

vol. 9

Winter 2023

WINTER TIME

MFA in Writing Newsletter



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN



The MFA in Writing community would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory, the traditional territory of Cree Peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. We pay our respect to the First Nation and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

SPECIAL
CONTRIBUTORS

- Daniel Bliss
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- Amy Gerein
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- Delaynie Palmer-Crosby

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*Congratulations to
Nicole Haldoupis
on signing a feature
film option for
Tiny Ruins!*





MFA DIRECTOR'S REPORT – 2023

DR. JEANETTE LYNES

This is the first MFA in Writing newsletter since 2019 when the Covid pandemic ground the world to a halt. What a time it has been! Despite the challenges of the past few years, our MFA in Writing program has flourished. Established in 2011, the program now has sixty-five graduates, a growing cohort of mentors, and an expanded faculty complement. Creative writing programming in the Department of English has been building at the undergraduate level as well. During fall, 2022, we returned to in-person classes and were grateful to come back to our beautiful campus on Treaty 6 Territory.

Congratulations to the Class of 2022! This energetic, lively group of writers not only persevered through the pandemic, but excelled: Ian Canon, Kristine Scarrow, Aliza Prodaniuk, Callum Wilson, Gunnar Ohberg, Özten Shebahkeget, Brandon Fick, Karen Wood, Delane Just. Miraculously, these students all converged in Saskatoon to walk across the stage at fall convocation and

receive their degrees. Most of them had never met in person due to classes being conducted online. We're so proud of these graduates! Also in autumn 2022, the MFA in Writing welcomed seven new students from across Canada and the United States.

There's much good news to share in these pages. We were pleased to partner again with the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and offer a hybrid Writing North conference in January 2023; Rahul Edwin covered Writing North and his stories appear in these pages. We're grateful to the Department of English for supporting this event.

In faculty news, Dr. Sheri Benning joined the Department of English on a permanent basis last fall. We're so fortunate to have Sheri's continuing contributions and her visionary engagement. During the pandemic, during lockdowns, she launched the MFA in Writing Variety Show which filled our isolated days with poetry, stories, and music from writers and musicians here at home in Saskatchewan and across the country. Sheri continues to oversee *The River Volta Review of Books*. We have been fortunate, too, to have novelist and scholar Sheheryar Sheikh teaching fiction. And as always, we have been blessed with amazing mentors. Our most recent men-

tors were Deborah Willis, Bill Gaston, Jacob Scheier, Marina Endicott, Lee Henderson, and Kristine Scarrow. Mentor Candace Savage received the 2022 Kloppenburg Literary Award; MFA in Writing student Delaynie Palmer-Crosby covered the award ceremony; her story appears in these pages.

Our current MFA students and graduates continue to impress me with their creativity, drive, and accomplishments. Tea Gerbeza received the Thesis Prize. Brandon Fick, Karen Wood, and Olive Scott won SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) scholarships. Ian Canon and Callum Wilson launched a literary magazine, *Quagmire*. Ian and Callum, along with Delane Just, ran the *River Volta* podcasts during the pandemic. Kristine Scarrow was appointed Writer in Residence at Saskatoon Public Library for the 2022-23 year. Özten Shebahkeget undertook an internship with CBC Manitoba. Amy Gerein covers in this newsletter the numerous books our MFA graduates have published over the past couple of years. Our graduates have done well in securing work in the arts sector, as editors, and publicity coordinators for publishers as well as winning arts grants. They also engage with the wider

writing community through involvement with local, artisanal presses.

I owe many debts of thanks. First, to the editors of this newsletter, Rahul Edwin, English student intern, and Erin Petrow, MFA in Writing student; to my colleague Dr. Sheri Benning for her sustained support throughout the pandemic, her teaching prowess, and leadership of *The River Volta Review of Books* and the MFA Variety Show; to the MFA students who carried the *River Volta* Reading Series torch through the pandemic – Dawn Muenchrath, Walker Pityn, Josiah Nelson, Olive Scott, Red Davis, Ashley Lekach; Nadine Penner in the Administrative Support Group; my colleagues in the Department of English for their support and professional service on thesis committees; Amy Gerein in the Department of Drama. Most of all, thank you to our fearless writing students, past and present. Your spirit and dedication brought us through the pandemic. It's challenging to provide a snapshot of almost four years in one report, but we're still here, still writing. And every day I recognize what an honour it is to work with MFA in Writing students at the University of Saskatchewan.

MFA IN WRITING CLASS OF 2022



MEET OUR GRADUATES



**IAN
CANON** He/Him

Ian is a Métis writer from Edmonton, Alberta. He was mentored by Scotiabank Giller Prize-winning author, Sean Michaels. He is the author of the novel *It's A Long Way Down* (2018), *Before Oblivion* (2017), and his thesis was a short story collection called *The Door To Truth Might Be Strangeness*. He is the EIC of *Quagmire Magazine*. His stories have been featured in *long con magazine*, *Brink Literary*, *in media res*, *Mont-réal Writes*, *The Sunlight Press*, *The Spadina Literary Review* and others. He has won the Illumination Prose Prize from *Spire Light Magazine* and was nominated by *long con magazine* for the best of the web fiction 2022.



**BRANDON
FICK** He/Him

Brandon is from Lanigan, Saskatchewan. His MFA in Writing thesis, *Only An Only Child*, was a short story collection exploring modern masculinity and small town life, and it was nominated for a Graduate Thesis Award. During his MFA, he was mentored by Governor General Award-winning writer, Guy Vanderhaeghe. Brandon's fiction has been published in *The Society*, *in medias res*, and *Quagmire*, and he's published book reviews in *Prairie Fire* and the *River Volta Review of Books*. His story, "Trip to Little Bighorn," was one of twelve long-listed for the 2022 Bridge Prize. He is currently a fiction editor for *Quagmire* and an intern with *Grain Magazine*.



DELANE JUST

They/Them

Delane is a Saskatchewan-based queer neurodivergent writer and graduate student in the MFA in Writing program at the University of Saskatchewan. Their thesis was a collection of short stories about the queer millennial experience titled *Cryptids Anonymous*. They have also recently gotten a tattoo to commemorate the project! While polishing and submitting stories for publication at various magazines, Delane has been working away as a proofreader for *Grain Magazine* and Executive Director at JackPine Press. They have also been invited to read their work at Writing North 2023 which they are very excited about!



GUNNAR OHBERG

He/Him

Gunnar is a fiction writer and 2022 graduate of the Masters in Fine Arts program at the University of Saskatchewan whose poetry and short stories have appeared in *The Racket*, *in media res*, *The Mark Literary Review*, *Old Red Kimono*, and *The Fieldstone Review*, among others. His thesis and first novel, *Belly, Doc, KUDZU*, was nominated for an award for outstanding thesis by his alma mater. He currently works as a freelance editor of all things fiction. Gunnar lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where he enjoys drinking with friends and playing music... poorly.



ALIZA PRODANIUK

She/Her

Aliza's thesis was a gothic crime fiction novel *Freshwater Fury* that discussed societal deprivation in Sarnia, Ontario, by connecting crime in modern Sarnia to the Great Lakes Storm of 1913, demonstrating how the storms of life linger. Since completing her MFA, she has been working with Jamie Messum

from the University of Toronto to edit *Freshwater Fury* and travelling. She spent a month in Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Ireland and is preparing to head back to Ireland and on to France. She hopes to get into her Ph.D. in Scotland, but in the meantime, she is helping her mom open a coffee shop, freelancing, starting a magazine with Delane Just, and submitting work for publication. Her latest publications are "Amazone Time" in *Mulberry Literary* and "Two Page Tales," a short-fiction anthology she wrote with her writing group in Dundas, Ontario.

KRISTINE SCARROW

She/Her

Kristine is a Saskatoon author of four young adult novels all published by Dundurn Press. In the MFA in Writing, she wrote a short story collection titled *Only Human*, in which restrictive gender roles, marital discord, and domesticity feature heavily in the stories and invite the reader to consider ethical boundaries. She is working on an adult fiction medical novel and another YA fiction novel and is currently serving as the 2022-2023 Writer in Residence for the Saskatoon Public Library.



ÖZTEN SHEBAHKEGET

She/Her

Özten is a member of Northwest Angle 33 First Nation who grew up in Winnipeg's north end. She graduated from the MFA program in 2022. Her thesis, *Mashkode*, is a speculative verse novel set at the Manitoba legislative building which was initially drafted during a mentorship with Katherena Vermette. Her poetry has appeared in *CV2*, *Prairie Fire* and *the Winnipeg Free Press*. She joined CBC Manitoba in December 2021 and currently works as an online reporter. She also recently attended the Banff Centre's 2023 Winter Writers Retreat to further develop her MFA thesis under the guidance of Lisa Robertson.



