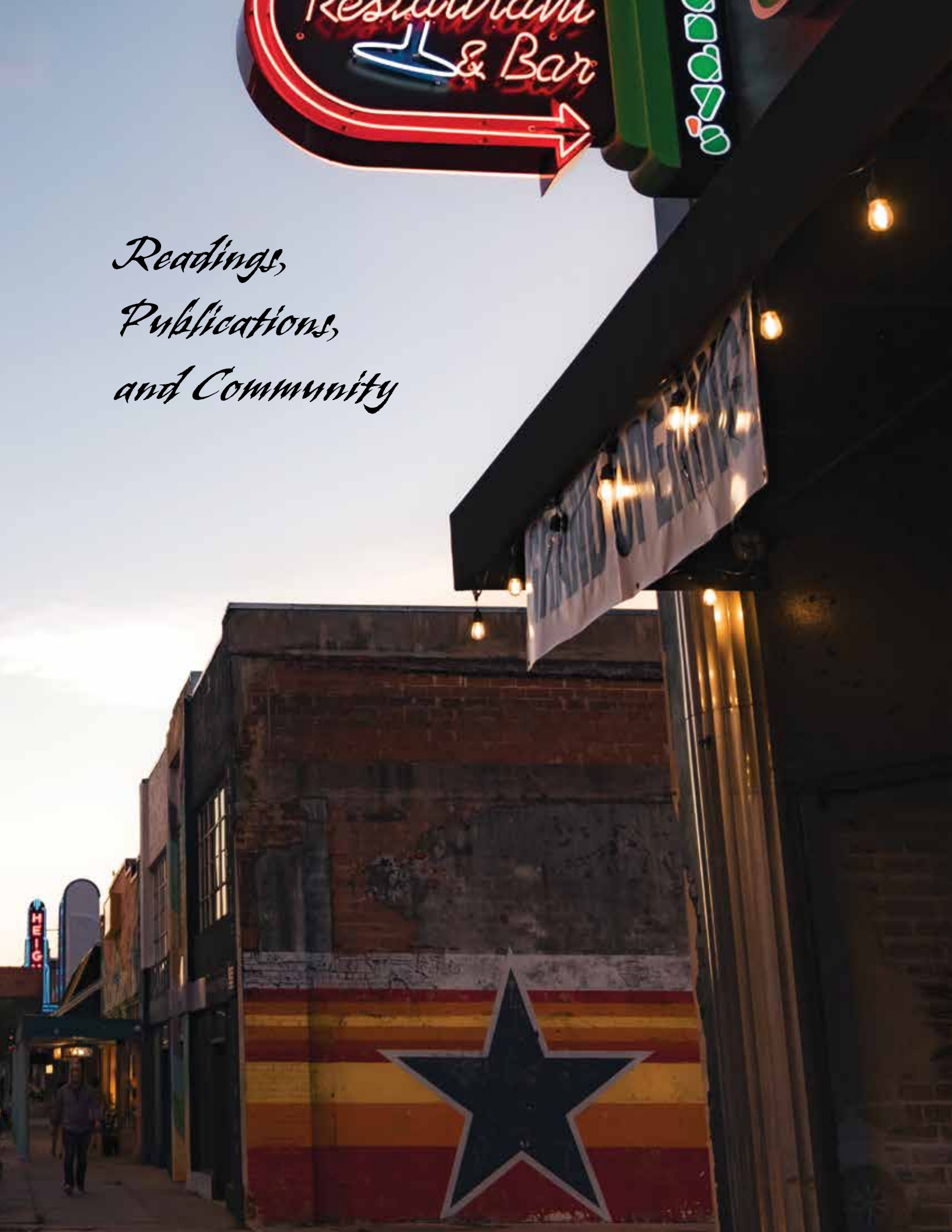
**NONFICTION**

Alex Marzano-Lesnevich





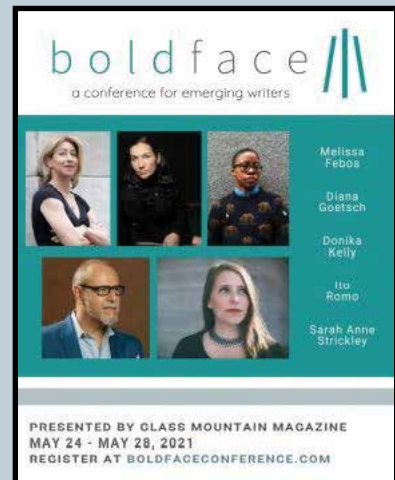
*Readings,  
Publications,  
and Community*



# Boldface Conference

We began planning for the 2021 Boldface Conference toward the end of the fall semester. We knew the conference would be virtual, which meant Boldface would look different than in years past. During the fall semester—with the help of business students at the Bauer college—we researched successful virtual conferences, their formats, advertising, and what they had to offer. This was invaluable when we got down to really planning the conference and setting it up for success.

The *Glass Mountain* editors, more than anything else, wanted to make Boldface 2021 feel like more than just a zoom classroom. We wanted to find a way to offer community, connection, engagement, and fun alongside all the writing and craft-building material. The past year has been tough on so many of us, and having a community is more important than ever, especially for writers. We can confidently say that we succeeded in accomplishing this goal. We got creative when designing the conference schedule—offering morning meditations and a coffee hour, afternoon social hours with food and drink tutorials (such as empanadas with our Poetry Editor Mayra Romero and cocktails with our Social Media Co-Manager Lauren Peraza), and open mics throughout the conference for participants to share their work. Because of the flexibility of an online conference, we were also able to offer more featured writers than we ever have previously—and a featured editor! These included Melissa Febos, Donika Kelly, Diana Goetsch, Ito Romo, and Sarah Anne Strickley.



Feedback from participants was extremely positive. Many had never been to a conference before, and said that the conference felt like a safe space to begin seriously pursuing their writing goals. Many found what could end up being their lifetime writing community at the conference—writers that can act as compassionate readers, and more importantly, friends. And we all got to hear some phenomenal talks and readings from world-class writers.

The big person to thank here is Gabriella Iacono, our Graduate Advisor and conference coordinator. Her tireless hard work and leadership paved the way for the incredible success of this year's Boldface conference, which was no small feat. Measureless support also came from Faculty Advisor Hayan Charara, whose guidance kept us on track throughout the process. We have no way to know what next year will look like, but things are looking up. There might even be a return to an in-person conference in the near future, but this year *Glass Mountain* crushed it over the Zoom screen—with Boldface, and with everything else.



