



**Winter 2024 Newsletter**  
**Creative Writing Department**  
**San Francisco State University**  
**[creativewriting.sfsu.edu](http://creativewriting.sfsu.edu), [cwritings@sfsu.edu](mailto:cwritings@sfsu.edu)**

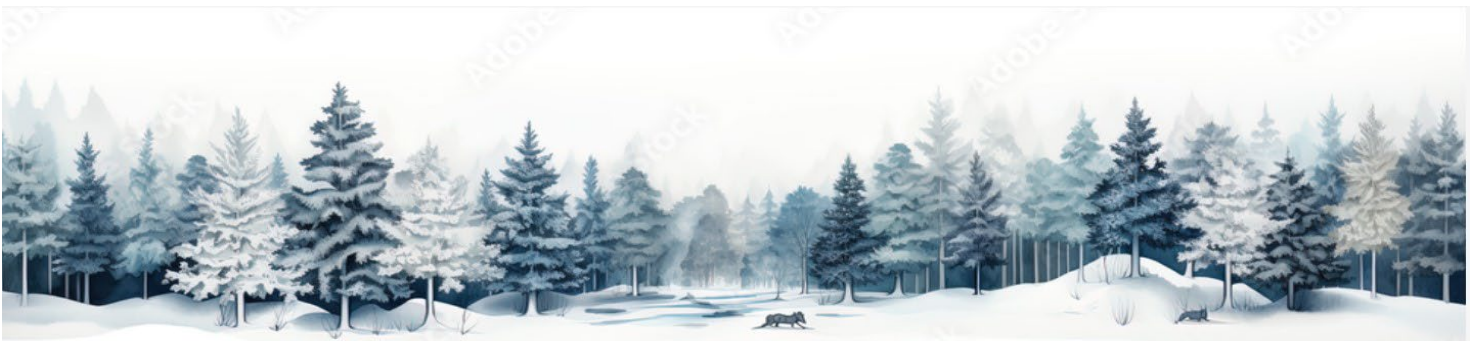


**Introduction**

By: Chanan Tigay

Greetings Creative Writing community! Though I've been here at SFSU for a dozen years now, I write to you for the first time as chair of the Department of Creative Writing. It's a genuine honor to take up the mantle from Prof. Andrew Joron who did a marvelous job during his stint as chair and, along with prior chairs, leaves big shoes to fill.

To be sure, this is a challenging moment throughout the university and the entire Cal State system. You've all heard and read about the issues facing SFSU and the ways they are and might continue impacting us. I'm here to tell you that despite all these very real challenges, Creative Writing at SFSU





continues to thrive, focusing on our No. 1 priority: our incredible students. We're excited about all the news our students and alumni are making, like MFA Alumni Keith Donnell getting ready to publish his collection of poems, *Supreme Night*. What's more, our faculty continues to shine, bolstering our reputation as a productive center for amazing writing nationally.

Meantime, the SFSU Poetry Center, a 70-year-old institution and previously self-supporting unit within LCA, has come under the auspices of the Creative Writing department. Collaboration between the Center and the department has always been close, but with the retirement (and non-replacement) of the Center's director and associate director last year, the Center will now be managed by the department's poetry faculty. In addition, the department's administrative offices have now relocated to a space within the Poetry Center.

We are thrilled to announce the establishment of a number of new awards for students in our department made possible by generous donors.

The annual Dorothy Bryant Award offers \$1,000 for a work in any genre by a grad student. This award is being funded by Bay Area author Dorothy Bryant's daughter Lorri Ungaretti.