CALLUM WILSON

He/him

Callum is an MFA in Writing Grad from Camrose, Alberta. His thesis was on creating literature through hauntological methods/being haunted. He's working on reinvigorations of ancient forms of poetry, is the poetry editor for *Quagmire Magazine* founded by fellow graduate Ian Canon. He'll be reading from his thesis at Writing North 2023.



KAREN WOOD

She/her

With roots in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, Karen's creative writing is fueled by a commitment to address gendered violence and informed by years of experience in research and community practice. Karen completed her

MFA in Writing at the University of Saskatchewan in 2022. Her MFA project, *Inheritance*, is a linked short story collection of eight fictional narratives of lives impacted by interpersonal violence and abuse. Delighting in the extraordinary capacity of artistic expression to create space for social and political engagement and activism, Karen is working on her first novel, as well as non-fiction articles related to gendered violence.

QUAGMIRE MAGAZINE

A LITERARY MAGAZINE WHERE PIGS FLY

Introducing a writer-first lit mag located in the Canadian prairies!

Now accepting short fiction submissions

Find us here: quagmiremagazine.com

QUAGMIRE MAGAZINE IS A WRITER-FIRST MAGAZINE CREATED BY IAN CANON, AN ALUMNI OF THE MFA PROGRAM. THEY PUBLISH ONE PHYSICAL ISSUE ANNUALLY. ON THEIR ONLINE PUBLICATION, THEY PUBLISH A BI-WEEKLY SHORT STORIES, POETRY, INTERVIEWS, AND MORE.



CALL FOR READERS!

The Fieldstone Review is calling for volunteer readers to help with this year's issue, REVERSALS. If you're interested in being a reader, please email us at fsr.editorinchief@usask.ca with your name, genre preference, and availability by the end of April.

THE FIELD STONE REVIEW

[The University of Saskatchewan's
online literary journal.](#)

About Us

The Fieldstone Review is an annual literary journal published digitally by graduate students in the English department at the University of Saskatchewan.

Established in 2006, the FSR has published poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and literary reviews by authors from Canada and abroad.

2023 Editorial Team

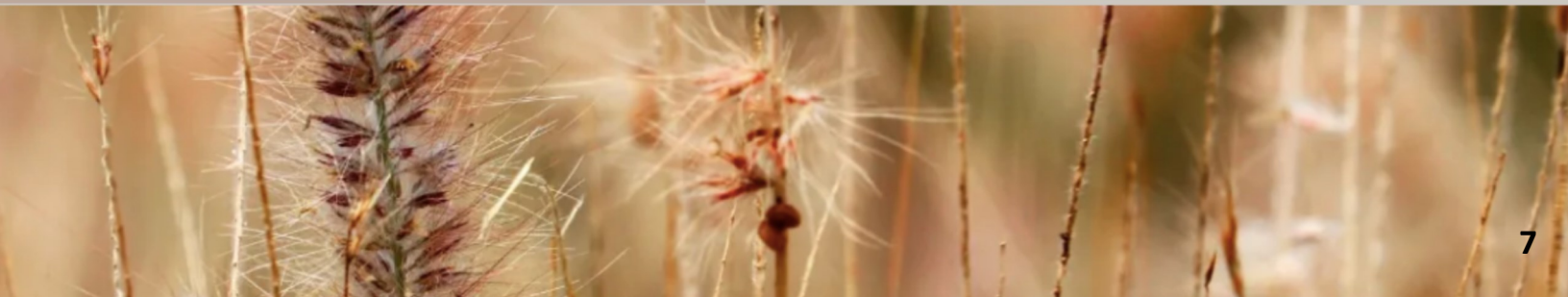
Editors-in-Chief: Walker Pityn (he/him)
and Dawn Muenchrath (she/her)

Fiction Editor: Josiah Nelson (he/him)

Poetry Editor: Olive Scott (she/her)

Nonfiction Editor: Red Davis (he/him)

Copy Editor: Jenna Miller (she/her)



An Interview with: Prof. Sheheryar Sheikh

Q: WHAT CAN A STUDENT EXPECT FROM ONE OF YOUR CREATIVE WRITING CLASSES? ARE THERE ANY UNIQUE STRENGTHS OR TEACHING METHODS THAT YOU ARE KNOWN FOR?

First of all, I am super enthusiastic in class; ridiculously enthusiastic, maybe. This is the one thing I want to do in my life: teach and practice creative writing. I am fully there. Everything that exists outside the class is forgotten at that point. I don't have any other concerns except the text in front of us and what we are going to take out of it and build from there.

My methods are very intuitive. As well as building on much of the knowledge I have gained in the formal methods, I plan lessons with instincts about my students and what will resonate with them. For example, I was teaching layering, how to layer in a story—I used Nicholas Montemarano's "To Fall Apart," which is the story about the disappearance of a child, and the narrator is writing it from the perspective of the child's elder sibling, twenty-five years later. He [the sibling] is reminiscing about how his sister disappeared, and the layering that he does in the story is that he comes back to it again and again from a different angle, and years apart, and the two-years-later and twenty-five-years-later layers, as well as others, become intertwined into one narrative. But to pull them apart, and to show how the writer was going about creating the text, the analogy that I used was that of constructing the multiple layers of a lasagna: the layers that give structure, the ones that contain meat, sauce and flavour similar to the layers of a lasagna. I will use anything in the world to bring home the point to my students. I will go out of my way. I will also teach many different kinds of stories, and I will be uniquely passionate. I think that is my thing.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT THE CRAFT OF CREATIVE WRITING FROM YOUR STUDENTS?

I have always welcomed feedback from my students. One of the things I have learned from them was—in this course especially, Introduction to Creative Writing—give them texts that are as long as the ones they are required to write. For example, they had a word limit from 1800 to 2200 for the fiction piece, so now I will give them fiction pieces only that long so that they can focus on the quality of a similarly structured piece. I have learned, give them an example of what I am expecting to enable clarity of expectations.

I did, for a long time, consider writing a solitary effort. Even when my wife, a few agents, and a few publishers were giving me feedback, I thought that it was a solitary project. But the workshop environment of 115 people, working on a text, and smaller breakout groups of thirty people rather than eleven people workshopping, has made me realize how much of a collaborative effort it is to get your own writing into a certain shape. It has given me an idea of what kind of focus groups I want to make in the future. I don't want a limited group of two or three people. I might have fifteen people read my writing before I edit it.



INTERVIEW BY: Rahul Edwin

THIS YEAR, YOU HAVE TAKEN ON ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PROFESSOR. ARE YOU FEELING EXCITED, NERVOUS, HOPEFUL?

In Fall, 2022, I started teaching ENG 120, Introduction to Creative Writing, which has 115 students. I had three TAs to manage as well—MFA students, Daniel, Sara, and Owen—and from the get-go working with them was just a wonderful collaborative team effort. We were all on the same page, sharing ideas, working as peers.

Along with the teaching, I have been trying to finish up my Ph.D. I did not get a lot of work done in the last three years, and I have suffered a bit from 2020 to 2022 because I have mostly been taking care of my son at home. But at the same time, I would never pass up an opportunity to teach creative writing. And this has been a blessing—not even in disguise. Teaching the ENG 120 enabled me to finally embrace teaching creative writing completely. It has been difficult balancing it with my dissertation and family life, but I have been able to pull nights, get it all together.

Now, in Winter 2023, I am teaching an advanced creative writing course in fiction, and working on their developing novels with 9 students is an incredibly rewarding experience. I am nervous before every class, but the excitement takes over as soon as things start clicking into place—and my students have enabled at least half of that clicking.

Q: ARE THERE ANY PROJECTS THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I am working on several different projects, and hopefully two or three of them will see the light of day in the next few years. My current novel in progress is a work set within the pandemic, and it focuses on the relationship between a father and his son. I have been slowed down in the creative writing because of the PhD, but now that it's nearing an end, I am excited about soon becoming fully immersed in the teaching and writing of fiction.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE FIRST STEP A NOVICE WRITER NEEDS TO TAKE TOWARD BECOMING A BETTER ONE?

The first step is to realize that this is going to be a long journey and to not be afraid that it is going to be a long journey. When you're five years old, you think you want to be forty at once, but this is a long, very rewarding journey, very painful as well. It is meaningful; the pain is all meaningful.