# Glass Mountain

2020-2021 was all about transition for *Glass Mountain*. Long time Faculty Advisor Audrey Columbe passed the torch to Hayan Charara, and Gabriella Iacono stepped in as our new Graduate Advisor. Aside from Web Editor Joanna Li, *Glass Mountain* got a fresh set of upper editor staff members, ready to embrace the obstacles of the new school year and realize the magazine's potential. Emma Allbright joined the team as Editor, Natalie Dean as Managing Editor and Art Editor, Mayra Romero as Poetry Editor, Jacob Edwards as Prose Editor, Veronica Ordoñez as Reviews, Interviews, & Essays Editor, Leena Baloch and Lauren Peraza as Social Media Managers, and Sarah Rabalais as our Archival Project Manager. We knew we were stepping into a uniquely challenging semester, amidst the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic and the unfamiliar landscape of online learning, but our team also saw opportunities for growth within this environment.

## Fall 2021

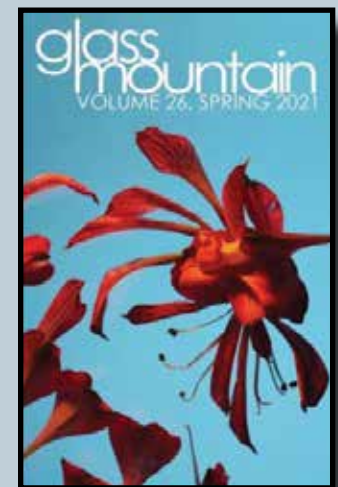
At the beginning of the fall semester, we decided it was time to take the magazine online. *Glass Mountain* has been a print journal since its conception in 2007, and this hands-on experience in the print industry has been invaluable to the university and its students. However, with the rise of digital media and the changing framework of the industry, along with the surge of virtual modes of interaction in response to the pandemic, we believed we could expand the magazine's accessibility and engagement by making the switch to online. With the help of Joanna Li, our Web Editor, we launched our completely redesigned website and Volume 25, the first online issue of *Glass Mountain*—now free and accessible to all! We continued our reading series—virtually, through zoom—and had great turnout and engagement from people all across the country.

The virtual format, necessitated by the pandemic, actually made it possible for more people to attend. We featured undergrad readers such as Wafa-E-Fatima Kazmi, Kyle Okeke, Zach Eaton, and Doc Lathan II, graduate student readers such as Aris Kian, Fey I. Kamba, Daniel Tompkins, and Christopher Miguel Flakus, and community readers such as Outspoken Bean, francine j. harris, Miranda Ramírez and Leila Chatti. At our open mics, we were inspired by the emerging writers sharing their voices, continuing to write courageously in the face of so much turmoil and disruption.

## Spring 2021

In the spring, we published monthly blog posts from our upper editor staff, attended the virtual AWP conference, launched Volume 26 of *Glass Mountain*, and began getting ready for Boldface 2021. We also had our first in-person staff gatherings of the year, finally getting to know each other outside of the Zoom window. *Glass Mountain* has always been, first and foremost, a community for emerging writers and students, and it was a joy and a relief to many to be able to experience this community in person again after so long.

Many of our staff members graduated this year —our Reviews, Interviews, & Essays editor Veronica Ordoñez, our Web Editor Joanna Li, our Poetry Editor Mayra Romero, and our Social Media Co-Manager Lauren Peraza. Our Editor, Emma Allbright, also graduated this past year in December. Having discovered her passion for publishing and editing through *Glass Mountain*, she applied to summer publishing programs, looking to forward her career in the industry. Accepted into NYU's Summer Publishing Institute, she will be studying with other aspiring writers and editors in New York City this June. We look forward to seeing where she and all of our other graduates go from here.



# *Gulf Coast:* *A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*

The 2020–2021 year was a wild ride for *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*. Things kicked off in dramatic fashion, under quarantine, with outgoing senior editors Justin Jannise (Editor), Paige Quiñones (Managing Editor), and Robbie Howell (Digital Editor) sharing their expertise with the incoming senior editors virtually. The Journal also brought on new staff members in all genres, both print and online—many of whom have worked from far places, over Zoom, in collaboration with those of us in Houston.

We were thrilled to publish two beautiful issues despite the year's challenges. Issue 33.1 includes poetry by Rosa Alcalá and Nathaniel Mackey; stories by Yoko Ogawa and Naphisa Senanarong; nonfiction by Gemma de Choisy and Kathryn Nuernberger; and two 8-page color folios featuring artists Autumn Knight and Diedrick Brackens, whose gorgeous tapestry *when no softness came* graces the cover.

Issue 33.2 includes stories by Eloghosa Osunde and John Miguel Shakespear; nonfiction by Aisha Sabatini Sloan and Natalie Kinkade; and poems by Courtney Faye Taylor and Franz Wright. It also features a special section, curated by Guest Editor Vievee Francis and titled “Origin Stories”; as well as works by artist Aya Brown and Houston-based photographer Bria Lauren. The winners of 2020's Barthelme Prize for Short Prose, Beauchamp Prize for Critical Art Writing, and Gulf Coast Prize in Translation are there, too. It's a big issue!

Speaking of prizes, *Gulf Coast* runs a total of six, including the Barthelme Prize for Short Prose, the Beauchamp Prize for Critical Art Writing, and the *Gulf Coast* Prizes in Poetry, Fiction, Nonfiction, and Translation. Our judges this year included Jenny Offill, Franklin Sirmans, Natalie Diaz, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Kiese Laymon, and Urayoán Noel. In April, we hosted an online conversation between Beauchamp Award-winner Ayanna Dozier and trailblazing filmmakers Barbara McCullough and Ja'Tovia Gary, which was attended by nearly 500 people.

The *Gulf Coast* Reading Series migrated online, too, starting with a visit from National Book Award-



nominated Eduardo Corral, who met with UH Creative Writing students for an online Q & A. Incredible writers and readers Eileen Myles, Lillian-Yvonne Bertram, Rachel Heng, Aisha Sabatini Sloan, and Vievee Francis followed. We were excited to close the season with an event produced in partnership with Project Row Houses, featuring UH students filmed on-location at Project Row, as well as a conversation between Vievee Francis and Houston artist Lisa E. Harris. Videos of all the year's readings are archived on *Gulf Coast's* new YouTube Channel, as well as on our social media pages.

Our online presence flourished this year, with updates to our social media channels and a website redesign. We debuted two editions of Online Exclusives, featuring a freshly bolstered selection of reviews and interviews as well as work by Leanne Ogasawara, Brandon Shimoda, A.J. Knuse, Lillian-Yvonne Bertram, Samyak Shertok, Kara Vernor, Elizabeth Miki Brina, and many more. We also raised the profile of the *Gulf Coast* Blog, featuring "Origin Story"—a meandering four-part series by Robert James Russell—as well as interviews conducted by GC staff.

*Gulf Coast's* successes this year are testament to the collective efforts of many people—most essentially, CWP students, who worked together without the reinforcement of real social interaction. Our staff of over 40 also includes undergraduate interns, who help us keep vision blooming and operations running smoothly. And a host of donors and foundations make sure that *Gulf Coast* can continue to pay our staff as well as our contributors and, indeed to print the Journal. We rely on the support of many generous institutions and individuals, as well as on our talented and committed Board. It was truly heartening this year to see so many people step up. There is a lot of love for *Gulf Coast*—not just within our department, but among the arts and literary communities in Houston and beyond.

