A photograph of a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent tower, likely a part of Vanderbilt University. The building features arched windows and a gabled roof. In the foreground, there are trees with bright yellow autumn leaves, and a paved path leads towards the building. The overall scene is bathed in warm, golden light.

Vanderbilt Creative Writing

Fall 2022 | Volume 1

Vanderbilt University College of Arts and Sciences

To Grow

Rick Hilles, Associate Professor of Creative Writing

●●● *After Piet Hein* ●●●

There appeared before our eyes a tuft of grass
on the earth.

Warm sunlight spread over it, as from spilled juice.
Whatever the sunlight touches grows.

It grows in sunlight, in sudden rains, in snow-squalls,
in thunder storms.
Every little random treat, trinket, arbitrarily given sign
gives it form.

Small charred bits from bonfires comingling in the air with
compromised juices
squeezed liquids, nectars, coming going through it bloom
fresh airs and scents.

Another world appears out of the merest discarded gloom:
an inviting bath
edged with green waist-high spearhead corn-silk stalks tipped
with shriner's plumes.

Even the hardest shell will stretch, the Absolute bursting
the encasings of seeds.
Small hardly noticeable things, that weren't there before,
now will poke through.

Softly created veins branch, leaf by leaf, into nervous systems
out of mud.
Such fullness! And out of what? Nothing? ...Yet it happens.
Minute tremors,

minute spasms, minute fissures, minute breaks, minute wounds,
minute somersaults.
Out of shadow a newly awakening world rubs its eyes, waking,
it eclipses the sun.

We have some serious work ahead of us, without a doubt,
we do.
One needs to believe oneself so deserving, so rich, so strong:
To grow.

VOLUME ONE

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Fall 2022



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Letter from the Director

Since my arrival to Vanderbilt, occasionally while biking or walking, I mentally journey backward to an era belonging to my grandparents, Major and Lucille Gooch, who were born in Nashville in the early 20th century. I see Nashville, like today, as a bustling city and take stock of its growing significance and prosperity, then and now. In my grandparent's time, however, opportunities were circumscribed by Jim Crow segregation and racialized violence,

Full letter on page 04



Letter from the Director

Since my arrival to Vanderbilt, occasionally while biking or walking, I mentally journey backward to an era belonging to my grandparents, Major and Lucille Gooch, who were born in Nashville in the early 20th century. I see Nashville, like today, as a bustling city and take stock of its growing significance and prosperity, then and now. In my grandparent's time, however, opportunities were circumscribed by Jim Crow segregation and racialized violence, which led them, like so many African Americans, to leave the South for better prospects, in what we know as The Great Migration. My grandparents settled in Philadelphia by way of the military. My grandfather lied about his age so that he could enlist in the U.S. Army. He served KP duty at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina and shared many stories of serving thousands of soldiers of all backgrounds during World War II.

Although he was not a writer, my grandfather had a penchant for language in the service of some moral lesson. One of his stories involved the abuse of special privileges. With his keys, he snuck into the chow hall late one evening and cooked himself a special dinner of steak and mashed potatoes. The scent of food wafted across the barracks to the quartermaster's room who shortly walked in and asked Major Gooch to whip him up a plate of the same. After pleasantly discussing the St.

Louis Cardinals' winning season beneath a fluorescent lamp, after taking his last bite of ribeye, the Staff Sergeant sentenced Major to seven days of peeling potatoes. By week's end, my grandfather calculated he peeled forty bags which left his fingers hurting for days. It took him about a decade to eat mashed potatoes again. His stories about his days in Nashville as a kid were equally vivid and entertaining, often possessing some moral for me and my cousins to carry with us into our lives. I wished I could have transcribed some of those tales so that I could live with them forever and pass them down to generations behind me.

Whether invented or taken from real life, I marvel at the gift of storytelling and the imagination to transfer experiences from long ago; the other function of writing, of course, is to test the limits of language and present-day values, and, in so doing, give texture and shape to our future. Stories and poems carry systems of belief and assumptions, and it is the poets who most consider how language serves as a repository of our most treasured principles.

Such was the case of the poems and short stories we heard as a community at the Graduating MFA *and* the Undergraduate Creative Writing Major's readings this past Spring, culminating events that allowed us to celebrate talented writers in the English Department.

Several days later, we acknowledged and

expressed gratitude to retired Professors Kate Daniels, Mark Jarman, and Lorraine Lopez for their founding and leadership of the MFA Program in Creative Writing, Vanderbilt's only graduate arts degree. Through a series of brief remarks by Professor Tony Earley, Rick Hilles, and Didi Jackson, we acknowledged their gifts in creating a diverse community of writers who represent the promise of arts and letters, and made Vandy's Creative Writing Program one of the important nationally ranked programs in the country.