There is a segment from *Inside the Actor's Studio* by Ben Kingsley where one of his students asks, 'What can an apprentice actor do while he has so much energy and there is no role coming?' And he gave this wonderful answer about how acting is a tribal thing. You are going to be entrusted with a bow and arrow when you are ready. And you're only ready for so much at certain points. At first, you may only be given the bow, and all you can do is twang it. But you will twang it so perfectly, if you're engaged with it, that you become fully immersed in the twang that when they give you an arrow, you will think, I am not ready yet. I don't want this.' You must be so immersed in what you are given in the moment that nothing else matters.

Similarly, I believe that a novice writer must be focused on the project that he or she or they are excited by and focus on it to the complete exclusion of things. The purpose of completing the first draft of a novel is to get that story down, yes, but also to complete that project—to internally, bodily experience, what it takes to complete a project. And once you know what it takes to complete a project, you can complete a better project after that. And being a writer is to keep on successively completing one project after another, in a long concatenation

Sheheryar B. Sheikh (Shero) has an MFA from the University of Notre Dame ('07), and he has published two novels with HarperCollins India, *The Still Point of the Turning World* ('17) and *Call Me Al: The Hero's Ha-Ha Journey* ('19). His shorter fiction has appeared in journals including *Prism International* and the *Black Warrior Review*. At the U of S, Shero is finishing up his PhD on post-9/11 American fiction while writing his third novel, for which he has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and SK Arts.

RED DAVIS

Red is a disabled & neurodivergent writer, artist, and chronic pain sorcerer. Red is from Calgary, Alberta, though he grew up in Prince George, B.C. Red completed both a BFA in Drawing at the Alberta College of Art & Design (now AU Arts) in 2011 and a BA in English (Art History minor) at Mount Royal University in 2019. His dystopian creative thesis, critical disability research, and arts practice are all directed towards challenging and subverting culture tropes of disability and neurodivergence. Red believes speculative works of fiction, especially science-fiction & fantasy, have the unique abilities to challenge (or reinforce) an audience's assumptions of social issues to a greater degree than most genres. He promotes how speculative works can invite new awareness by showcasing the realities and possibilities, both positive and negative, of nonconforming minds and bodies.

ASHLEY LEKACH

Ashley is writing an animal fable focused on exploring themes of disability and otherness. She enjoys writing about nature, queerness, and fairy tales through short stories and novels.

DAWN MUENCHRATH

Dawn is a writer originally from rural Alberta. Her poems and short stories have appeared in *Grain*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Every Day Fiction*, and *in media res*. She currently lives in Saskatoon, where she is completing her MFA in Writing at the University of Saskatchewan and working on her first novel. She has two cats.

SECOND YEAR

CURRENT

JOSIAH NELSON

Josiah's thesis is a collection of fabulist short stories. His work has appeared in *San Antonio Review*, *Vast Chasm*, *Fractured Lit*, and *the Rumpus*. He lives in Saskatoon.

WALKER PITYN

Walker is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Saskatchewan, where he writes poetry and realistic fiction. His work explores coming of age, codependency, and anticipatory anxiety. His work has been published in *in medias res*. He is a contributing editor at *ARC Poetry* magazine.

OLIVE SCOTT

Olive Scott is a second year student in the MFA program from Belleville, Ontario. She has a degree in Greek and Roman History from the University of Toronto and is currently working on her thesis---a retelling of ancient Greek tragic plays in the form of a novel. She is a SSHRC award holder and has been published in *Acta Victoriana*, *the Hart House Review*, *In Medias Res*, and other literary magazines. In her spare time, she is a member of the Confucius Institute Dance Team, a choreographer for the Only Human Dance Collective, and the Poetry Editor for the *Fieldstone Review*.

HANNAH ACKERMAN

Hannah is a first-year MFA in Writing student. She graduated with an English degree from St. Mary's University, where she had her short fiction published in the university anthology, *Sightlines*. She is currently working on her thesis, a modern gothic fiction novel.

DANIEL BLISS

Daniel Bliss is an American poet who is excited to write a full-length poetry collection for his thesis. Daniel's poems focus on travel and a person's relationship to places and cities. Over the course of his six-month mentorship, he'll be working with Pittsburgh poet Christopher Poindexter to hone his craft.

SARA KRAHN

Sara is a writer from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is also a classically trained pianist and a recent graduate of the MA in Arts Leadership program at Queen's University. Her current research in the MFA in Writing program focuses on landscape mythologies of the Western prairies within a migratory moment, and folk-art practices among Mennonite women. Sara will begin a six-month writing mentorship with Canadian author Lisa Moore in April 2023.

DELAYNIE PALMER-CROSBY

Delaynie is a first year MFA in Writing student at the University of Saskatchewan, where she received her BA in English in 2022. Her work has been published in *in media res*. Delaynie mostly writes short fiction and poetry which frequently focus on mental illness, trauma, and 2SLGBTQ+ issues. She is currently working on her thesis, a composite novel about loss and mourning.

STUDENTS

FIRST YEAR

TIM PATTON

Comedian.
1st Year MFA
Student.
From Hamilton,
Ontario.

ERIN PETROW

Erin joined the MFA in Writing program with an undergraduate honours degree in journalism from Toronto Metro University (formerly Ryerson University) and five years of reporting and editing experience at the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and *Regina Leader-Post*, where she published hundreds of articles nationwide receiving bylines in the *National Post*. Within her writing, Erin is interested in exploring the possible futures of politics and capitalism. During the MFA program Erin, alongside author and mentor Andromeda Romano-Lax, is working on her thesis project, a speculative fiction novel exploring female bodily autonomy, eugenics, and mental health in a postcapitalist world.

OWEN SCHALK

Owen is a writer from rural Manitoba. He is a columnist at *Canadian Dimension* magazine and has contributed to non-fiction publications including *Jacobin*, *Liberated Texts*, and *Monthly Review*. His fiction work has appeared in *Quagmire Literary Magazine*, *antlang.*, *Fairlight Books*, and others. His book on Canada's role in the war in Afghanistan will be published by Lorimer Books this fall. Owen's thesis is an eco-fiction novel set in a small farming community in Manitoba. His mentor during the MFA program is Michael Christie.



A CHANGE OF HATS: FROM MFA IN WRITING STUDENT TO SPL WRITER IN RESIDENCE AN INTERVIEW WITH: KRISTINE SCARROW

Q: BEING THAT YOU ARE ALREADY KNOWN FOR YOUR YOUNG ADULT NOVELS, IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY THAT PULLS YOU TOWARD THAT GENRE?

I didn't set out to specifically write YA, but I love the genre. Adolescence is a paradox between an exciting time of growing independence and utter misery. It's a time of life that sticks with us in ways other times of our lives may not.

I love that we can all recall those pivotal moments of our teen years. I think that is why YA draws a varied and extensive audience. I love the crossover appeal—there are just as many adults who read YA as teens.

Q: WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

AT THE SASKATOON PUBLIC LIBRARY?

Being the writer-in-residence at the library is fantastic. Being able to connect with writers of all ages and at different stages of their journey is so fulfilling. I've met with writers as young as 8 and 89. It's been a true honour. I wish I could do this job forever, but alas, soon it will be someone else's lucky spot.

I adore the library. Even as a regular patron prior to my residency, I was unaware of just how many programs, services, and resources there are. The library is continually evolving and adapting to make their services inclusive, accessible, and community-driven. And it's all free! The kindest people work there. They are book lovers who appreciate story deeply. What's not to love?

Q: ARE THERE ANY UNIQUE WRITING TIPS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH BUDDING WRITERS?

Always learn and grow. Attend workshops, read books on craft, find other writers to connect with. It can be a lonely world at times. Focus on creating. Write from your heart first. Let your head in on the process later, which is to say try to silence your inner editor or the voice that tells you that you can't.

I used to think the joy would come with publication, and while that's certainly an exciting and worthy goal, I've learned that the joy is really in the creating. Also, many writers do not consider themselves writers, especially if they don't have anything published. I say if it's in your heart to write and the desire to wrestle words into something thought-provoking, beautiful, or interesting is there—you're a writer.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL YOU TOOK AWAY FROM THE MFA IN WRITING PROGRAM THAT YOU DO NOT THINK YOU COULD HAVE LEARNED WITHOUT IT?

Many people were curious as to why I'd enter the MFA in Writing program given that I'd already established a writing career and published four novels. As my career has evolved, I'm being asked to mentor and judge more often and at times, I wasn't always certain of my ability to give solid, actionable, and meaningful advice in genres such as poetry, for example. I also have a strong desire to teach. I entered the program with the desire to become a more well-rounded writer and work in other genres (I wrote a short story collection for my thesis). I wanted to use my time wisely, take risks, stretch myself and ultimately prove to myself that I could learn and grow. I received all of this and more by being in the program. Plus, what other time in my life would I get to delve in all things writing for two whole years? This was a true thrill for me as it wasn't easy to return to school at middle age and as a mom of three teens.

continued from previous page.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY LITERARY PROJECTS CURRENTLY IN THE WORKS?