Over the summer, we will begin production on Issue 34.1, due out in October. We will also open three contests: the 2021 Beauchamp Prize in Critical Art Writing, the Barthelme Prize in Short Prose, and the *Gulf Coast* Prize in Translation. Look for those announcements soon! Once the start of the fall semester nears, we will begin hiring some new staff members for 2021-22. Hopefully, this coming year will offer the opportunity for us to connect more in person—and for the whole staff to gather, as we're all overdue for a celebration.



# The Unsung Masters Series



**SHREELA RAY**

ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF AN AMERICAN MASTER

Edited by **KAZIM ALI** and **ROHAN CHHETRI**

**THE UNSUNG MASTERS SERIES**

**The Unsung Masters Series Celebrates  
the Eleventh Volume in its Series  
Shreela Ray: On the Life & Work of an American Master  
Edited by Kazim Ali & Rohan Chhetri**

The Unsung Masters Series is funded through donations made to the Department of English by Nancy Luton and by the University of Houston. Each volume in the series spotlights an unjustly neglected, little-known author and contains a range of scholarship surrounding his or her work. Interviews, letters, rough drafts, photographs, and other ephemera accompany a large selection of the author's own poetry or fiction.

The purpose of the Series is not only to bring renewed attention to a little known but important writer, but also to suggest something of that writer's life and character.

The Series is curated by Kevin Prufer, poet and Professor of English at the University of Houston, and UH MFA alum Wayne Miller, who is now a professor at the University of Colorado in Denver.

The current volume will be distributed to the public through bookstores as well as through a subscription service. Subscribers to *Gulf Coast*, *Pleiades: Literature in Context*, *The Asian-American Literary Review*, and *The Georgia Review* will also receive copies.

A Q&A with Kazim Ali, lead editor of this year's  
Unsung Masters Volume

*Who was Shreela Ray and why did you propose her for the Unsung Masters Series?*

Shreela Ray was one of the earliest Asian American poets publishing in the United States. She came to the US first as a student at the age of 18 but she stayed for the rest of her life. Her work was published widely at the beginning of her career, and she knew many of the most important poets of the day. Though she did not publish another book after her first collection in 1977, she continued to write poems until her death in 1994. The Unsung Masters Series is the perfect venue for a writer like Ray; as with all the poets in the series, there are multiple, various and complex reasons why her work remains unknown, and the essays in the book will explore some of those.

*What do you think Shreela Ray brings to the world of American poetry?*

Ray's work is international in tone, weaving together multiple lineages, including Indian anglophone poetry, confessional poetry, Asian American poetry, a political outlook informed by Third World liberation movements and feminist philosophy, and a particular cosmopolitan outlook that was uniquely herself. She always considered herself an American poet, though she was not always seen that way in her own day.

*How has it been working with your co-editor and UH PhD student Rohan Chhetri and others on this project?*

I had been familiar with Ray's poetry since high school. Ray lived not far away from where I grew up and one of my teachers was good friends with her. My examination of Ray's work began with lectures given at the Smithsonian's Asian American Literature Festival. After the second lecture, I received such good response and feedback from poets and writers who wanted to know more about Shreela Ray, so I pitched the project to Unsung Masters. Shreela's archives are in boxes at her sons' homes in the Hudson Valley. In December of 2019 I went out there and found that not only had Shreela continued to write powerful poetry throughout her life, she had also written hundreds and hundreds of pages of letters. Rohan and I were quick to see the potential of the letters: though Shreela had not written criticism or essays or memoir or political commentary or philosophy, it was all there in the letters. We also made a decision not to reprint her first book in its entirety but rather try to do a selection that would span Ray's writing life. In the end the selection of poems and letters present a vibrant and powerful writer of compelling and revelatory poetry and prose.

I am very grateful to Rohan for his contributions to the volume. I only wish that he too had been able to visit the archives (the pandemic and attendant travel restrictions prevented that); but his eye on the work was invaluable, especially in shaping the selection of previously unpublished poems.

# Brazos Bookstore

## About Brazos:

Brazos Bookstore, Houston's premier literary bookseller since 1974, features an eclectic mix of literary fiction, general interest nonfiction, art/architecture monographs, kids books, and sideline items. Through carefully crafted curation, Brazos proudly emphasizes independent publishers and literature in translation. It is our mission to ensure that every title on hand is something that either staff or customers feel strongly about.

As the arts become increasingly crucial to Houston's identity, Brazos continues to adapt and grow as a central cultural hub. The store is honored to partner with Houston's leading literary, arts, and community organizations and are constantly expanding the reach of these partnerships. Notable among these are the University of Houston Creative Writing Program, Inprint, *Gulf Coast*, Houston Public Library, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Project Row Houses, The Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, Interfaith Ministries and more!

Brazos Bookstore's event programming ranges from local authors to internationally renowned figures. Recent notable authors include Ocean Vuong, Bryan Washington, Gloria Steinem, David Sedaris, Annie Leibovitz, Malcolm Gladwell, Patton Oswalt, Barbara Epler, Madeleine Albright, Valerie Jarrett, Marlon James, Anne Lamot, Alan Lightman, Lacy Johnson, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton and Hanif Abdurraqib.

It is an honor to serve the reading and writing community of Houston. As we continue to adapt to the realities of this year and the growing uncertainties of the future, please know we remain committed to our readers and the writers they love. Brazos has a wide offering of virtual event programming and we continue to fulfill book orders for curbside pick-up or shipping.

## Upcoming Virtual Events:

July 8-

### **Women in Translation Panel**

Translators: Heather Cleary, Jennifer Croft, Lizzie Davis, Robin Myers, Emma Ramadan, Juila Sanches and Jennifer Shye. Moderated by Veronica Esposito.

July 14-

**Danny Trejo (TREJO)** in conversation with Steve Buscemi and moderated by Daniel Peña

August 12-

**Ashley Nelson Levy (IMMEDIATE FAMILY)**

September 29-

**Benjamin Labatut (CEASE TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD)** in conversation with Dustin Illingworth





# Grackle and Grackle

Grackle and Grackle devotes itself to helping writers throughout Houston and the world receive the support, community, and push they need to translate their thoughts and stories into the mediums they love. Founders Miah Arnold and Raj Mankad are both UHCWP alums and writers. Miah is a poet, essayist, and novelist. Raj is an editorial board member, columnist and op-ed editor at the *Houston Chronicle* with an extensive non-fiction background.

For seven years Grackle and Grackle has run classes ranging from traditional poetry, nonfiction, and fiction workshops, to songwriting and playwriting, podcasting Moth, and mixed-genre classes. We also hold a literature-in-translation reading group, and we work with nonprofits and small businesses on high profile projects that require a literary eye.