Through their initiative, Vanderbilt graduates have published books of poetry and fiction with esteemed literary presses. Many of our graduates have made enormous contributions to contemporary literature by writing and publishing stories, poems, and essays in distinguished literary magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Paris Review*, and further, many have won honors and awards including the Kate Tufts Award, Fulbright Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, Pushcart Prize, Stegner Fellowship, and many more. We were proud to present broadsides to mark the occasion which you can view at the end of this newsletter.

Building on Vanderbilt's literary history,

their leadership also included the founding of the Gertrude C. and Harold S. Vanderbilt Reading series which has made Nashville a destination for some of the most celebrated writers of our times. Last year was no exception as students heard from a diverse range of powerful writers including Sonia Sanchez, Tommy Orange, and local writer Margaret Renkl, whose book *Graceland, At Last*, received the 2022 Southern Book Prize for Nonfiction.

In addition to welcoming new faculty member this semester, Lydia Conklin, whose debut of short stories *Rainbow Rainbow* published this summer, we greet MFA graduate students Nathan Blum (fiction), Lela Ni (fiction), Carson Colenbaugh (poetry), Michael Carlson (fiction), Alissa Morgan Barr (poetry), and Anika Potluri (poetry). We are enormously proud of current and admitted students. You can read about their accomplishments in our first newsletter.

I'll sign off with a request. We have not come up with a name for our newsletter and welcome any suggestions. Meanwhile, stay tuned to upcoming events and gatherings. Writing communities thrive through interactions across a belief in the power of storytelling and song.



Professor Major Jackson

Gertrude Conway Vanderbilt Chair in the Humanities
Director of the MFA Program and Creative Writing



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:

An Interview with

Lydia Conklin



What makes you most excited about teaching at Vanderbilt? What are you most looking forward to here?

I'm so excited for the people. I've already spoken to some of the students, and have met many of my new colleagues. The students are amazingly talented and driven and also kind and open—a fabulous and unusual combination. And the faculty members are such literary superstars. It will be such a joy and an honor to work with such generous, brilliant people.

What do you believe are the most crucial steps a Vanderbilt undergraduate should pursue as a writer?

For me the two most important steps to focus on at the undergraduate level are building a practice and following your interests. If it's possible to try to write a little bit every day, even if only for ten minutes, that will be transformative for improving and developing your skills. And it's crucial to write about what interests you and thrills you, not what you think you *should* write about.

What are you currently reading, and what ideas does it spark for you?

I just read the short story collection “Nobody Gets Out Alive” by Leigh Newman, who is my editor, and I was blown away by the humor and wildness of her stories. I just read my favorite one—the first one—aloud to someone and felt completely humbled by her turns of phrase and the way she animates a scene.

Lydia Conklin earned a BA in Art from Harvard University and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Currently, they are the Helen Zell Visiting Professor of Fiction at the University of Michigan, and in September, they will join the Vanderbilt creative writing faculty as an Assistant Professor of English.

ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



Lydia Conklin's short story collection *Rainbow Rainbow* was published by Catapult Books in May. Recent short stories of theirs were published in *American Short Fiction*, *Code Lit*, *One Story*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *The Baffler*.

Professor emerita **Kate Daniels'** memoir *Slow Fuse of the Possible* was published by West Virginia University Press in January, 2022.

Didi Jackson won the 2022 Robert H. Winner Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. Recent poems of hers were published in *Oxford American*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Northwest Review*, & *Bennington Review*.

Major Jackson has been named to the Board of Governors of the Poetry Society of America.



He recently received a Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, and the University of Michigan Press published his essay collection *A Beat Beyond* this month. Recent poems of his were published in *Oxford American*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Poem-A-Day*.

Professor emeritus **Mark Jarman's** poetry collection *Zeno's Eternity* will be published by Paul Dry Books in 2023.

Sheba Karim won the South Asia Book Award and was named a finalist for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators'

Golden Kite Award for Young Adult Fiction for her novel *The Marvelous Mirza Girls* (Quill Tree: 2021). Her essay "To the Servant Girl Who Shared My Toys" was included in *Letter to a Stranger: Essays to the Ones that Haunt Us* (Algonquin: 2022), which aired on CBC Radio.

Lorrie Moore won the Berlin Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin. She also received an O. Henry Prize 2022 for her short story "Face Time," which was originally published in *The New Yorker*.