I am working on an adult medical fiction novel about the effects of burnout. I think this is an important topic with what the world has endured in the past few years. I'm midway writing both a middle grade and a YA novel. I'm also trying to revise the short story collection I wrote for my thesis.

Interview by:
Rahul Edwin

INKED

POETRY
BY MFA IN
WRITING
STUDENTS

IMPRESSTIONS

cat lady haikus

Highlighter eyes peek
from a dusty box, she stalks
toes that get too close.

Sleek, silvery wave
breaks, tsunami of softness
envelops flesh cliffs.

Soft grey wall rumbles,
purr brings calm, kiss keeps comfort.
Guardian of dreams.

-Erin Petrow

Home

I hope home
became as beautiful to you
as you swore, it could be to me.
-Dan Bliss

Looking on

*Introspection is a spring
when the cherry blossoms picket
in their all-pink gowns
refusing to brown.*

-Rahul Edwin

Road Repairs In July

Summer's air clicks, whirs with sounds
of metamorphosing dark on the urban highway.

Mechanical thunders pulse below dog-day cicadas,
wheeled gods drown nymphs' wings in steel.

Thrusting phallic necks towards the font, heedless,
headless mouths tar the infant road, a charcoal baptism.

Three figures at the foot of the crucifixion
in that Bacon painting bare teeth like these

gleaming machines, decapitated, gnaw the streets
and my brain, pounded meat, trying to read.

-Sara Krahn

MFA STUDENT DELAYNIE PALMER-CROSBY REPORTS FROM THE 2022 KLOPPENBURG AWARDS



The MFA in Writing program wishes to express the deepest condolences and sympathies to Cheryl Kloppenburg and family following the passing of Henry Kloppenburg in October.

My nervousness, a mixture of social anxiety and post-pandemic tension, fled as I walked the stairs up the Saskatoon Golf and Country Club on Treaty 6 Territory to attend the Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg Award for Literary Excellence. I entered a group of people, smiling, laughing, welcoming me with handshakes and hugs. As I sat at a table with a group of writers who, like me, started out with a pencil and a dream, I was overwhelmed by their friendly care. They asked about my own works in progress, gave me advice on managing the community, and made me feel like I belonged there just as much as any of them.

Alice Kuipers, the accomplished Young Adult fiction writer, welcomed us to the ceremony. Following Kuiper's initial comments and thanks, all stood for the Honourable Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Then, those in attendance were served a decadent lunch and the room was once again bursting with the buzz of laughter and whispers of anticipation.

Mirasty was first to speak after the meal. Greeting us first in Woodland Cree, followed by English, before thanking to the event's host, the Saskatchewan Writer's Guild. He recognized the influence the SWG has had over the many years since its establishment. He also thanked Henry and Cheryl Kloppenburg for their generosity. Mirasty was followed by the Mayor of Saskatoon, Charlie Clark, who took his time to express his gratitude towards writers and the escape they

provide to their readers. He acknowledged the award ceremony as a way to "celebrate

writers" and all they do for the community.

The Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg Award for Literary Excellence, established in 2010, was created after Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg, lawyers and philanthropists, noticed artists and writers in Saskatchewan were not receiving significant recognition. The couple wanted to acknowledge those in the community who have "written a substantial body of literary work and had a significant impact on writing in Saskatchewan." The award, a total of \$10,000 and a framed print from the work of award-winning Saskatchewan artist Dorothy Knowles, honours the impact the arts have on a community and, indeed, celebrates writers.

Cheryl Kloppenburg listed the previous twelve winners as those listening leaned closer in anticipation.

Applause erupted as Candace Savage was announced as the 2022 recipient of The Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg Award for Literary Excellence. After a moment for applause, Cheryl Kloppenburg acknowledged Savage's successful literary past and many awards. Once pictures were taken and the excited hum of the room calmed, Savage stood at the podium.

Savage was born in the Peace River Country of northern Alberta but now mainly resides between Saskatoon and Eastend. After giving recognition to the Indigenous peoples on Treaty 6 Territory. Savage described the Saskatoon area as "a land of stories" and said she was humbled and proud to have the oppor-

tunity to contribute to this tradition of storytelling. Regarding the prestigious award, Savage said it was "comforting, grounding" to be honoured in such a way. She then thanked the Kloppenburgs for their continued generosity and read a passage from her picture book *Always Beginning*.

Watching Savage receive this award was especially inspiring to me. Like Savage, I originate from an often-overlooked rural area and have worked towards being a writer for most of my life. Her triumph resonates with me and others who have often felt their origin could not align with recognition. Savage has shown me that through ambition, hard work, and the ever-growing support one can find in Saskatchewan's writing community, we can become more than the place we were born.

After Savage's reading, Henry Kloppenburg spoke briefly. He shared his experiences with writers in Saskatchewan and expressed his gratitude for them.

The closing remarks were delivered by Kuipers, who gave a final congratulations to Savage, thanks to the Kloppenburgs, and a farewell to everyone. Most in attendance stood and began socializing, many trying to squeeze their way through the crowd to give their congratulations to Savage. I remained seated, watching old friends and colleagues be reunited after being separated because of COVID-19. Sitting in the beautiful country club surrounded by strangers, I couldn't help but be overwhelmed with a sense of familiarity and belonging. I left the ceremony knowing that with some ambition, hard work, and the support of this amazing community, I, too, could become the writer I dream of being.



AN AMERICAN IN THE PARIS OF THE PRAIRIES

DANIEL BLISS

You're probably wondering how an American who went to school in Philly ended up on the prairies of Canada for a master's program. My journey to the great white north started with a late-night Google session looking at different writing programs across the States before adding Canada to my search out of pure curiosity. After a few hours of searching, I landed on a university shockingly good at football and smack in the middle of the country, the University of Saskatchewan.

The writing MFA had everything programs in the States lacked. It was well-balanced, exposed students to all forms of writing, and was taught by professors who supported each student as individual writers. When I was accepted, it was a no-brainer that USask was where I'd call home for the next two years.

From a cultural standpoint, I didn't know what to expect. We Americans have the most clichéd stereotypes of Canadians. In the States, we assume Canadians are the nicest people on Earth, all play hockey, drink maple syrup with every meal, and have this mysterious thing called healthcare. While some of these things are true, I've discovered so much more about Canada while at USask.

It's the slight cultural differences I noticed first. The small things that you wouldn't think would matter add a charm to Saskatoon. Before integrating myself into the city, I couldn't have told you bunny-hug meant hoodie, toque is a beanie, ketchup could be a chip flavour, or that saying thank you to the bus driver is commonplace. I would have never guessed it was possible to be as friendly as the locals of Saskatoon.

As fall turned to winter, I got to experience the full force of a Canadian winter. The type of cold that sticks to your lungs and hangs ice from your eyelashes. The kind of cold I didn't know existed anywhere outside of Antarctica. When I first felt -20 Fahrenheit, it made sense why even in late August, locals were warning me to get ready for winter. The term "base layer" became new to my vocabulary, but one locals were happy to teach along with the other four layers needed to make it across campus.

Even on the coldest days, there hasn't been a single moment where I've doubted my decision to come to USask. In my first year alone, I've already become a better writer, met friends I'll keep for a lifetime, and had the opportunity to teach writing workshops to eager students always willing to ask questions about being American along with guessing the origins of my accent.

In just seven months, Saskatoon, through all its oddities and feet of snow, has felt like a home I've never found anywhere else in all my travels. I would encourage any writer and student to come to the USask; there's nowhere as friendly and welcoming as Saskatchewan.

TWELVE YEARS OF TALENT: CELEBRATING THE INSPIRED MINDS PROGRAM

Creative Escape 2012:

Inmate Stories & Art



Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre

Creative Escape 2017

Inmate Stories and Art



Creative Escape 2016

Dr. Jessica McDonald with thanks to Diann Block and Dr. Nancy Van Styvendale.

Inspired Minds: All Nations Creative Writing is a creative writing program for people who are incarcerated in Saskatchewan and Alberta. The program began in 2011 and currently operates out of the Saskatoon Correctional Centre and Edmonton Institution. Inspired Minds is the result of an ongoing partnership between Ms. Diann Block, Indigenous Cultural Coordinator at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre, and Dr. Nancy Van Styvendale, an Associate Professor of the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta.

Rooted in Cree and Métis ways of being and knowing, Inspired Minds places relationship-building at its core. Classes are participant-centred, completely designed around the interests of the students in the class, meaning no two Inspired Minds classes look or feel the same. For example, one group may be more interested in sustained writing time, while another group may be more interested in discussion. Above all, the classes provide participants the opportunity to learn about, discuss, and explore different modes of storytelling, including oral tradition, poetry, short stories, autobiographies, songs, and more.

