



2023 Fall Newsletter

CREATIVE WRITING DEPARTMENT



San Francisco State University

creativewriting.sfsu.edu, cwriting@sfsu.edu



INTRODUCTION

Dear Creative Writing community,

Welcome to our 2023 Winter Newsletter! As my greeting indicates, we are not only an academic department but a community, and a strong one at that, here to support each other as creative artists and as human beings in these challenging times.



One of the challenges we've felt most acutely this fall has been CSU management's shrinkage of programs across the university, resulting in the cancellation of classes and the layoff of many lecturer faculty members. In line with this budgetary contraction, the CSU is also seeking to impose tuition increases. These measures have been met with resistance from both faculty and students. Indeed, the unity between faculty and students who have joined together to preserve our programs and to oppose the fee hikes has been inspiring!

Another challenge—one coming from beyond the university—has been the war in Gaza, which has impacted the members of our community in deep and different ways. Achieving unity on this issue is of course more difficult, but our need to respond—as creative artists and human beings—to this humanitarian crisis is clear. As part of this response, Professor May-lee Chai and I organized two Zoom webinars titled “Writers’ Voices for Peace and Justice” that took place in November, featuring internationally acclaimed writers Isabella Hammad, Fady Joudah, Peter Cole, and Adina Hoffman. The Poetry Center also hosted a day of readings on this issue in November.

Looking ahead to spring, our Marcus endowed chairs Joseph Cassara and Tonya Foster will continue to organize and host events dedicated to the promotion of equity and inclusivity in creative writing.

Also in spring, our creative writing community will be well represented at the AWP writers’ conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Our two student-produced literary magazines, *Fourteen Hills* and *Transfer* will share a table there, with editors Michaela Chairez, Chris Jones, and Tadeh joined by Professor Michael David Lukas in attendance. Grad students Celeste Chan, Hasti Jafari Jonzani, Gretchen Cion Cooke, and Chino Scott-Chung will participate on AWP panels along with Professor May-lee Chai.

In this newsletter, you will find notices of other activities, events, and publications by our highly accomplished community of faculty and student writers. There's no doubt that our community is staying strong and resilient, committed to upholding progressive values and the creative spirit, as we enter the new year.

With best wishes, and in solidarity,
Andrew Joron, Acting Chair



Faculty News

Michelle Carter's play-in-progress, *MOTHER MOTHER*, will continue to be developed in a Moment Work lab in New York over Spring Break in 2024.

Nona Caspers' essays and creative nonfiction are forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner* and *Cimarron Review*. She read at *Medicine for Nightmares* – “Liminal Women” – with London Pinkney, Kimi Sugioka, and Barbara Tomash. In Spring 2024 she was selected to attend the Dorland Arts Residency with support from the Marcus Fund for Excellence in Creative Writing.

Professor May-lee Chai published essays in the *Boston Globe*, *South Writ Large*, and *LitHub*, and book reviews in both the print and online editions of the *New York Times Book Review*, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, and *Seattle Times*. She organized a hybrid (in-person and virtual) panel for AWP23 in Seattle called “Essays in Diaspora” featuring four award-winning BIPOC women authors. Her latest short story collection, *Tomorrow in Shanghai*, was longlisted for The Story Prize and

selected as a New York Times Editors' Choice pick.

Professor Maxine Chernoff's book of new and selected poems, *Light and Clay*, will be out from MadHat Press in November. The most recent *Denver Quarterly* (#57) has a 40+ page portfolio of an interview with me and essays by poets on my work edited by Prof. Lea Graham (Marist College), and she is the keynote poet at the annual Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture in February. She has also been named board member of the literary and political *Journal of the Plague Year*.

Matthew Clark Davison has had the first chapter of his memoir-in-progress *Hott Lipps* published in *CRAFT Literary Magazine*.

On November 4th **Tonya M. Foster** presented as part of the event “[James Schuler: A Morning for the Poet](#).” The day of performances and presentations ran from 6am to 11am (an unseemly time on a Saturday). On November 5, 2023, as part of the [Rooted & Written 2023 Conference](#) through The Writers Grotto, Tonya M. Foster gave a keynote address that was live-streamed. Her *Undisciplining the Fields* reading series



will present Divya Victor on December 9 and Major Jackson on February 29.