ZZ Packer participated alongside poet Danez Smith in the **PEN America Austin Program** "Who is Afraid of Black Books?," a conversation that reflected on recent book bans and the power of literature to spur important cultural conversations. She was a featured faculty member at Napa Valley Writer's Conference, and will serve as the 2022 judge for AWP's Grace Paley Prize for Short Fiction.



Sandy Solomon received an artist residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Her recent and forthcoming poems have or



will be published in *The New Yorker*, *Plume*, *Kenyon Review*, *Hopkins Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Scientific American*, *Vox Populi*, and *Moment Magazine*.

MFA CANDIDATES



Nathan Blum's short story "**The Coywolf**" was published in the fall 2021 edition of *The Westchester Review*.

Kanuk Kapur received the Tennessee Williams Scholarship to attend the Sewanee Writers' Conference.



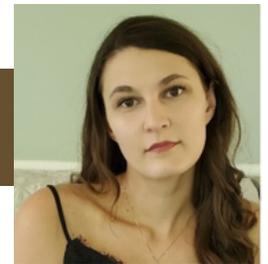
Danny Lang-Perez has a short story forthcoming in *Kenyon Review*.

Jessica Lee received a scholarship to attend the Sewanee Writers' Conference.



Sam Marshall has a forthcoming short story in *Gulf Coast*. She will be a participant in the 2022 Sewanee Writers' Conference.

Alissa Morgan Barr received a 2022 Rona Jaffe Scholarship to attend the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference.



John Mulcare received a scholarship to attend the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

Em Palughi's poem "**Alabama Pace**" was published in *Black Warrior Review* and reprinted on *Verse Daily*.





Alex Peterson participated in the 2022 Tin House Summer Workshop. She received an Italia Scholarship award to attend the Leopardi Writing Conference.

Jess Silfa received a Ricardo Salinas Scholarship to attend Aspen Summer Words.



Caroline Stevens won the 2022 Vanderbilt Academy of American Poets Prize for her poem "[Bordered.](#)"

Pallavi Wakharkar's short story "Simple Animal" was published in *The Iowa Review*. She received the Olive B. O'Connor Fellowship in Creative Writing at Colgate University, and she was named a finalist for the Philip Roth Residence in Creative Writing at Bucknell University.



Fall 2022 M.F.A. party

UNDERGRADUATES



Click here to see the students featured in the Vanderbilt Writing Studio's 2022 Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium

Cailin Welles Bracken's "A Letter to College Sports," written for Professor Amanda Little's non-fiction workshop "The Art and Craft of Opinion Writing" went viral this spring after publication on "The Mental Matchup." It was republished on the USA Lacrosse Magazine which led to an appearance on "Good Morning America."

Zhi-Ying Chua won first place in the 2022 Unity & American Democracy Poetry Contest for her poem "[International House](#)."

Eghosa Eguakun won the 2022 Merrill Moore Prize for Nonfiction. In July, 2021, her flash essay, "My Mini Me," written for Professor Justin Quarry's Advanced non-fiction course was published in The New York Times's "Tiny Love Stories."

Morgan Elrod-Erickson won *The Vanderbilt Review's* 2022 Best Poem award for his piece "[Dandelion](#)." He was a finalist for the 2022 Iris N. Spencer Sonnet Award, and he presented his poem "Message for X Æ A-XII" at the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Writing Symposium. His poem "[Bodysseus](#)" was recently published in *Zeniada*. Later this year, he will begin a Fulbright teaching English in Taiwan.

Abigale Harrelson won the 2022 Outstanding English Major Award. She is also the recipient of a tuition scholarship to the New York State Summer Writers Institute at Skidmore College. Her poem "[A Subverted Sex Poem](#)" was recently published in *The Vanderbilt Review*.

Farrah Hasan won second place in the 2022 Unity & American Democracy Poetry Contest for her poem "[Post-Hijab Memoir](#)."



Justin Quarry's Undergraduate Advanced Nonfiction Workshop, Spring 2022

Zhixian Li won third place in the 2022 Unity & American Democracy Poetry Contest for his poem "Island."

Kelly Morgan won the 2022 Merrill Moore Prize for Poetry and the 2022 Outstanding Honors Thesis Award. She received the Rudy Kikel Scholarship to the Fine Arts Work Center, as well as a tuition scholarship to the New York State Summer Writers Institute at Skidmore College. She has poems forthcoming in *Collision*, *Zeniada*, *Oakland Review*, *Rainy Day*, and *Outrageous Fortunes*.