Inspired Minds classes are facilitated by volunteer faculty or student facilitators, including students from the University of Saskatchewan's English Department and the Masters of Fine Arts in Writing. In total, we have offered more than 40 classes, with approximately 225 people participating.

The workshops introduce participants to literary and storytelling concepts and techniques by studying, reading, and discussing a variety of literary texts while also honing their writing and editing skills by participating a variety of in class and independently driven exercises. In addition to the development of transferable skills in communication and critical thinking, the program aims to provide an important outlet for participants to express themselves and their experiences.

"Inspired Minds takes place smack dab on the threshold between two institutions: university and jail. Notably, it also takes place in a circle: one that's full of reciprocal learning, sharing, listening, and laughing in ways that build good relations through community-supported creative writing—and I'm grateful to be part of it. If you're interested, please volunteer. You don't have to know anything about creative writing. Simply being a good listener goes a long way."

—KAITLYN CLARK, USASK STUDENT VOLUNTEER



Dr. Nancy Van Styvendale, Co-Founder of Inspired Minds.

Cree author Tomson Highway shares knowledge with students during an Inspired Minds class in 2011. (photo courtesy Dorian Geiger)



in medias res

A STUDENT-LED
LIBERAL ARTS
JOURNAL

Participate in the
campus literary
community by

- Submitting your artwork and writing for publication
- Attending IMR events
- Reading the latest issue
- Following IMR on social media
- Applying to the editorial board



<https://stmcollege.ca/imr/>
[@inmediasresstm](#)



WRITING NORTH 13

CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 26-28, 2023
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

- ♦ Virtual Keynote
Lecture with Omar El Akkad
- ♦ River Volta MFA Student
and Alumni Readings
- ♦ In-Person Readings
and Workshops



PRESENTED BY THE SASKATCHEWAN WRITERS' GUILD
AND USASK MFA IN WRITING PROGRAM

WRITING NORTH 2023

BEFORE AND AFTER WRITING: PLOTTING, STRUCTURE, AND REVISION WITH OMAR EL AKKAD



Writing North 13 kicked off with an introductory speech by Kate O' Gorman, who welcomed the keynote speaker, Omar El Akkad, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Writer's Guild and the University of Saskatchewan. As a recent graduate of the MFA in Writing program at USask, and as the prose editor for *Grain Magazine* and editorial assistant with Thistledown Press, O' Gorman was an ideal candidate for moderating the event. After giving a Land Recognition, expressing her gratitude for the privilege to share the land of Saskatoon, which falls on Treaty 6 Territory, O'Gorman

passed the baton to Dr. Brent Nelson, the Department Head of English at USask. Dr. Nelson reflected appreciatively on the 13th year of the partnership between the USask and the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, before O'Gorman introduced Omar:

"Omar is an author and journalist. His fiction and non-fiction writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Guernica*, *GQ* and many other newspapers and magazines. His debut novel, *American War*, is an international bestseller and has been translated into 13 languages. His second novel, *What*

Strange Paradise, won the Giller Prize, the Pacific Northwest booksellers award, and the Oregon book award for fiction; it was also named the best book of the year by the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *NPR*."

All Writing North
reporting by:

Rahul Edwin

DAY 1 KEYNOTE ADDRESS

This article would not have been possible without cooperation from the Saskatchewan Writer's Guild. Special thanks to Yolanda Hansen, the program manager of SKG, and Saskatchewan Lotteries, the Canada Council for the Arts, the University of Saskatchewan, and the USask Department of English for funding the Writing North event.

WRITING NORTH 2023

A Peek Inside Omar El Akkad's Creative Process

Thoughts on building a narrative substructure:

“One of the ways I think about the underpinnings of a story—the load-bearing beams—is to divide them up into two kinds of substructure. What I mean by this, is not necessarily what the reader sees on the page, but what’s holding it all up. And I tend to put them into two kinds of categories. There’s decision-based, and there’s immersion-based.

What I mean by decision-based is that there is something about this story where you have to make a decision: so, what narrative are you going to have? The

most straightforward narrative is plot: a thing happens, and then another thing happens, and then another thing happens. Or are you going to go in a different direction? Are you deliberately going to be anti-narrative? Are you going to do something that has a well-established shape, or are you going to deliberately try to upend a well-established shape, or are you deliberately going to try to be shapeless? There’s no right or wrong answer, but you have to make those decisions with respect to the thing that you’re writing.

Then there’s stuff that’s immersion-based, which is less of a decision, but rather how far down a particular road you want to walk: things like research, for example. You can research a novel for the rest of your life. There’s no ceiling on the amount of research you can do with a project. The same thing when you think about your characters. I owe a lot of my career to a brilliant poet named Carolyn Smart, and she once said that the benchmark is that you should have about 40 pages of writing about your main characters done before you start writing a word about them in the actual story. That’s a very high bar to meet, but it serves a purpose, right? The deeper you go into this, the more you find out both in terms of research and in terms of your characters how far you want to walk down those roads.”

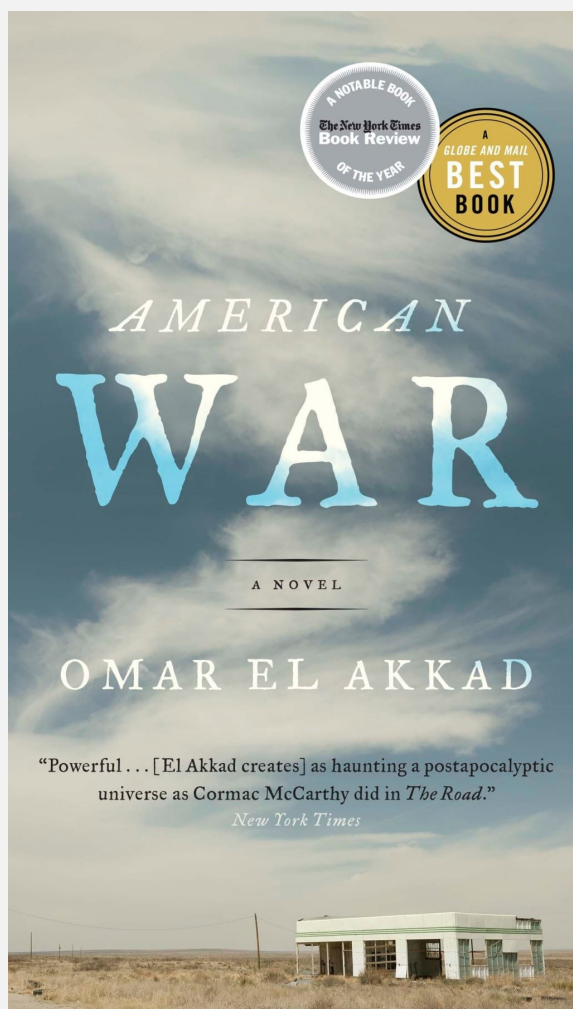
When considering the topic at hand:

“The nuts and bolts of what comes before and after the part where you sit down and write. So, essentially, thinking about structure, research, planning on one end of the writing project and then thinking about revision, rewriting, editing on the other end.”

On well-defined story structures:

“The murder mystery, as a form, is very well established. There are tons of precedents: we know the shape; we know the beats of it. We know that something happens at the beginning; we’re going to try and find out who did it; there’s going to be red herrings. And that well-established story form does a lot of the heavy lifting, and it leaves the creator to work on whatever it is they want to focus on because the story form is so well established.

You should know the shape of your story even if you think it is trite and something that you want to destroy. If you deliberately want to destroy the shape of a story form, you should know the shape of the thing you’re trying to destroy.”



DAY 1
CONTINUED

Perseverance when writing:

“I wrote three books that I’m never going to show to anybody other than my best friend, that I’m never going to try to get published. I think of them as the most important writing I ever did. They’re horrible finished products, but I think of them as sit-ups. I don’t necessarily want to see my favourite athlete do sit-ups, but I understand why you need to build up those muscles, especially when you’re in the bottom of the valley, where you’re on the fourth or fifth draft, and you know you’ve got another five to go. All the novelty of the project is worn off. Keep in mind that this is this is where people leave.