Anne Galjour was a featured writer and performer in violinist Georges Lamam's DREAMING THE DIASPORA: An Arab Immigrant's Musical Journey From Beirut to San Francisco at Dance Mission Theater in San Francisco.

Paul Hoover's poem, "Admonitions, Afternoons," originally published in *Allium*, was selected by David Lehman and Elaine Equi for inclusion in *The Best American Poetry, 2003*, published by Scribner. He also read the work at an online publication reading on November 2, 2023. His essay, "Maxine Chernoff: Formal Tactician," was published in *Denver Quarterly* 57.4 (2023), as part of series of essays celebrating her work, edited by Lea Graham. His annual literary magazine, *New American Writing*, published its 41st issue in October of this year.

Current Creative Writing Students and Alumni News

Richard Arbib (BA 1982) (MA 1989), award-winning novelist, created a new editing company to help other authors with their books.

Michael Banister published two novels at AndrewBenzieBooks in 2023—"A Time Away from Time" and "The Starlight Commune."

Angelica Maria Barraza Tran's new book, *How To Know You're Dreaming When You're Dreaming, Lesson One*, winner of the Hilary Gravendyk Award, was released this summer by Inlandia. She is a BA alumni of SF State and currently teaches English & Creative Writing at Santa Rosa Junior College.

Tom Barrett received his MFA in creative writing from SF State in 1993. Recently, I have published poems in issues #20 through #26 of the Black Scat Review and in the first three issues of TYPO magazine. I also contributed to Le Scat Noir Bedside Nonsense.

Tom Bentley finally got an article in the Washington Post after around 10 years of pitching them. Unfortunately, it took his account of a wretched, chaotic house-sitting assignment in Portugal to



convince the Post editors, but one does have to suffer for one's art, doesn't one?

Maria Breaux edited Duane Fitzpatrick's [*The Forgotten Crip*](#), a memoir written during his 33 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Maria also helps The Greater Good Science Center promote California's CalHOPE program in all 58 counties, providing mental health and well-being resources to educators and school staff.

Marianne Brems' poetry chapbook *In Its Own Time* was published by Finishing Line Press in August 2023. Marianne also had individual poems accepted by *Front Porch Review* and *Remington Review* among others. In October she was a featured reader at Feldman's Books in Menlo Park.

Lara Coley delivers her debut poetry collection, [*Ex Traction*](#), San Franciscan educator, living in France to save money on rent. She is a former fellow artist-in-residence at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, Co-Curator for VelRo Reading Series, Editor-in-Chief of Transfer Magazine, and coordinator for the Poet in the City program.

Annie Dawid's *Paradise Undone: A Novel of Jonestown*, published Nov. 18, 2023, the 45th anniversary of the Jonestown massacre, by Inkspot Publishing in the UK. Her story, "Sex and the Piano" was published in *Sequestrum*, October 2023.

[**Ray Farnsworth**](#) (1997 grad) is currently publishing a humorous creative writing blog and is also working on his first novel (ETA, 2024). Annually, he writes and acts in comedy skits and melodramas and previously wrote a weekly newspaper humor column. He also teaches ESL and Citizenship classes.

Nancy K. Fishman had a residency this summer at Write On, Door County in Door County, Wisconsin and a residency this fall at Dorland Mountain Arts Colony in Temecula, CA.

[**Keith Gaboury's**](#) first full-length poetry collection, *The Cosmos is Alive*, was published in September 2023 from Kelsay Books. He has a new writing-focused website.

Molly Giles, SF State alumni and past professor in CW department. New book.



She has given readings at Books and Letters, Guerneville, Books by the Bay, Sausalito, Books, Inc, Marina Store, San Francisco, and Book Passage, Corte Madera.

Alisa Golden had seven short stories published in Triple #22 from Ravenna Press (2023), among many magazine publications of stories, poems, essays, and artwork. She continues to publish and edit the art and literary magazine she founded in 2013, *Star 82 Review*, and offers professional "Editor's Eye" critiques.

Vinnie Hansen has had four short stories published in 2023 with another, "Killing Poe," included in Iron Press. The anthology launches on October 30th. In Vinnie's fictional tale, discover how Poe really died. She has also just signed a two-book contract with Level Best Books.