Daniella Ndubuisi-Ike received a fellowship to complete her MFA in poetry at New York University. International British Somali poet and Beyoncé collaborator, Warsan Shire, shortlisted her poem for The Moth Poetry Prize. Her poem "I put on my blue light glasses at 3 a.m." was recently published in *The Vanderbilt Review*.

Eric Ponce won the 2022 Merrill Moore Prize for Fiction. In April, he presented his short fiction piece "McNifica" at the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium. This fall, he will attend the University of Texas El Paso's bilingual MFA program, where he has received a teaching assistantship in their English department.

Alexandra Rahill received an honorable mention in the 2022 Vanderbilt Academy of American Poets Contest for her poem "Dad's Drum Set Pantoum."

Marissa Reaves' flash essay, "Send the Old Stuffie," written for Professor Justin Quarry's Intermediate non-fiction course, was published in The New York Times's "Tiny Love Stories" in August, 2022.

Kay Shao received an honorable mention in the 2022 Vanderbilt Academy of American Poets Contest for her poem "Father Daughter Dances."



Congratulations to Harry Choi, Morgan Elrod-Erickson, Abigale Harrelson, Jan Kim, Annie Mahaffey, and Kelly Morgan, who successfully defended their creative writing honors theses this past May! Pictured: English Honors Cohort, May 2022

The Academy of American Poets Prize was established in 1955 to encourage interest in poetry and writing among college students. All students enrolled at Vanderbilt University are eligible to enter. This year's contest was judged by Destiny O. Birdsong, Vanderbilt M.F.A. alumna.

The Unity & American Democracy Poetry Prize was hosted by the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy in partnership with the Creative Writing Program. All Vanderbilt students were eligible to enter, and the theme was "what unity through American democracy means to me."

ALUMNI CORNER



Lisa Dordal's new poetry collection *Water Lessons* was published by Black Lawrence Press in March, 2022.

Tiana Clark received a 2022 Amy Lowell Poetry Traveling Scholarship, and had recent poetry included in *The Best American Poetry 2022*.



Carlina Duan's poem "Morning" was published in Issue 13 of *Green Linden Press*, and her poem "Consonance" was published in the October 2021 edition of *Poetry* magazine.

Chad Abushanab's poem "Once" was published in *Code Lit*.

Edgar Kunz' second collection of poetry, *Fixer*, is forthcoming from Ecco in 2023.

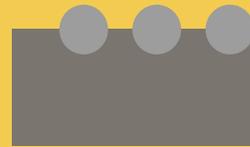


Madeline Goetz and Jack Sentell's humor piece "Meet the Only Sustainable Clothing Company That Upcycles Your Old Clothes and Sells Them Back to You" was published in *The New Yorker*.

Alumni, send us your news!

Please email any publications, fellowships, residencies, awards, or other writing-related accomplishments to creativewriting@vanderbilt.edu so we can celebrate with you!

OPPORTUNITIES



Creative Writing Conference at MTSU

Each Fall, MTSU Write celebrates its mission by hosting the Creative Writing Conference on the MTSU campus. The Conference brings together students, mentors, alumni, and members of the community for learning, networking, and recognizing program graduates.

This year's conference theme is "Truth or Dare: Writing Beyond the Boundaries of Form, Genre, Tough Topics & Taboo" and will feature classes and presentations that will invite you to edge out of your comfort zone, be it in terms of writing in a new form or genre or approaching topics that scare you. The Keynote Speaker will be acclaimed writer Sequoia Nagamatsu.



For more information and to register for the conference, click [here](#).

Southern Festival of Books: A Celebration of the Written Word



Humanities Tennessee presents The 34rd annual Southern Festival of Books: A Celebration of the Written Word! The Festival is among the oldest literary festivals in the country, annually welcoming approximately 200 authors and 25,000 visitors each October.

The Festival is free, and includes performance stages, food trucks, and more than 60 publishers and booksellers. For more information, click [here](#).

Linked Resources

[Fuse: Undergraduate Literary Journal Directory](#)

[BookJobs: Internships](#)

[New Pages: Call for Submissions](#)

[New Pages: Undergraduate Literary Journals](#)

[Poets and Writers: Contests, Grants, and Awards](#)

[Poets and Writers: Conferences and Residencies](#)

SEE ALSO:





Class of '22: M.F.A. Recipients

What was one of your most memorable moments in the M.F.A. program?

I loved the opportunity to teach several semesters of Beginning Fiction and was thrilled to share in my student's joy when her story from our workshop was awarded runner-up in One Story's annual teen writing contest.

—Lara Casey, *Masters in Fine Arts*

What activities most engaged your creative life while you were at Vanderbilt?