Many of our students have MFAs and PhDs in creative writing, or have written for most of their lives apart from their professional careers. Our workshop model is unique in that we allow anybody who wants to take a class to take a class, whether they can pay or not. We offer a ladder of discounts, and around fifty absolutely free spots for writers to use every year. This helps us build workshops diverse in age, ethnicity, and/or economic class. Our writers who pay full price are often in the same classes as our students on full scholarships, which injects a particular dynamic and community into Grackle and Grackle that we are very proud of.

This year we have started a podcast called the Incandescent Word and have branched into the world of online teaching. We hold readings and literary events. Our focus in the next year is on creating a nonprofit arm. We are growing quickly.

It has been easy for us to support the fine writers in the University of Houston Creative Writing Program by employing students to teach our courses, and by sponsoring a TAship in partnership with the university. The UH writers we employ are working for their PhDs, or occasionally, are working for MFAs but have long worked in literary fields. This is important since so many of our writers have advanced creative writing degrees.

Please friend Miah Arnold and Grackle and Grackle on Facebook and Instagram and make yourself known to us when you arrive in Houston.

We are always ready to mentor or support writers however we can. If you have an idea for a program or venture, please reach out, and we'll see how we can help you, connect you to resources that can. Contact us about teaching, volunteer, or mentorship at [miah@grackleandgrackle.com](mailto:miah@grackleandgrackle.com) or read more about us at [www.grackleandgrackle.com](http://www.grackleandgrackle.com)



# Inprint

As the city's major literary arts nonprofit organization, Inprint presents an inclusive array of creative writing and reading programs directly serving 15,000 people annually. Through popular and often sold out readings for adults and children, fully subscribed writers workshops for aspiring writers, vital community writing activities, innovative collaborations, longstanding support for graduate students in creative writing, a podcast, and more, Inprint works hard to bring Houstonians from all walks of life together around the power of sharing stories.

At the heart of all that Inprint does is its direct support of graduate students at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program (UH CWP). Since Inprint was founded in 1983, the support of UH CWP graduate students – the organization's celebrated *Inprint Fellows* – has been a core Inprint priority, forming the basis of a unique relationship between a community literary nonprofit and a graduate creative writing program. Annual fundraising efforts by the Inprint Board of Directors and staff, plus the creation and management of the Inprint endowment dedicated solely to funding UH CWP fellowships and prizes, make this assistance possible.

Despite the challenges of the past year, Inprint has maintained its vigorous support of UH CWP students. In 2020/2021, Inprint UH CWP support totaled \$216,000, including 14 \$10,000 fellowships for incoming students, \$43,500 in juried prizes for continuing students, the Inprint/UH CWP Fellowship, \$9,000 in fellowships to six international students, and \$11,000 in annual support of *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature & Fine Arts*. Inprint support of *Gulf Coast* totals more than \$250,000 since the founding of the journal. The UH Inprint Fund, managed by the UH CWP, supplements Inprint's direct support by providing, at the Program's discretion, dissertation fellowships (two this year, \$10,000 each, in memory of Inprint and Brazos Bookstore founder Karl Kilian), funding for author events, conference travel support, etc. Since 1983, Inprint has provided a total of more than \$4 million in support to 500+ emerging authors, including such UH CWP alumni as Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown.

Another significant way Inprint supports UH CWP

graduate students and alumni is by providing employment and creative writing teaching opportunities in the Houston community, including Inprint Writers Workshops, currently running online, open to the public, on different topics and in a variety of genres. These workshops give individuals an opportunity to explore creative writing for the first time, strengthen their skills as writers, revise pieces for publication, and more.

Inprint community workshops are also led by UH CWP students and alumni. These tuition-free workshops are conducted throughout the year for K-12 schoolteachers, senior citizens, hospital employees at the Texas Medical Center, incarcerated men and women at the Harris County Jail, and others, empowering individuals from a diversity of backgrounds to tell their stories. Combined, there are 50+ workshop teaching opportunities for local writers throughout the year, most of which are filled by members of the UH CWP community.

UH CWP students and alumni also serve as Inprint Poetry Buskers, a team of local writers who demystify and spread the joy of poetry by writing poems free on demand on typewriters at festivals and special events throughout the city. The program, currently on hold due to the pandemic, also has an active team of Spanish Inprint Poetry Buskers, many of whom are UH Spanish PhD creative writing students.

All of these opportunities connect the UH CWP students to different communities in the city in fresh and exciting ways. Additionally, Inprint is thrilled to have Katie Edkins Milligan back for a second year as the 2021/2022 Inprint/UH CWP Fellow. Katie officially joined the Inprint team in August 2020 and has been working on a variety of initiatives with the staff and learning firsthand about nonprofit administration. We are also thrilled to have former Inprint C. Glenn Cambor Fellow and *Gulf Coast* Editor-in-Chief Laurie Ann Cedilnik on staff since May as Inprint Development Manager, working on a variety of fundraising initiatives.

The Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, which launches its 41st season in September, is the organization's flagship program, presented in association with the UH CWP and Brazos Bookstore. The series makes it possible for thousands of Houstonians to meet and hear from the world's most accomplished writers and thinkers. The 40th anniversary season took place virtually, featuring 15

internationally celebrated authors, including Julia Alvarez, Margaret Atwood, Jericho Brown, Yaa Gyasi, Nick Hornby, Kazuo Ishiguro, Lily King, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chang-rae Lee, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Sigrid Nunez, and Marilynne Robinson, plus special guests Brit Bennett, Annette Gordon-Reed, and Kevin Kwan. Thanks to the Inprint “virtual studio,” the series attracted audience members from across the U.S. and around the globe.



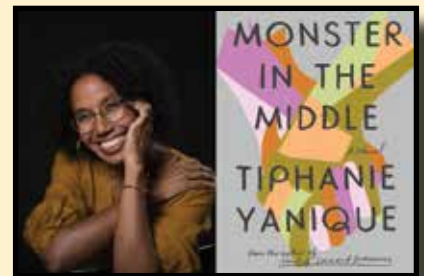
UH CWP students receive free complimentary access to all events, and faculty members often serve as interviewers. As part of the series, when events are held in person, writers also give outreach readings and craft talks at UH CWP, Texas Southern University, UH-Downtown, Houston Community College, and the HISD High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.



The 2021/2022 season will include a mix of in-person and online events, including readings by Pulitzer Prize winner Anthony Doer with his new novel *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, Pulitzer Prize finalist Hernan Diaz with his new novel *Trust*, celebrated poet Honorée Jeffers with her debut novel *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois*, and others. On occasion, we proudly feature UH CWP alumni in the series. Last year, Mayor Sylvester Turner proclaimed April 26, 2021, as Jericho Brown Day, in honor of his reading and accomplishments. This coming season, UH CWP alum and Inprint Fellow Tiphonie Yanique will be joining us with her new novel *Monster in the Middle*.