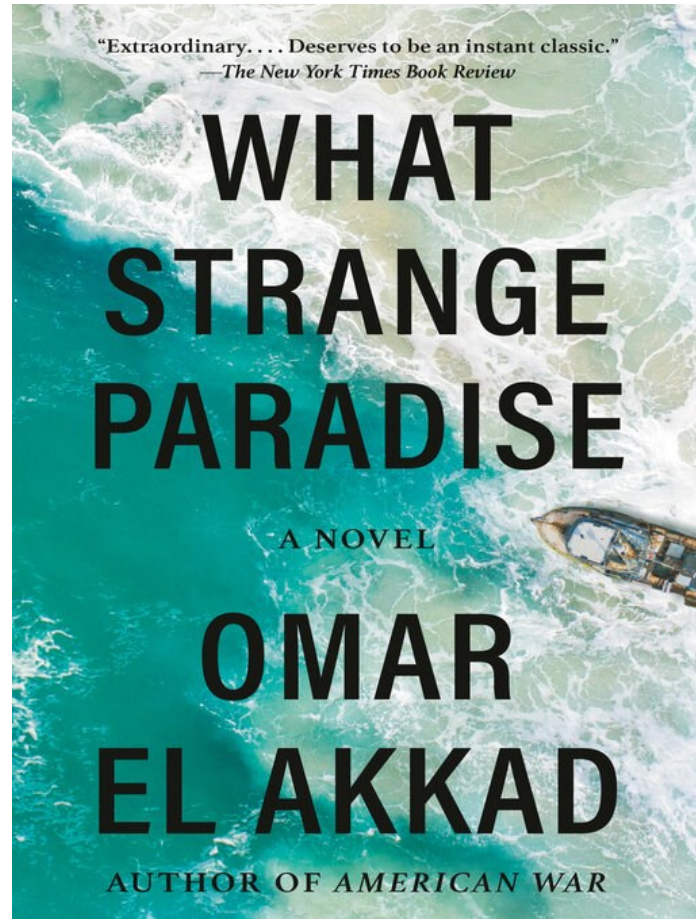
I don’t win marathons because I’m a fast runner. I win marathons because I’m really stubborn, or at least I finish marathons because I’m really stubborn. The canonical pieces of writing advice are to read as much as you can and write as much as you can; to that, I will add, be kind to yourself. I don’t think you can do this kind of work and not access a real vulnerability and sense of insecurity in yourself. There’s always going to be a sense of ‘this sentence, this idea, this passage, this entire project was like a crystal in my head, how did it turn to coal on the page.’ What happened in that translation process? Language is insufficient. The good sentences live beneath the bad sentences, and if you’re going to do that kind of excavation, you have to be good to yourself. Remember that the first draft is always, always a mess.”

How to balance research with writing and rewriting:

“It differs from writer to writer; it also differs from project to project. So, Richard Powers, I think, read every book that’s ever been published on fungus while researching *The Overstory*, which makes sense once you read *The Overstory*. It’s a doorstop of a book. I don’t know if Kerouac would have been well served to read every book on the U.S. Interstate System before he wrote *On the Road*. That’s a very different kind of experience, and so it’s a good idea to think about what your ratio is likely to be so that you don’t spend too much time on the wrong end of it.”

On overplanning:

“John Cage once talked about this idea that when the artist walks into their studio, everyone in the world walks in with them. But once you start working, one by one, these people get up and leave; your critics leave, your family members leave, previous versions of you leave, and then if you’re very lucky, even you get up and leave. That, I think, is the place I’m always trying to get as a writer. It’s the greatest feeling ever. That sense that something is happening outside of me, a sense of serendipity. The more you plan, the less pragmatic problems you have, but also the less room for serendipity, and for getting to that place. You know, the great thing about planning is that it keeps you from getting lost; the worst thing about planning is that it keeps you from getting lost.”



Cement the story in sensory details:

“There’s this element I call sensory planning; it’s a little more amorphous. The way that you populate your information containers is text, usually. You just write stuff down. But I want to make the case for a slightly more difficult means of note-keeping, which is to try to capture other kinds of sensory memory: scents, textures, tastes. It’s hard to pin these things down. For one story, I spent hours trying to find online a particular cologne that I remember a grown-up wearing back in Qatar when I was young. I knew that the second I smelled this thing, there would be a rush of memories, and I wanted to access them. It’s a very difficult thing to do, but the way that the sensory engages memory is really unlike anything else. Collecting leaves and pressing them into your notebook or trying to find scents, textures, tastes, any ways that you can move outside of just writing a note down has an immense upside in terms of accessing memory, in terms of moving that experience onto the reader. I’m sure all of you have read a passage in a novel that has a feast, people eating, and it’s visceral. There’s a quality to it that brings you really close; well, that happens on the planning end.

**DAY 1
CONTINUED**



Left to Right: Dr. Jeanette Lynes, Callum Wilson, Karen Wood, Dr. Sheri Benning, Ashley Lekach, Josiah Nelson, Delane Just, Red Davis, Walker Pityn and Dawn Muenchrath

THE RIVER VOLTA REVIEW OF BOOKS PRESENTS: READINGS FROM CURRENT & FORMER MFA IN WRITING STUDENTS

During the second day of Writing North, current second-year students and a few recent graduates of the MFA in Writing program took to the podium to share a reading from their thesis projects.



MFA in Writing students Josiah Nelson and Dawn Muenchrath host the MFA River Volta Reading at Writing North, 2023.

Red Davis is a disabled and neurodivergent writer and artist. He is currently working towards authentic disability representation in his creative projects as an MFA in Writing Candidate

Delane Just is a Saskatchewan-based queer neurodivergent writer and recent graduate of the MFA in Writing program. Their thesis work is a collection of short stories focusing on the experiences and writings of queer Canadian millennials.

Ashley Lekach is an author from rural Saskatchewan who writes about various topics, such as nature, queerness, and fairy tales.

Walker Pityn is currently an MFA candidate writing poetry and realistic fiction. He is also a contributing editor at *ARC Poetry magazine* and a co-editor-in-chief at *River Volta Review of Books*. Originally from London, Ont., Walker moved to Saskatoon for his master's degree in Summer 2021. He has been published in *In Medias Res*.

Callum Wilson is an MFA in Writing Graduate, Poetry Editor at *Quagmire Magazine* and editor/instructor at *Wheat & Laurel magazine*. He lives in Saskatoon, writing weird poems and stories, and taking photos of bugs.

Karen Wood has roots in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. She recently completed her MFA in Writing, working on the project, *Inheritance*, a linked short story collection focusing on lives impacted by interpersonal violence and abuse.

DAY 2
RIVER VOLTA

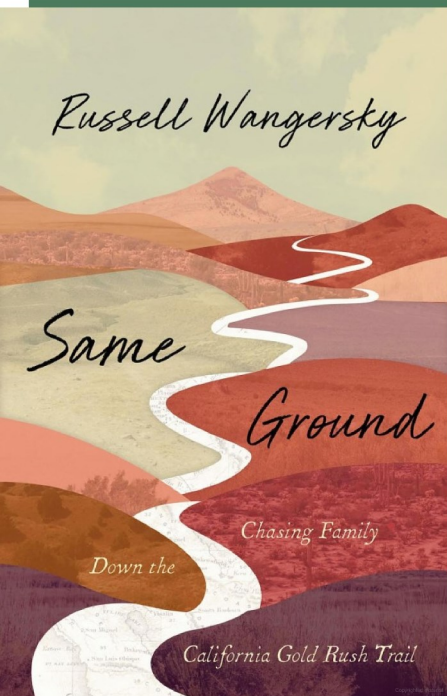
WRITING NON-FICTION WITH RUSSELL WANGERSKY

Russell Wangersky’s great-great-grandfather, William Castle Dodge, undertook a journey across America in search of gold in 1849. Aged 22, Dodge wrote a diary documenting that eventful journey. Fast-forward 160 years, this diary falls into the hands of Wangersky. Wangersky, realizing the golden opportunity and the burden on his shoulders, replicates Dodge’s feat, following the same trail. While Dodge searched for gold, Wangersky’s aims went deeper—to establish a connection with family.

In conversation with the poet, playwright, and writer Marina Endicott, Wangersky walked the audience through his journey dealing with shifting borders, changing landscapes, lonesome towns, and confusing directions; a journey that he termed “wondrous but terrifying.” Wangersky is a journalist and writer who has worked with *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, *The Telegram*, and the *Regina Leader-Post*, and won numerous critical accolades, including the National Newspaper Award, Winterset Award, and being short-listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize. His latest book, *Same Ground: Chasing Family Down the California Gold Rush Trail*, is now available on Amazon.com.



Following his conversation with Marina Endicott, Russell Wangersky conducted a writing workshop where he explored the relationship between fiction and non-fiction. The following are three excerpts from his workshop:



“Everything is malleable. Memories are malleable. The order you put things in is malleable. Different genres work in different ways, obviously. And different stories work in different forms. We know that simply from poetry and fiction. A poem is a poem. It’s not necessarily a short story; it doesn’t aspire to be one. Nor does a short story aspire to be a poem.