My most engaging class at Vanderbilt creatively was a Religion and Film class through the Divinity School with professor Jay Geller. The quantity and density of the readings, the difficulty of the films, and isolated nature of the pandemic gave me much to chew on in sterile times.

—Hayes Cooper, *Masters in Fine Arts*

Spending time with my friends and fellow writers outside of class was the most creatively engaging aspect of my MFA experience. I'd never had such a robust group of friends who were also writers before, and getting to talk informally with them about writing, but also all the living that inspires the writing, was really special.

—Pallavi Wakharkar, *Masters in Fine Arts*

What one piece of advice would you give an incoming M.F.A. student?

If I could give one piece of advice to an incoming MFA student, I'd say to just sink your teeth in! There are so many opportunities and the MFA is very much what you make of it. Immerse yourself in your writing and whatever writing community is best for you.

—Kiyoko Reidy, *Masters in Fine Arts*

For me, the four semesters of workshop went by really quickly. Workshop can be useful for all the obvious reasons, but one of my favorite aspects of it was getting to know my friends through their work -- coming to associate certain styles, images, movements, etc. with certain people. I'd say it is important to read generously in workshop, to pay attention to what excites you about the stories you encounter, and to make efforts to learn from those moments of excitement.

—Pallavi Wakharkar, *Masters in Fine Arts*

Class of '22: Creative Writing Majors

What was one of your most memorable moments in Vanderbilt's creative writing program?

The wonderful readings we had on campus were the most memorable experiences for me. Not only was it amazing to hear the work of so many gifted writers and get signed copies of their books, but having the opportunity to meet other creative writing students and professors really engendered a strong sense of community.

—*Abigale Harrelson, B.A. in English and Communication of Science and Technology*

At Vanderbilt, how did you engage with both creative writing and critical studies, and how did those subjects intersect for you?

The critical work I did in my literary studies classes always influenced my development as a writer—I think your reading inevitably has a hand in shaping your writing—but this really picked up during the spring of my junior year. I was taking both a materialist theory course and a poetry workshop that semester, and I started directly responding to the theory I was reading in the poetry I was writing. I found this approach incredibly fruitful, and those poems ultimately formed the basis for my honors thesis the following year. I think learning to meld my critical and creative work like this is one of the most important skills I acquired at Vandy, and I really appreciate the professors who pushed me to approach my work from this direction.

—*Kelly Morgan, B.A. in English*

Now that you've graduated, what are your future creative writing aspirations?

I chose to study creative writing because I believe it is one of the few ways I can use everything I have ever learned, which is exactly what I plan on doing. In the near future I hope to write and publish fiction—I am currently at work on a collection of short stories, most of which are very short (Tik Tok length, I think)—that revolves around the lives and experiences of young Latinx people across the Americas. Vanderbilt has given me the tools necessary to craft my knowledge and experience into art and thanks to all of the incredible professors I've had I feel confident in my ability to create on a global level.

—*Eric Ponce, B.A. in English and Philosophy*

What one piece of advice would you give to incoming creative writing students?

My biggest piece of advice to new students would be to find/make at least one friend who's also a creative writer (in your preferred genre, though ideally you'll also have friends who write other genres too!) and have them be your writing buddy/buddies. Having a friend who's very familiar with your work is always helpful when you need suggestions or ideas, and they can also help keep you accountable—if you both have stories/poems you need to be working on, you can poke each other and make sure you're actually writing!

—*Morgan Elrod-Erickson, B.A. in English*

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

NASHVILLE REVIEW



The Vanderbilt Review

Undergraduate Literary and Arts Magazine

**Congratulations to our
Incoming Editors-in-Chief!**

Nashville Review: Jess Sumalpong

Vanderbilt Lives: Anqy Tong

Vanderbilt Review: Thanvi Dola



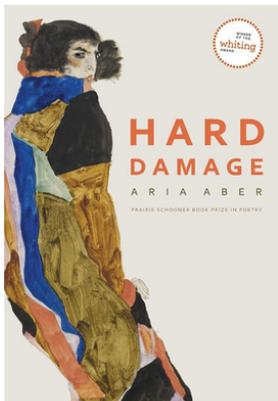
The Vanderbilt Review Launch Party, April 2022

To learn more about each magazine and to submit your work, please click the corresponding logo.

GERTRUDE C. AND HAROLD S.