In addition to the Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series, the UH CWP community is always invited to enjoy the organization’s other offerings (some of which have continued online and some of which have been on hold due to the pandemic), including the Inprint *Cool Brains!* Series, featuring the nation’s top middle-grade authors; *Escritores en la casa*, a Spanish-language reading series featuring visiting and local authors; community readings held at Inprint House; the Inprint Writing Cafe; the Inprint Book Club; *Ink Well*, a podcast conducted in collaboration with Tintero Projects, featuring established and emerging Latinx and other authors; and more.



For information, visit [www.inprintheouston.org](http://www.inprintheouston.org), where you can join the email list and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. If you have a good idea or just want to visit, please reach out at [inprintheouston.org](http://inprintheouston.org) or come see us at Inprint House (behind the Menil Collection, 1520 West Main).



# *Writers in the Schools*

In 1983, creative writing students from the University of Houston founded Writers in the Schools (WITS) to both serve K-12 students throughout Houston and provide paid teaching opportunities for the city's writers.

Thirty-eight years later, WITS operates in over one hundred public and private schools across the Greater Houston area. In addition, we work with community partners such as the YMCA, Montrose Center, Dream Academy, Urban Enrichment Institute, and others to provide specialized out-of-school-time programming to diverse groups of students. We offer professional development for teachers, fellowships for young writers, and opportunities for students to showcase their work.

In a typical school year, WITS programs reach over 65,000 students and teachers. 2020-2021 was not a typical school year, but WITS still managed to provide virtual creative writing programming to thousands of students both inside and outside of schools.

Without WITS writers, none of our programs would be possible. WITS owes its successes over the past year to the dedication, tenacity, and creativity of the CWP students working on our roster. This spring, WITS teaching artists Paige Quiñones and Justin Jannise completed their WITS residencies while simultaneously releasing award-winning first collections of poetry. CWP student and UH alum Aris Kian Brown led workshops in performance poetry for teen poets competing in our annual Space City Slam Series. Onyinye Ihezukwu both successfully defended her dissertation and provided creative writing instruction to four classes of third graders at Kolter Elementary School. Former MFA student and current UH instructor Josie Mitchell worked with 6th and 7th graders at HISD's Young Women's College Preparatory Academy. Recent doctoral recipient Erika Jo Brown worked with pediatric inpatients through our partnership with MD Anderson. Former Glass Mountain Editor-In-Chief Mindy Mayden, as well as UH undergraduates Haley Carr, Katrina Zapata, and Adriana Salazar all participated in our Emerging Writers Fellowship. Finally, CWP students Joshua Gottleib-Miller, Sarah Robinson, Gabriella Iacono, and Nick Almeida are working with WITS at our annual Creative Writing Camp this summer alongside Aris, Adriana, Katrina, Justin, Onyinye, and Paige.

At Writers in the Schools, our work extends beyond Houston. We lead an international network of 38 sister programs through the WITS Alliance; many of these programs were actually founded by former WITS writers (and CWP alums).

The long-standing relationships between the Creative Writing Program and Writers in the Schools dates back to the earliest years of both organizations. Over nearly four decades, our ties have deepened, expanded, and evolved. We continue to rely on our partnership with the UH CWP to help us serve and strengthen the whole of Houston's writing community. For more information about WITS, including how to apply for teaching placements during the upcoming school year, please visit us at [witshouston.org](http://witshouston.org) or call 713-523-3877.





# Alumni News

**Samuel Amadon's** (PhD, 2012) new book, *Often, Common, Some, And Free* is forthcoming in October 2021 from Omnidawn.



**Selena Anderson's** (PhD, 2017) short story, "Godmother Tea," originally published in *Oxford American* was included in *Best American Short Stories 2020*. She also received the Emerging Texas Star Award from *American Short Fiction*.

**Christopher Bakken** (PhD, 1999) will serve as a Fulbright scholar in Greece for the 2021-22 academic year, working on several literary projects while teaching at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He holds the Frederick F. Seely Chair at Allegheny College and is Director of Writing Workshops in Greece: Thessaloniki & Thasos.

Twenty of **Ann Bogle's** (MFA, 1994) short stories are featured in the latest issue of *Thrice Fiction*, volume 2, no. 1, edited by R.W. Spryszak and illustrated by David Simmer II.

**Shannon Borg** (MFA, 1999) coaches artists and writers through art and business transitions, helping them set up business systems, create online courses, and overcome mindset issues in her business, Shannon Borg Art & Business Coaching ([www.shannonborg.com](http://www.shannonborg.com)). She is a painter, writer, coach and teacher living in the San Juan Islands of Washington State.

**Conor Bracken's** (MFA, 2015) first full-length collection of poems, *The Enemy of My Enemy Is Me*, was published by Diode Editions in June 2021. His translation of Jean D'Amérique's book length poem, *No Way in the Skin without this Bloody Embrace*, is forthcoming from Ugly Duckling Presse in 2022.



**Thomas Calder's** (MFA, 2014) debut novel, *The Wind Under the Door*, was released in March 2021 by Unsolicited Press.



**Hayan Charara's** (PhD, 2010) new poetry collection, *These Trees, Those Leaves, This Flower, That Fruit*, is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions in 2022.

**Jane Creighton's** (MA, 1991) collection of poems, *Bone Skid, Bone Beauty*, will be published by Saint Julian Press in September 2021.



This past year **Audrey Colombe** (PhD, 1999 and currently an associate professor on CWP faculty) worked online like everyone else, suddenly and completely, also accompanying the CWP graduate students learning to teach online. (So many teaching portals, so much deteriorating eyesight.) Still, wonderful work was done—humbling to see, honestly. (The undergrads in creative writing at UH are more impressive every year; recommendations went out last winter for MFA applications; many students were accepted by nationally renowned programs.) There is also her book coming out later this year, *Creating an Undergraduate Literary Journal: A Guide for Editors and Advisors*, (Bloomsbury Academic, London) which is rather self-explanatory and comes from years of working with undergrad editors, most recently at Glass Mountain. Next year, '21-'22, is sabbatical time, i.e. writing time.