Katharine Harer has published seven collections of poetry and her poems have appeared in newspapers, lit journals, and anthologies. A personal essay was published in Best Women's Travel Writing #11. Katharine retired from Skyline College and taught at the

SF Writing Salon and privately and serves as an organizer for her faculty union.

Laird Harrison's poem "Cubicle Physics" appeared in *Blood Tree Literature* and his poem "Between the Lines" appeared in *Passager*. He read in the Writer's Grotto reading series. He taught a course and appeared on two panels about using AI in writing. He co-organized an Authors Guild Writers of Color Meetup

Meredith Hobbs Coons has spent 2023 publishing reviews, essays, and interviews for *The A.V. Club*, *Aquarium Drunkard*, and *Tape Op* as well as co-hosting the fan podcast *Wilco Will Love You* with Mary MacLane Mellas. She also works as a speech therapist, serving students with moderate/severe/profound disabilities.

Daedalus Howell, a 2021 Creative Writing graduate, is currently the editor of the North Bay Bohemian, Pacific Sun, and Healdsburg Tribune. As a writer, director, and actor, he recently completed his second feature film, "Werewolf Serenade," which is coming to screen near you in 2024.



Dayna Ingram's ('12) fifth book, 30 TO 50 FERAL HOGS was published in August by The Seventh Terrace. He works for Meals on Wheels in Southwest Ohio. He hopes to see you at a horror book convention in 2024!

Jeff Kaliss's (MFA '17) conversation with Linda Ronstadt appeared in Issue No. 25 of *Alta Journal*. The Spring 2023 edition of *Forum* literary magazine published a poem, a short story, and a filmscript scene by Jeff. He's currently updating his biography of Sly & the Family Stone for Backbeat Books.

Steven Kennedy (MFA 2020) had his novel Between Sounds published by The Shortish Project. He continues to write for McCovey Chronicles, an SB Nation site dedicated to baseball and the San Francisco Giants.

Vanessa Micale, 2023 Latinx in Publishing fellow, has a short story *Smoke Will Follow You* in *The Hopper*, Issue 8.1, a poem in *Journeys by zines and things*, and a workshop offering *Personal Narrative as Mixtape: Releasing secret tracks on the album of your life*.

Aífe Murray completed season one as Executive Producer and "rogue scholar" of *The Slave Is Gone* – the show that talks back to AppleTV+ *DICKINSON*. Cohosts Jericho Brown and Brionne Janae are joined by Ada Limón, Danez Smith, Evie Shockley, Chen Chen and Tracy K. Smith on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

Carol Muske-Dukes' poem "Raccoons" in the *New Yorker* (July, 2023) reprinted on-line, al,,,,, so my two reviews for the *Washington Post Book World*, (review of Jorie Graham in October, 2023 & my forthcoming review of Nick Laird's *Up Late* (November, 2023) & other publications in *Agni Review* & *Plume*, 2023.

Jim Nelson received several awards for his interactive fiction *According to Cain*. It placed sixth in the Interactive Fiction Competition, and received Outstanding Game of the Year (Player's Choice) and Outstanding Game Over Two Hours in the IFDB Awards. *Cain* also placed 21st in the 2023 Interactive Fiction Top 50 of all-time favorites.



David Olsen (MA, 1987) has lived in Oxford, England, since 2002. *The Lost Language of Shadows*, his fifth full-length poetry collection published in Britain, is new from Dempsey & Windle. Four chapbooks are from US publishers.

Andrew Pimentel, with the mentorship of Professor Andrew Joron, was awarded a Marcus Undergraduate Research Fellowship grant for the 2023-24 academic year to support his creative project: an autobiographical cycle of poems tentatively titled, "Carrying the Pandemic: An Experimental Poem About Essential Workers and Hyperobjects."

Evelyn Jean Pine is a Resident Playwright at PlayGround San Francisco to develop her latest play Frida & Mrs. Trotsky. Her poems have recently been published in the online journals, Scrittura, Fourth Wave, and The Lark.

Mark Ernest Pothier, past winner of the Chicago Tribune/Nelson Algren Award and public information officer for the California Council for the Humanities, will publish his novel, "Outer Sunset," with University of Iowa Press in May 2023, and participate in Poets & Writers'

"Get the Word Out" debut author publicity incubator.