Vanderbilt Visiting Writers Series

Readings occur Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. | Locations TBA



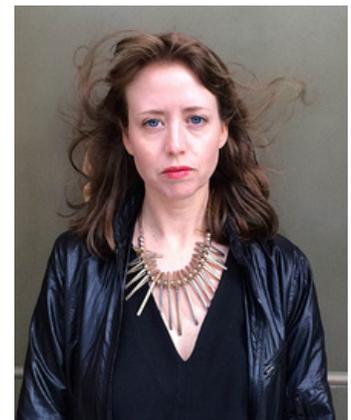
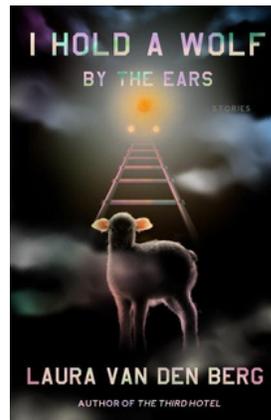
Introduced by Caroline Stevens

Aber's debut book *Hard Damage* won the Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry. Her poems are forthcoming or have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *New Republic*, *Kenyon Review*, and elsewhere. A graduate from the NYU MFA in Creative Writing, she holds awards and fellowships from Kundiman, Dickinson House, and the Wisconsin Institute of Creative Writing. She is the recipient of a 2020 Whiting Award in Poetry and is currently a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University. She is at work on a novel and a second book of poems.

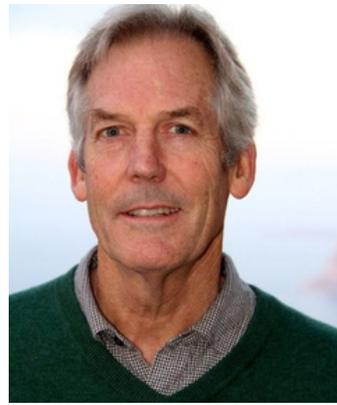
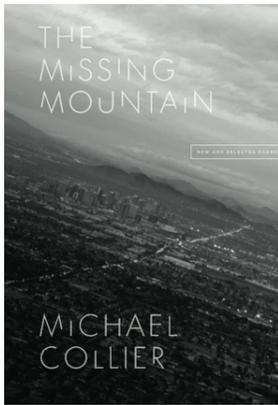
ARIA ABER | September 15

Introduced by Danny Lang-Perez

van den Berg is the author of five works of fiction, including *The Third Hotel*, a finalist for the New York Public Library Young Lions Fiction Award, and *I Hold a Wolf by the Ears*, which was one of Time Magazine's 10 Best Fiction Books of 2020. She is also the recipient of fellowships and awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts & Letters, Civitella Ranieri, and the MacDowell Colony. At present, van den Berg splits her time between Florida and New York State, with her husband, the writer Paul Yoon, and their dog, Oscar.



LAURA VAN DEN BERG | Sept. 29



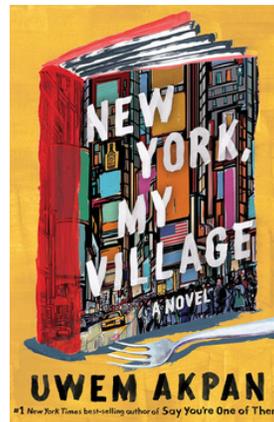
Introduced by Tandria Fireall

Collier has authored, edited, or translated eleven books. He has received Guggenheim and Thomas Watson fellowships, two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, a "Discovery"/The Nation Award, the Alice Fay di Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, and an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Director of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conferences from 1994-2017 and Poet Laureate of Maryland from 2001-2004, he is an emeritus professor of English.

MICHAEL COLLIER | Oct. 27

Introduced by Sam Marshall

Akpan is the author of the novel, *New York, My Village*. His writing has appear in *The New Yorker*, the *Oprah* magazine, *Hekima Review*, and the *Nigerian Guardian*. His first book, *Say You're One of Them*, an Oprah Book Club selection, received the Commonwealth Prize (Africa Region), the Open Book Prize, and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. Uwem has been a Fellow at the Black Mountain Institute, Institute for the Humanities at University of Michigan, Yaddo Foundation, the Cullman Center and the Hang Center for Catholic Intellectual Heritage. Uwem teaches in the University of Florida's MFA Program.