When these forms collide, you sometimes see that the tools that work well in one, work in the other too. The collision is very clear between fiction and non-fiction

in the sphere known as creative non-fiction. But it can also be seen in what I call factual fiction, which is fiction that is generated out of pieces of fact. Creative non-fiction simply means that everything in the narrative is true; some people disagree.

Everything I write, fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, magazine, books, is made up of my experience. It may not look that way. But it is. Yes, you can do research and then tape it together. It’s a whole package. And yes, you can use your imagination to go anywhere else. But if you do,

be consistent.

What I mean by that is if you go somewhere you’ve never been, if you want to write from the point of view of an organic chemist or even write about an organic chemist, let an organic chemist look at your work, because nothing knocks someone out of your story more than a simple mistake. Whether that’s a date, time, function, if you put in a medical test that isn’t used at the right time, you lose a little chunk of your audience. Audiences are small enough that you can’t afford to lose any.”

“Novels have better and more satisfying endings because you can make them do that. No matter how much you hope it will be different, non-fiction won’t give you satisfying endings unless you are writing about someone who themselves has a satisfying ending. News stories—which are great stories—flounder because of the fact that their endings are not tidy or fall into a grey area. There are no complete wins, no absolute victories. Protagonists in a

**DAY 3
NON-FICTION**

news story are rarely satisfied with how anything turns out—even the story.

But, having the ability to move things through, either fiction or non-fiction, gives you a tremendous advantage because you get to pick where you go. There’s a man who walks by my house in Caswell Hill almost every day. Grey hair, grey beard, he always looks angry. He has one of those canes that have four little feet on the bottom for broader plant on the ground. Every time he goes by my house, around the corner, he’ll change direction, take his cane, and whack the wildflowers growing next to the sidewalk. About every

three or four days, he will come by. He’s very deliberate. He stops. Takes aim. Gives every little aster or weed a couple of whacks. I could use him, as a device, say, in a newspaper column. Here’s a snippet of a column I wrote long ago where he just might fit:

 ‘There’s something about the trombone: I think it’s the way the lowest notes can stretch past brassy into something much closer to the aftermath of the ringing of a bell. Start, stop, start all over again.

Value solo trombone notes that come to you on the wind.

With those notes hanging in the air over him, a

small boy rode back and forth, back and forth, up and down the block on a tiny bike with a plastic Spider-Man mask fixed firmly on the front of it between the handlebars.

He left the shambling, slowly walking ball of people that was his family—other, father, sisters—darting away bravely into new territory before being reeled back into the comfort of familial security, over and over again.

Like a hummingbird at a feeder, fuelling up, casting out, fuelling up, casting out. Finding new horizons, but not ready to commit to them yet.’

 I could use that man in a

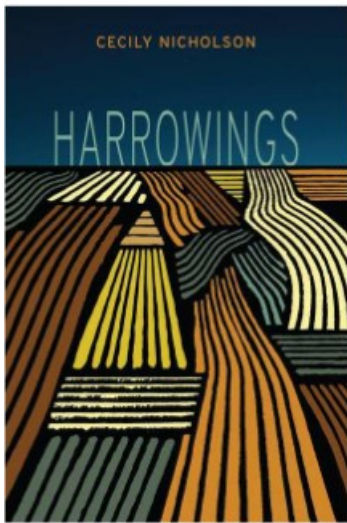
“There’s a device I call in my head, a blender. The question is the speed and duration of the blend. It’s about how you use all human experience and personal information you collect for writing purposes on a regular day. How people talk, or dress, or look. Where they are. Where they interact with their surroundings. I am not a big notetaker, but the notes I take are very precise, very short, and are meant to be the key to unlock what I remember about a person’s behaviour, scene, or place, plant, or flower.

The only difference between non-fiction and fiction is that for non-fiction, I run the blender for a short time. Chopping full experiences into big chunks, in

what might be called scenes, if you are working at it from a dramatic point of view. I can move around the timeline as I see fit, distort it a little in a particular direction. From a musical point of view, to put the notes in a place where it develops into a crescendo. Everything actually happens. It’s all true. The only difference is the order.

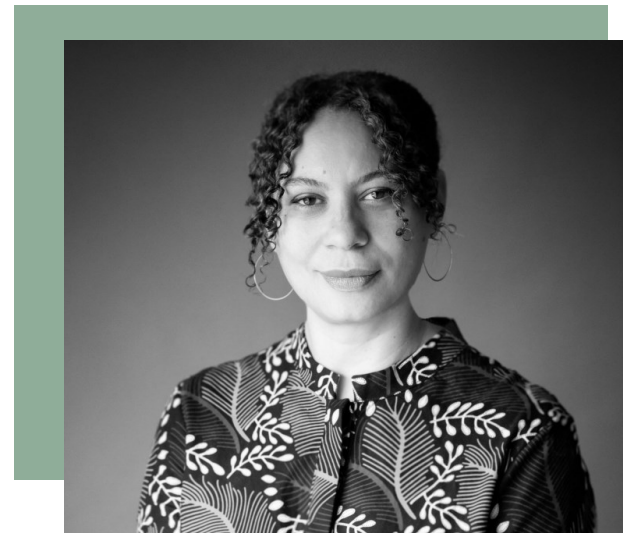
For fiction, my blender runs longer. The chunks are smaller, less identifiable, shreds of human mannerisms, small still lives of ponds, woods, water, bare bones of arguments. I might take a piece of your life, your expression, the way you walk. For fiction, I build an amalgam of all these different experiences.”

THE ART OF POETRY WITH CECILY NICHOLSON



Cecily Nicholson is the author of four books (*Triage*, *From the Poplars*, *Wayside Song*, and *Harrowings*) and a past recipient of the Dorothy Livesay Prize. She is also the writer-in-residence at the University of Windsor. Nicholson read from her latest poetry collection, *Harrowings*, which takes place mainly in rural settings, with heartfelt moments recalled from the poet’s childhood growing up

on a farm in Ontario; at the same time, the poems contend with “the farm” as a tract of colonial advance. *Harrowings* is a work deeply interested in Black intellectual and art history. In conversation with the poet, Khodi Dill, Nicholson redefined what it means to be “a rural black woman.”



DAY 3
 POETRY

Poetry Workshop

For the workshop, Nicholson gave everyone in the room two prompts. Based on these prompts, she encouraged people to write and share their poems, and gave pointers as to what feels beautiful and what works in all of them.

PROMPT 1

WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

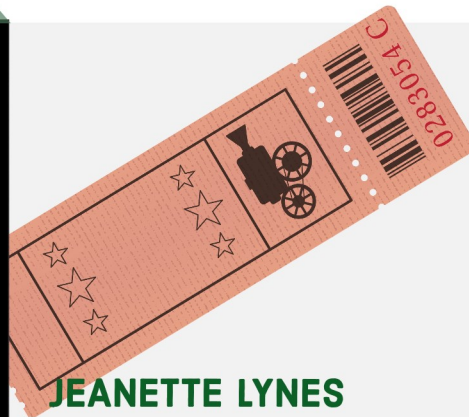
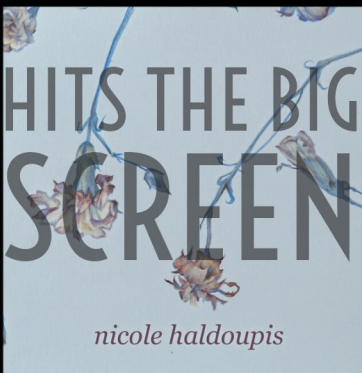
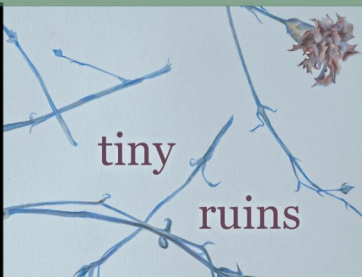
- share your name, how you like to be known
- introduce your object
- how does your object “come from the earth”

PROMPT II

I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of:

follow this prompt, where does it take you?

- take note/s
- consider your object (an interaction, an artwork, and exclamation...)
- use your senses
 - imagine a scene (place where an incident in real life or fiction occurs)
 - tell a story (an account of imaginary or real characters and events)
 - describe and build out scale, context, associations
 - consider formal qualities of the object, how do these inspire you?



JEANETTE LYNES

MFA in Writing graduate Nicole Haldoupis has had her MFA thesis, after its publication by Regina’s Radiant press, optioned for film. The screenplay development and casting are in their early stages, but how exciting – congratulations to Nicole!