Jan Probst's play "Just an Old Woman in a Rocking Chair" was published by Next Stage Press. Her play "Road Trip" is included in the Smith & Kraus anthology *The Best Ten-Minute Plays 2023*, and her climate crisis play "The Prophecy of the Crows" received a reading at the 2023 Valdez Theatre Conference.

Alex Rieser's poem *Alluvial Deposition* appeared in *Imposter Journal* issue 3.1. Two poems, *Sugar Hexany*, and *New Stones in the Valley Which We Live*, have been selected for publication by *The Coachella Review*. Additionally, his review entitled *A frame for the raw moment: Reflexing on Sarah Rosenthal's Lizard* appeared at *Heavy Feather Review*.

Tracy Santa's *The Tompo of the Ringing*, a *Pop Matters* Best Books of 2022 selection, was described in Greil Marcus's May 2023 *Real Life* Top Ten column: "as entertaining a music life book as I've ever read...creating a tone that never breaks, the great stone face that never doesn't smile."



Sommer Schafer's (MFA '13) debut book of collected short stories, *THE WOMEN*, will be released November 14, 2023 by Unsolicited Press. Sommer is a senior editor of *The Forge Literary Magazine* and lives on Coast Miwok land with her family, a rescue dove, and a bearded dragon.

Douglas Shepard is one of the founders of *RarityGuide, Inc.* Started in 2008 as a pricing guide and review site, and it became known for video game walkthroughs. This led to *Orcz.com*, a wiki website dedicated to walkthroughs. Aids in the development of a free D&D5e project, *Dungeons and Destiny*.

Seth Singleton is 2002 Creative Writing alumni. Seth has written the *Greedy Greg* comic strip for the monthly and quarterly editions of the eco-education publication *HAPSIE* since 2023. The first issue of his newest comic book *Spellcasters Major League Magic* was published by Saturday Originals in October 2023.

[Jeanne Haynes Sirotkin](#) is the curator of poetry for the Botanic Gardens at Historic Barns Park in Traverse City. "Wrestling the Bear," a collection

of short stories, won the Stephen F Austin University prize in Fiction. Published in 2013.

Cole Swensen had a book of prose poems on poetics, *And And And*, come out from Shearsman Books and a translation of Pierre Alferi's poetry, *And the Street*, from Green Linden Press. Work was or will be published in *Poetry* and 12 other journals, and she gave readings in Marseille, Reykjavik, and elsewhere.

Dorothy Wall published a review in *The Lake*, and poetry in *Schuylkill Valley Journal* and *Eastern Iowa Review*. Her new poetry collection, *Catalogue of Surprises: Poems*, was published by Blue Light Press, fall 2023.

Sandra Wassilie has 13 poems appearing in 4 publications: *Alaska Women Speak (Adrift)* (4), *The Throwaway Special* (5), *Cirque, A Literary Journal for the North Pacific Rim* (1), and *Aquila Review* (3). A prose piece "Learning to Feel, Learning to Speak" is forthcoming online in the journal *WordSwell*.

BK Wells' (alumni) new novel, *The Rainbow Tiger*, will be released Fall 2023. Wells is one of twenty writers



selected for Space Economy Writers Camp, an event bringing together respected economists and skilled writers to create new concepts for worldbuilding in speculative fiction.

Marlene (Marnie) White's book, "Echoes from an Open Space Ranch," about her life as a park ranger's wife was published in 2000. She just completed a fictional book titled, "Revilo," based on her grandfather's real-life adventures as a cabin boy on an old sailing ship; and as a balloonist at the turn of the century.

Creative Writing Associates

Joan Gelfand has endowed a creative writing scholarship to be granted each year to a creative writing student. The award will be in perpetuity. Joan's essay "Rocking and Rolling at the Fillmore East" will appear in "Women and Rock and Roll" published by Cervena Barva Press.

Toni Mirosevich served as the Poet Laureate of Pacifica, CA in 2023. She created and hosted an ongoing reading series, *Pacifica Poetry Night* with the Pacifica Public Library. One of her first

selected poets to feature was **Professor Emeritus Roy Conboy** who read from his forthcoming poetry book, "River, Street, Sky and Casa."

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Please consider a gift to the SF State Creative Writing Department to help us transform the lives of our students. Your tax-deductible gift will allow us flexibility to secure guest lecturers, put on academic events, with subscriptions to publications and most importantly, help us ensure that we are providing the best educational environment for our faculty, staff and students.

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