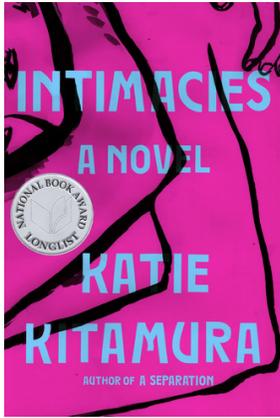
UWEM AKPAN | Nov. 10



Introduced by Kanak Kapur

Majumdar is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller and Editors' Choice *A Burning*, which was also selected as one of Margaret Atwood's "Quarantine Reads," a Barnes and Noble Discover Pick, and a Book of the Month Pick. She was born and raised in Kolkata, India. She moved to the United States to attend college at Harvard University, followed by graduate school in social anthropology at Johns Hopkins University. She works as an editor at Catapult, and lives in New York City. *A Burning* is her first book.

MEGHA MAJUMDAR | Jan. 26



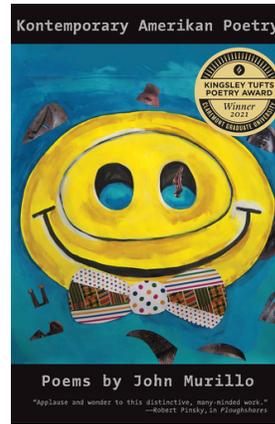
Introduced by Prof. Lydia Conklin

Kitamura is the author of four works of fiction, including the novel *Intimacies*, one of The New York Times' 10 Best Books of 2021 and one of Barack Obama's Favorite Books of 2021. Her work has been translated into 21 languages and is being adapted for film and television. A recipient of fellowships from the Lannan, Santa Maddalena, and Jan Michalski foundations, she teaches in the creative writing program at New York University.

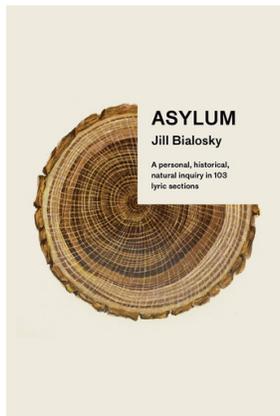
KATIE KITAMURA | Feb. 9 | Co-sponsored by the Asian Studies Program

Introduced by Lily Someson

Murillo is the author of two poetry collections. His most recent book, *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry*, won the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award and the Poetry Society of Virginia's North American Book Award, and was a finalist for the PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry and the NAACP Image Award. The recipient of a Four Quartets Prize, a fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts, two Pushcart Prizes, and numerous other honors, Murillo directs the creative writing program at Wesleyan University.



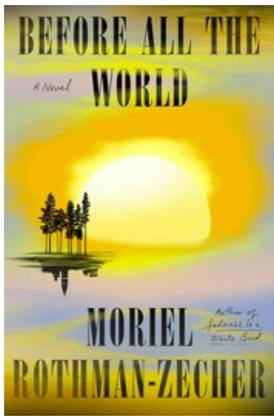
JOHN MURILLO | Feb. 23



Introduced by Prof. Major Jackson

Bialosky is the author of five collections of poetry, four novels, and two memoirs. Her newest volume of poetry, *Asylum: A Personal, Historical, Natural Inquiry in 103 Lyric Sections*, was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. Her poems and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *O Magazine*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Best American Poetry*, and elsewhere. She is an Executive Editor and Vice President at W. W. Norton & Company. In 2014 she was honored by the Poetry Society of America for her distinguished contribution to poetry.

JILL BIALOSKY | March 2



Introduced by Prof. Allison Schachter

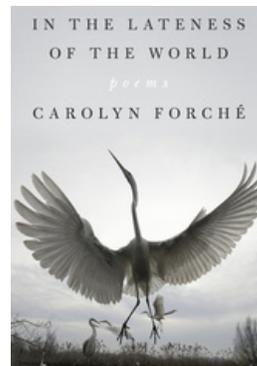
Rothman-Zecher is the author of the novels *Before All the World* and *Sadness Is a White Bird*, for which he was given the National Book Foundation's '5 Under 35' Honor, and named a winner of the Ohioana Book Award and a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. He teaches creative writing at the University of Dayton and online through the Catapult Writing Program.

Co-sponsored by

MORIEL ROTHMAN-ZECHER | Mar. 23 | the Jewish Studies Program

Introduced by Prof. Didi Jackson

Forché is an American poet, translator, and memoirist. Her books of poetry are *Blue Hour*, *The Angel of History*, *The Country Between Us*, and *Gathering the Tribes*. Her memoir, *What You Have Heard Is True*, was published by Penguin Press in 2019. In 2013, Forché received the Academy of American Poets Fellowship for distinguished poetic achievement. She was one of the first two poets to receive the Windham-Campbell Prize. She is a professor at Georgetown University. She lives in Maryland with her husband.