In an email interview, I asked Nicole, who now lives in St. John’s, Newfoundland, to tell me how this came about. She told me that her friend Charlotte Rice asked if *Tiny Ruins* had been adapted for film yet. When she discovered it hadn’t, Charlotte “said she’d like to adapt it to film with her partner, Mark Hoffe. They

run Rogue Rock Pictures together in St. John’s. I was very excited but knew nothing about film adaptations or how any of that works, so they contacted Radiant Press and met with them to get the ball rolling.”

Timelines are somewhat fluid but they’re aiming, Nicole wrote me, “to have a draft of the screenplay ready for late 2023/early 2024, and they’re aiming to shoot in spring/summer 2024.” Nicole will have input in the film, she reported: “they want to make sure I’m happy with the script and how the characters are portrayed, which is really nice.”

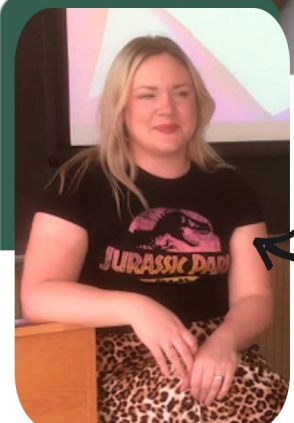
When I asked Nicole how it feels to have her fiction appear on screen, she responded, “It feels so unreal! [Charlotte and Mark] will make a super cool film out of it. I trust them a lot, and I’m so excited to see what they do with it.”

Stay tuned for *Tiny Ruins* playing at a theatre near you!

Podcasting: A Primer

Dr Jessica
MacDonald

Dr MacDonald will cover
the basics of podcasting
and share insights in her
own inspiring podcast
'Teachin' Books'.



Sept 28
3:00

All are
welcome!

JUST A FEW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MFA IN WRITING 2022-23 YEAR

Dr. Jessica
McDonald,
Dept. of
English,
USask,
presents a
Writ 990
session on Podcasting to MFA in
writing students, 2022.



MFA in Writing
graduates and cur-
rent students pre-
sent a Writ 990
session on writing
and community
engagement,
2022.

Left to Right: Dawn
Muenchrath,
Jaclyn Morken and
Kristine Scarrow



The final Writ 990 session for the 2023 term
was an enjoyable hour with Métis dramatist
and Indigenous Storyteller in Residence Bruce
Sinclair, pictured with MFA in Writing students.



Bruce
Sinclair,
Indigenous
Storyteller
in Resi-
dence,
with MFA
Director
Jeanette Lynes in April 2023.

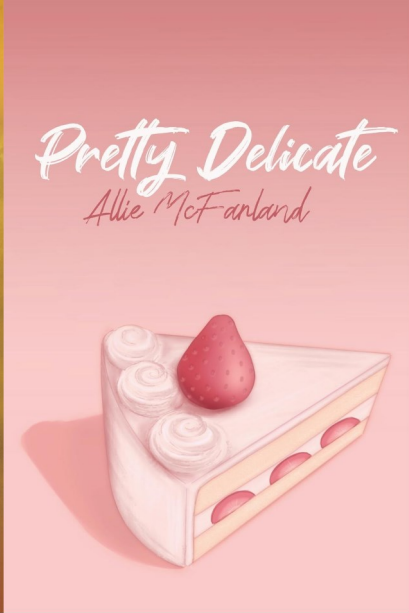
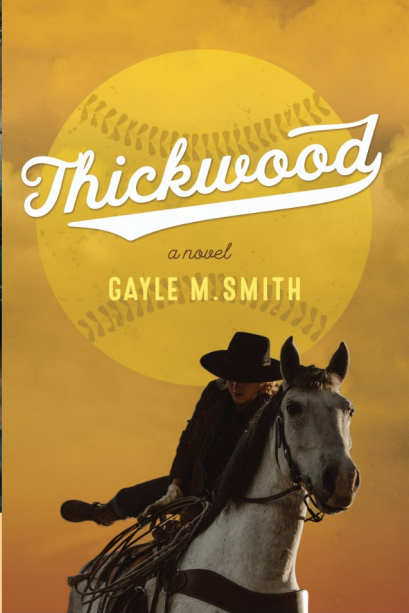


Author Lisa Bird-Wilson (third from right,
standing) presented a talk and reading
based on her recent novel *Probably Ruby*
to the MFA fiction class. Fall 2022.



GO GET THAT GRANT!

Joanne Gerber from the Saskatchewan Arts Board spoke to
MFA in Writing students on grant writing. February 2023.



AMONG THE UNTAMED

dee Hobsbawn-Smith

DEE HOBSBAWN-SMITH
AMONG THE UNTAMED
PUBLISHER: FRONTENAC HOUSE

GAYLE SMITH
THICKWOOD
PUBLISHER: SHADOWPAW PRESS

ALLIE MCFARLAND
PRETTY DELICATE
PUBLISHER: AOS

SARAH ENS
FLYWAY
PUBLISHER: TURNSTONE PRESS



A BUMPER CROP OF BOOKS!



MFA IN WRITING STUDENTS AND GRADUATES ARE PUBLISHING A RICH ARRAY OF BOOKS. MANY OF THEM BEGAN AS MFA THESES.

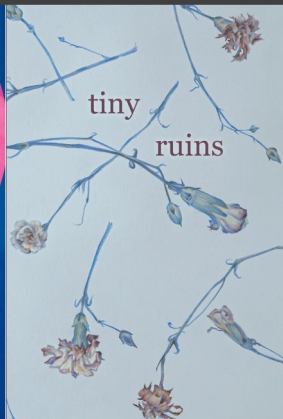
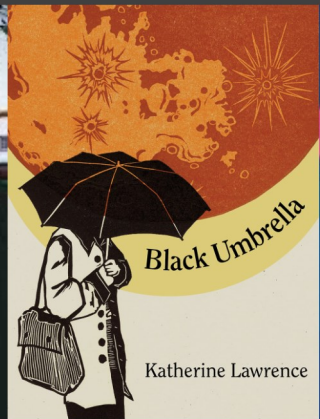
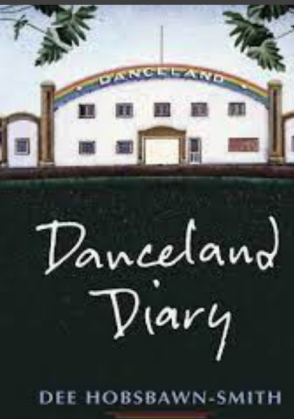
DEE HOBSBAWN-SMITH
DANCELAND DIARY
PUBLISHER: RADIANT PRESS

KATHERINE LAWRENCE
BLACK UMBRELLA : POETRY
PUBLISHER: TURNSTONE PRESS

SARAH TAGGART
PACIFIQUE
PUBLISHER: COACH HOUSE BOOKS

NICOLE HALDOUPIS
TINY RUINS
PUBLISHER: RADIANT PRESS

TEA GERBEZA
HOW I BEND INTO MORE : POETRY
PUBLISHER: PALIMPSET PRESS



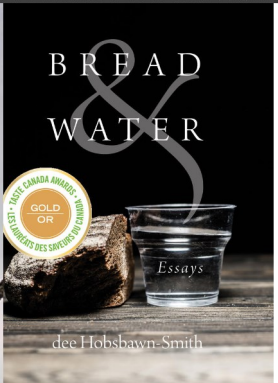
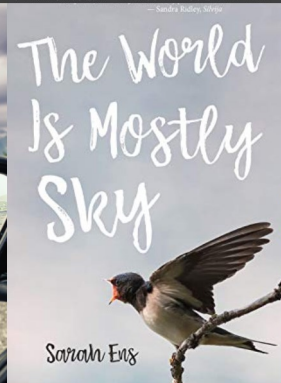
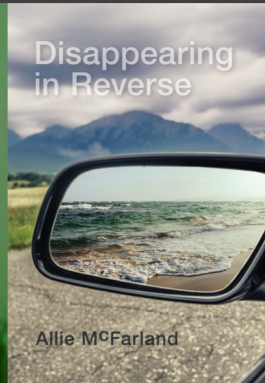
PATRICK O'REILLY
A COLLAPSIBLE NEWFOUNDLAND
PUBLISHER: FROG HOLLOW PRESS

ALLIE MCFARLAND
DISAPPEARING IN REVERSE
PUBLISHER: U OF CALGARY PRESS

SARAH ENS
THE WORLD IS MOSTLY SKY : POETRY
PUBLISHER: TURNSTONE PRESS

DEE HOBSBAWN-SMITH
BREAD AND WATER : ESSAYS
PUBLISHER: U OF REGINA PRESS

COMING SOON!



BOOKS AND INFORMATION COMPILED BY:
AMY GEREIN

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE AUTHORS!