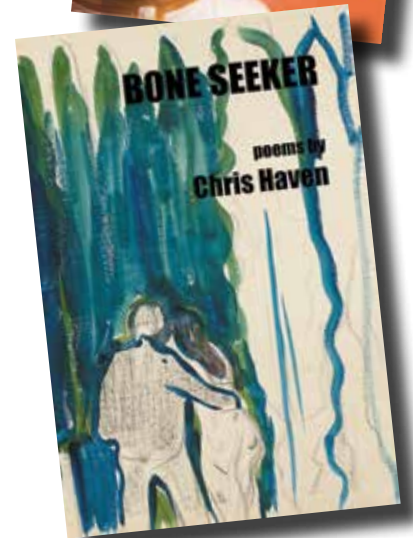
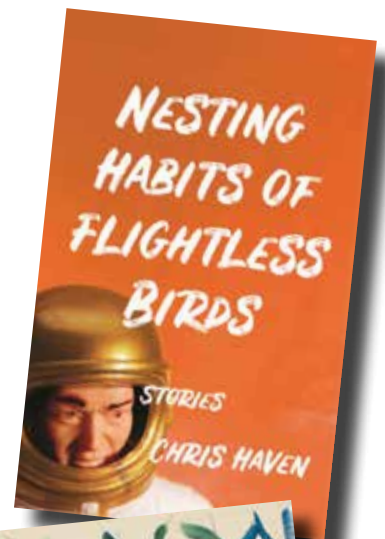
**Chelsea B. DesAutels's** (MFA, 2019) first book of poems, *A Dangerous Place*, will be released from Sarabande Books on October 19. Chelsea was also awarded the Jeffrey E. Smith Editors' Prize in poetry from the *Missouri Review*.



**Christa Forster** (MFA, 1994) writes about teaching for *The New York Times* Learning Network and W.W. Norton's K12 Talk. She was selected as part of the inaugural 2020-2021 New York Times Teaching Project, a group of 60 high school and middle-school teachers from across the United States who use *The New York Times* in their classroom curriculum. Periodically she teaches writing courses for Inprint and Grackle & Grackle Writing Workshops. Additionally, she continues to publish essays and poems while working full time as faculty in the English department at The Kinkaid School in Houston, TX.

**Jessica Greenbaum** (MFA, 1981) co-edited the first ever poetry haggadah which came out from CCAR Press in March 2021 and is considered the pre-eminent Reform haggadah. *Mishkan HaSeder*. She is co-editing, with Jennifer Barber and Fred Marchant, a poetry anthology with the working title *Treelines: 21st Century Poems by 150 Poets*, which will come out from Grayson Press in early 2022. This past spring, she taught a poetry workshop at Vassar College, and had a very good time.

**Chris Haven's** (PhD, 2001) debut book of short stories, *Nesting Habits of Flightless Birds*, was published by Tailwinds Press in 2020. "The Marks," a story from that collection published by *Kenyon Review Online*, is listed as Distinguished in *Best American Short Stories 2020*. His debut collection of poems, *Bone Seeker*, was published by NYQ Books in 2021.



**Jenny Staff Johnson's** (MFA, 2020) tribute to Larry McMurry, "Such Paris as I Had," was published in *Texas Highways* in March. *Asympote Magazine's* 'Translation Tuesdays' will publish her first literary translation, "The Double Cat Syndrome," later this month. The piece is from the original "A La Sombra De Dos Gatos Per Uno" by Carmen Boulosa, and was originally undertaken in Dr. Lois Zamora's Intro to Translation class. Jenny has also joined the staff of *Action, Spectacle, Magazine* as Senior Translations Editor.

**Janine Joseph's** (PhD, 2013) second poetry collection, *Decade of the Brain*, was accepted for publication and is forthcoming in January 2023 from Alice James Books. She published in *The Nation*, *Pleiades*, *Copper Nickel*, *Poets & Writers Magazine*, *MumberMag*, and *PBS/Rewire.org*, and had a poem selected for inclusion in *Border Lines: Poems of Migration*. UndocuPoets, for which she is a co-organizer, celebrated its 5th year of awarding fellowships to poets who are currently or who were formerly undocumented, and received grants from the Literary Arts Emergency Fund and the Amazon Literary Partnership Poetry Fund/Academy of American Poets. With her co-organizers, Janine is editing an anthology of poetry and poetics forthcoming from Harper Collins.

**Leah Lax** (MFA, 2003) completed *Not From Here* during the pandemic, a memoir/narrative nonfiction book about rediscovering America because of a job doing refugee oral histories. The modern opera she wrote and designed based on her memoir *Uncovered* has been released to premiere at the University of Utah, then on to New York City Lyric. A translation of *Uncovered* in Arabic will soon be released for free download by Ideas Beyond Borders, under the auspices of Democracy Now. Also, during the pandemic, for composer Mark Buller, she wrote the (secular) *Mass in Exile*, for vocalists and orchestra.

**Lance Larsen** (PhD, 1993) recently published poems in *Poetry Magazine*, *Poetry London*, *Five Points*, *Rattle*, *Witness*, *Triquarterly* and a story in *Michigan Quarterly Review*. He was a finalist for the 2020 Rattle award and the 2021 Cavafy Prize. He has new poems forthcoming in *Gettysburg Review*, *LIT*, *Lake Effect*, *Copper Nickel*, and *Southern Review*, and a short story forthcoming in *Boulevard*. Here's a link to a quickie interview he did with *Massachusetts Review*: <https://www.massreview.org/node/9315>

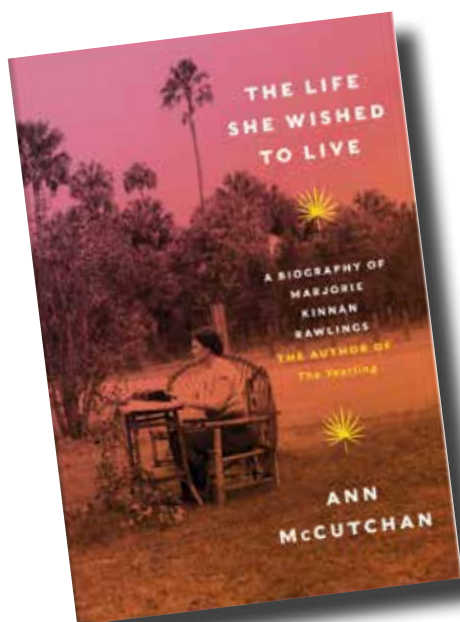
**Dr. Caitlin Maling** (MFA 2014) published her fourth book of poetry in 2021, *Fish Work* (UWAP). She received her doctorate in literature from the University of Sydney in 2019 and gave birth to her first child in 2020.



**James Davis May** (MFA, 2007) received a 2021 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship in Creative Writing. His second poetry collection, *Unusually Grand Ideas*, will be published by Louisiana State University Press in 2023.



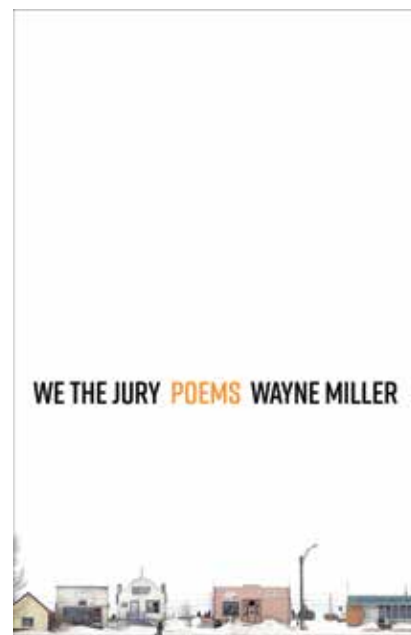
Ann McCutchan's (MFA, 1998) new book, *The Life She Wished to Live: A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Author of "The Yearling,"* was published by W.W. Norton May 11.