CAROLYN FORCHÉ | April 13



GIVING REMINDER

Please consider making a donation to the Vanderbilt Creative Writing Program to support future events like these. To do so, go to the [Vanderbilt Giving Page](#), enter your donation, select "Other," and search for "Creative Writing Program."

This speaker series is made possible by a contribution from the **Gertrude C. and Harold S. Vanderbilt** fund.

Congratulations

To our Class of 2022 M.F.A. graduates!



Third-Year M.F.A. Reading, May 2022. From left: Jessica Lee, Yi Jang, Pallavi Wakharkar, Kiyoko Reidy, Lara Casey, and Hayes Cooper.

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Evening reading with Vievee Francis, April 2022. Part of the Gertrude C. and Harold S. Vanderbilt Visiting Writers Series.

Rethinking the Burning of Books

Regret is the only book I've ever
Burned: I threw it into the fire
As a useless text, and resolved
To stand still for awhile, and feel
The fire's heat, and not even try
To resist. The path backward
Is overgrown anyway before we
Even reach its end. We already saw
Its sights and blistered our feet
And froze our asses off walking
There the first time. We know its
Start and stop. So why go back?
A bonfire built to burn regret
Destroys every pathway leading
Back, and wastes no energy lighting
Up the dark environs of the unknown
Future that lies beyond its flaming
Circle. Its message is fiery and
Stark: five syllables flaming
In the present tense: *It is what it is.*
A declaration, of sorts. A manifesto,
If you will. A way to live.

KATE DANIELS



"Rethinking the Burning of Books" first appeared in *In the Months of My Son's Recovery*, 2019. This broadside was created to mark the occasion of the poet's retirement from Vanderbilt University, at the ceremony held on April 29, 2022. Designed and printed by May Day Studio, Montpelier, Vermont, in a limited edition of 25.

from *The Darling*

Hours later, her mind a busy hive, Caridad rose from the air mattress, careful not to disturb her sleeping sister, and padded to the front room where the damp books were ~~arrayed~~ on the floor. She flicked on a lamp to check these for dryness. Caridad found the novel that had been given to her by Esperanza in the hospital, the used copy of *Moll Flanders*. Caridad fanned its pages before flipping to the ending, and there she made out a three-word note scribbled in the margin, an annotation to countermand the book's pious ending—the heroine's resolve to repent for wicked living. The barely legible phrase called back that night in South Carolina, the amber glow of the night-light and this nearly forgotten message penciled in as a reminder, a promise to Caridad from a former and foresighted self: *You are loved.*

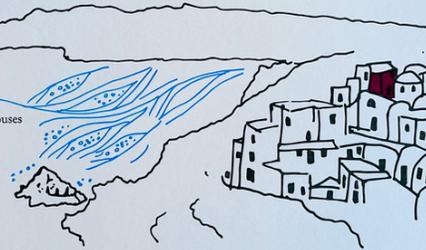
LORRAINE LÓPEZ

The Darling was published in 2015 by The University of Arizona Press. This broadside was created to mark the occasion of the author's retirement from Vanderbilt University, at the ceremony held on April 29, 2022. Designed and printed by May Day Studio, Montpelier, Vermont, in a limited edition of 25.

Santorini

On the clifftop snowy with whitewashed houses
in the one red building my wife is singing.
She is singing the Greek songs of Ravel,
her legato linking the breakage of time.
A volcano became a saint of peace
and now she lifts a note from its edge.
A lagoon turned blue in a basin of lava
and now her song floats on its light.
A caldera became a necklace of islands
and now she clasps it around her throat.
A cloud of ash turned to cloudless sky
and now the sun climbs through her voice.
In the one red building on the white-crested cliff
of a place blown apart, she is making it whole.

MARK JARMAN



"Santorini" first appeared in *The Heronry*, 2016. This broadside was created to mark the occasion of the poet's retirement from Vanderbilt University, at the ceremony held on April 29, 2022. Designed and printed by May Day Studio, Montpelier, Vermont, in a limited edition of 25.

These broadsides were created to mark the occasion of the retirement of creative writing faculty members Kate Daniels, Mark Jarman, and Lorraine López from Vanderbilt University at the ceremony held on April 29, 2022. Designed and printed by May Day Studio, Montpelier, Vermont, in limited editions of 25.



Faculty Retirement Party, April 2022.



Fall M.F.A. Party, 2021.



Vanderbilt University MFA Alumni

2008 - 2022

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Christopher Adamson
Ricardo Baez
Matt Baker
Rebecca Bernard
Jesse Bertron
Laura Birdsall
Destiny Birdsong
Alicia Brandewie
Elena Britos
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Rita Bullwinkel
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