Karyna McGlynn's (PhD, 2015) third full-length book of poetry *50 Things Kate Bush Taught Me About the Multiverse* will be published by Sarabande Books in early 2022. Several of the poems from the book were awarded the *Arts & Letters Rumi Prize for Poetry* selected by Cate Marvin. McGlynn also received the 2020 *Florida Review* Editors' Award in Fiction for her first published short story. Her essay "Leaping Between Seams: What Analog Collage Taught Me About Sequencing" will appear in the forthcoming craft guide *Marbles on the Floor: How to Assemble a Book of Poems* (University of Akron Press, 2022). With fellow UHCWP alum Erika Jo Brown, she's currently editing the anthology *Clever Girl: Witty Poetry by Women* [pssst... it's still accepting submissions & looking for a press!]. If her tenure review goes as planned, she'll soon be an Associate Professor of Creative Writing & Literature at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, TN.

Jonathan Meyer (MFA, 2017) published the story "Meat off the Bone" in issue 288 of *The Fiddlehead*. He also started a job in the Office of Research at Rice University. He and his wife Alana will welcome their first child in September.

Wayne Miller (MFA, 2002) was recently promoted to Full Professor at the University of Colorado Denver (where he teaches alongside UH alums Brian Barker and Nicky Beer). He continues to edit *Copper Nickel* and, this past March, Milkweed Editions published his fifth poetry collection, *We the Jury*, which was named a *Library Journal* "Poetry Title to Watch" for 2021. Wayne lives in Denver with his wife, Jeanne Ouellette—a licensed clinical social worker—and their two kiddos, Harper and Sean.



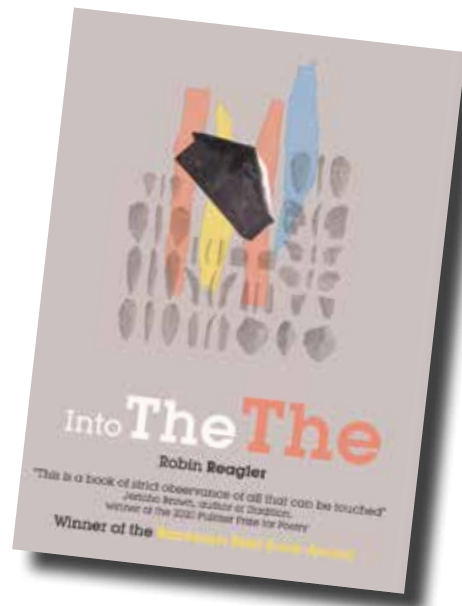
# Alumni News

Christopher Munde's (MFA, 2008) first book, *Slippage* (Tebot Bach 2019), was recently named a finalist for Utica College's Eugene Paul Nassar Poetry Prize.

David Nikityn's (MFA, 2020) story "The Rat Jar" appeared in *Mississippi Review* where it was named a finalist in the 2021 MR Fiction Prize.

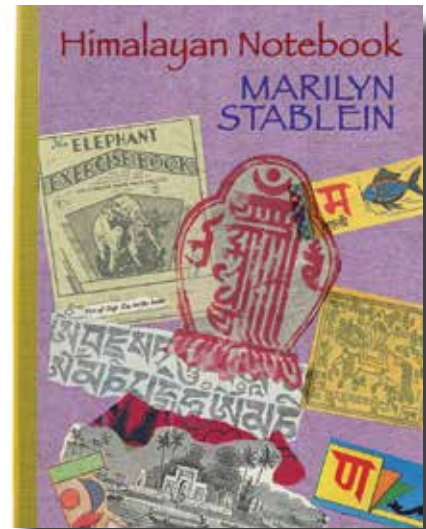
Aza Pace (MFA, 2018) had poems appear in *New Ohio Review*, *Passages North*, *South Dakota Review*, *Poets.org*, and the anthology *Odes and Elegies: Eco-Poetry from the Gulf Coast* from Lamar University Literary Press. She was the winner of a university Academy of American Poets Prize (selected by Kiki Petrosino) through the University of North Texas, where she is pursuing her PhD.

Robin Reagler's (PhD, 1994) book, *Into The The*, won the UK's Best Book Award and was published by Backlash Press in March. She retired from Writers in the Schools after 22 years, transforming the organization from serving 2,000 to 65,000 students each year. Currently she is the Board Chair of LitNet, the national advocacy group representing the literary sector and is doing consulting work in education and literature.



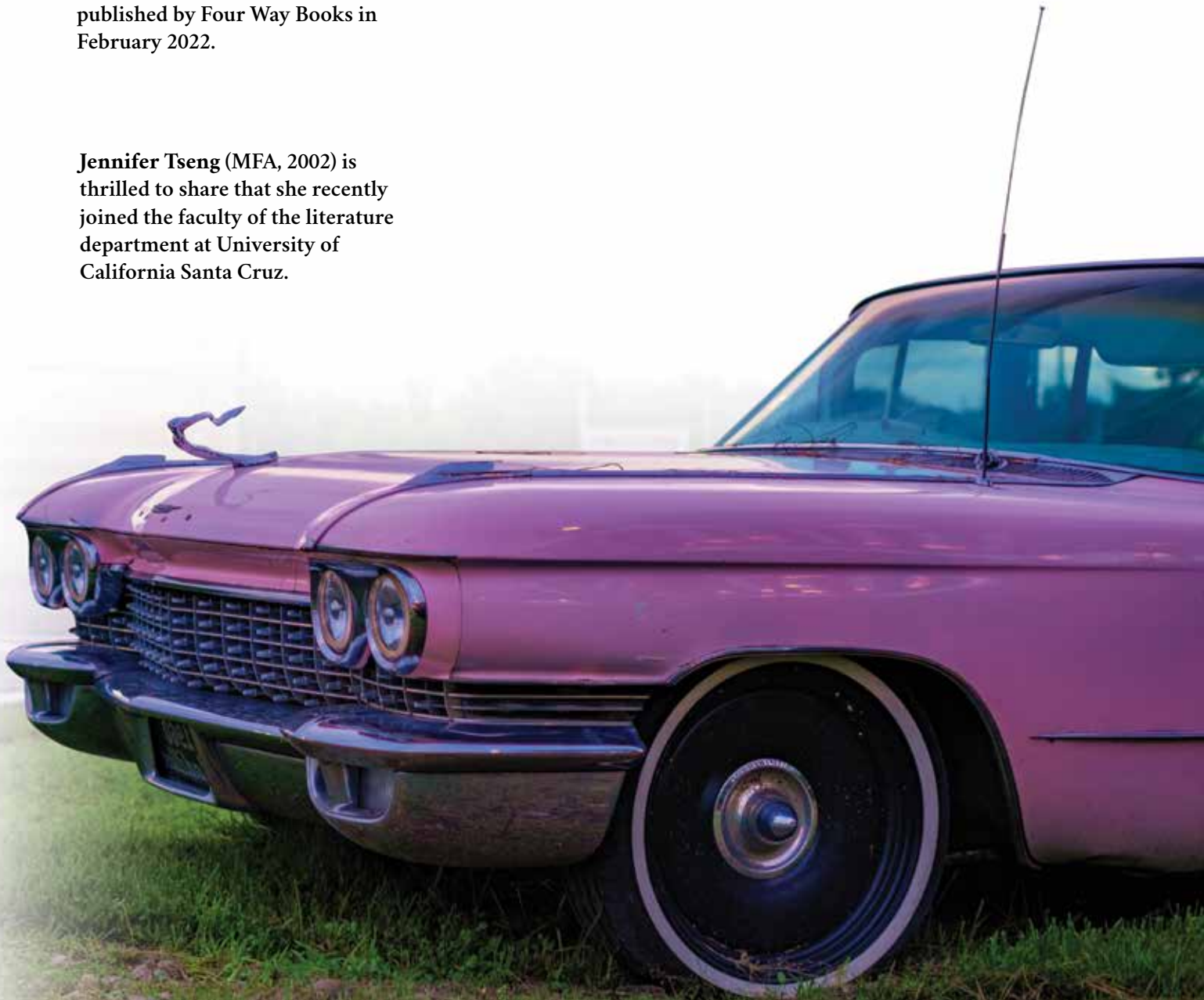
J.D. Smith (MA, 1989) has two books forthcoming. His fifth poetry collection, the light verse collection *Catalogs for Food Lovers*, will be published in late 2021 or early 2022 by Kelsay Books. His first fiction collection, *Transit*, which includes a story set in Houston, will be published in late 2022 by Unsolicited Press. He offers updates by social media including @Smitroverse on Twitter.

In 2021 Red Fox Press, Ireland, released a limited edition, numbered, hard cover artist book of Marilyn Stablein's (MA, 1984) collages *Himalayan Notebook*, which is part of an ongoing vernacular series of time / place based visual journals, this one inspired by a seven year residency in the Himalayas to study calligraphy, Tibetan art and Asian book arts. *Houseboat on the Ganges & A Room in Kathmandu* was recommended reading during the pandemic by *Rain Taxi*. <https://www.raintaxi.com/pandemic-reflections-on-houseboat-on-the-ganges-a-room-in-kathmandu/>. New work appeared in *Gargoyle* and *Otoliths* magazines.



**Yerra Sugarman** (PhD, 2016) took part in a panel at the 43 Annual ALTA conference (The American Literary Translators Association). The title of the panel was “Skyscrapers or Gardens?: A Discussion of the Power of Paratext.” The moderator was Conor Bracken, and the other presenters were Philip Metres and Jake Syersak. Yerra has had work recently published or forthcoming in: *New Orleans Review*, *New England Review*, *Best of Tupelo Quarterly*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Arts & Letters Journal*. Her poetry book, *Aunt Bird*, will be published by Four Way Books in February 2022.

**Jennifer Tseng** (MFA, 2002) is thrilled to share that she recently joined the faculty of the literature department at University of California Santa Cruz.



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**(Annual) Napa Valley Writers' Conference**

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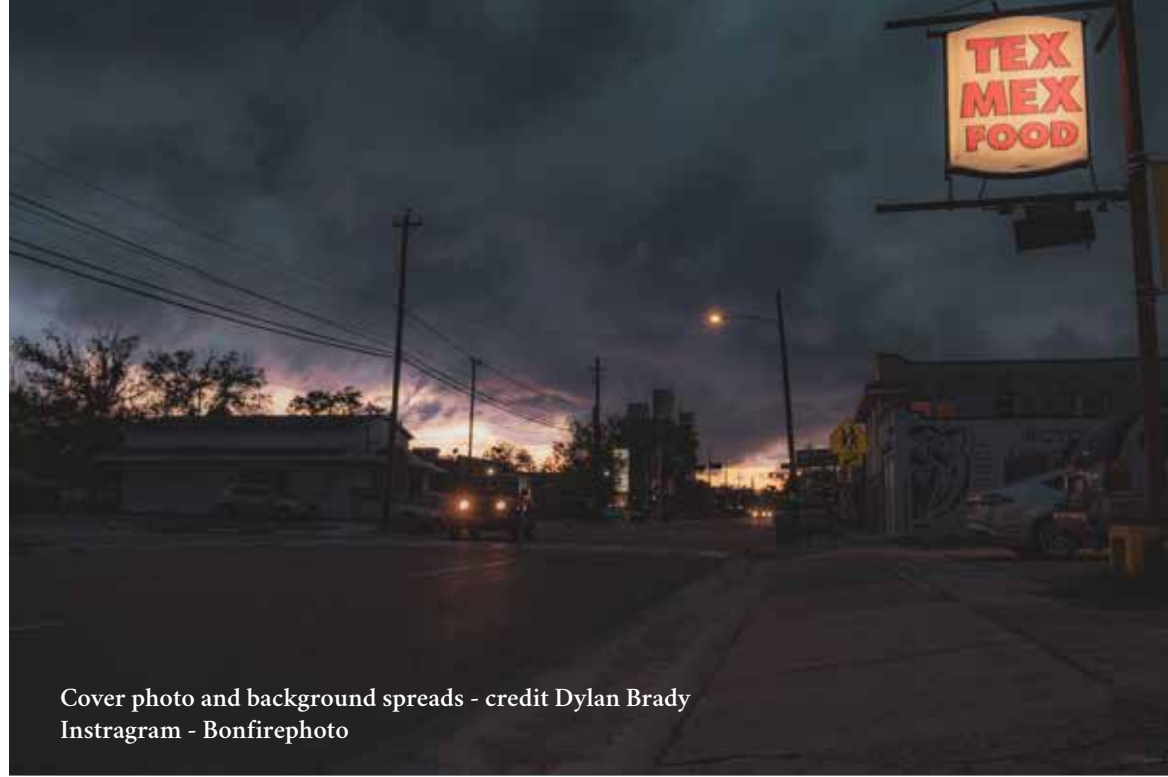
Faculty

Alexander Parsons  
*Director*

Erin Belieu  
Robert Boswell  
Audrey Colombe  
Chitra Divakaruni  
Nick Flynn  
francine j. harris  
Antonya Nelson  
Kevin Prufer  
Martha Serpas  
Roberto Tejada  
Peter Turchi

*Introducing:*  
Brenda Peynado





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