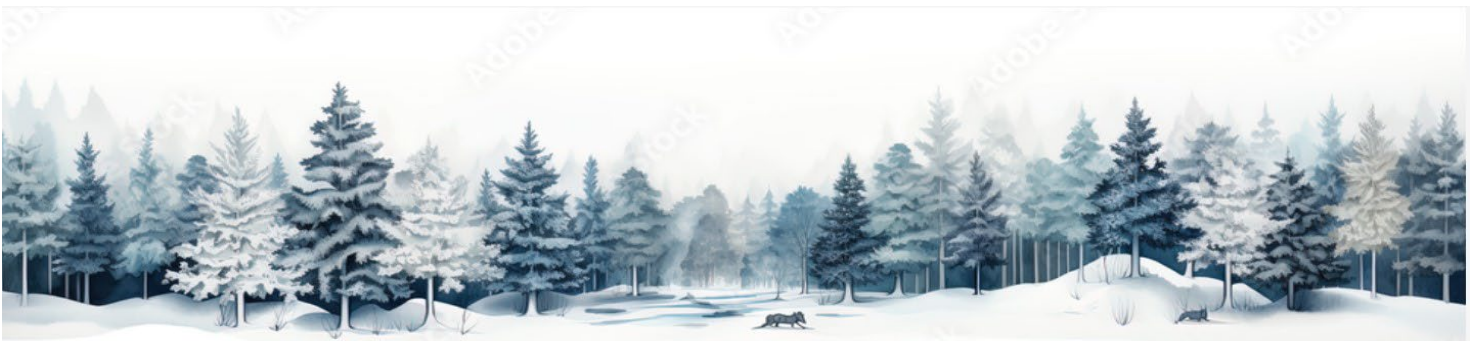
The Marsha Lee and Norman M. Berkman Endowed Scholarship in Creative Writing will provide \$1,000 scholarship annually for a graduate student.

And all this on top of a gift announced this past summer, the Elle Gianforte Endowed Scholarship in Creative Writing, a remarkable planned gift of \$500,000 from Elle Gianforte that will provide vital support and opportunities for future generations of writers, ensuring that their creative talents are nurtured and celebrated.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these visionary supporters for their commitment to fostering the arts and education at San Francisco State University.

Wishing you a fruitful and peaceful semester.

Warmly,  
Chanan





## Faculty News

**Nona Caspers** creative nonfiction essays appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *North American Review* online, and *The Southern Review*.

Short stories are forthcoming in *Painted Bride Quarterly* and *Cimarron Review*. She started her first year of the Faculty Early Program this fall.

**May-lee Chai** Has an essay, "A Mother and Daughter Blood Story," in the anthology *Nothing Compares to You: What Sinéad O'Connor Means to Us*, forthcoming from Atria/One Signal in July. Her flash fiction work "Things that Cannot Be Compared: Exile and Diaspora" won the Neutrino Short-Short Prize and will be appearing in *Passages North*.

**Caro De Robertis** - Wrote the novel *The Palace of Eros* was published in August, in the US, the UK, and France. Their nonfiction book, *So Many Stars: an Oral History of Trans, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit People of Color*, is forthcoming in May of 2025. Meanwhile, their 2019 novel *Cantoras* has been acquired for publication in Uruguay, where the novel is set, by the small feminist queer-led press *Harta*.

**Tonya M. Foster** - In Fall 2024, Tonya's essay "Parentheticalities (Or How I (We) Came to Be(ing))" was published in *Other Influences: An Untold History of Feminist Avant-Garde Poetry* (MIT Press, Nov 2024). In September, she was in public conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip on the occasion of the 15th anniversary publication of *Zong* by Graywolf Press. She also participated in the convening of *Furious Flower IV: Celebrating the Worlds of Black Poetry*. First "convened by Dr. Joanne Gabbin in September 1994 to celebrate the eminent poet Gwendolyn Brooks, the [Furious Flower] conference brought together Black poets, as well as scholars and lovers of Black poetry.

The groundbreaking gathering was among the largest of its kind, drawing more than 30 acclaimed Black poets in conversation and audiences of up to 1,300 people. Attendees packed auditoriums on the campus of James Madison University to hear from Black poets





and learn more about Black poetry.” This conference occurs every 10 years. Looking forward to the fifth convening of Furious Flower in 2034.

Prof. **Paul Hoover's** poem, "Signs and Wonders," was published in the anthology, *Greening the Earth: A Global Anthology of Poetry* (Penguin Vintage, 2024). His poem, "Admonitions, Afternoons," first published in *Allium: A Journal of Poetry and Prose*, was published in *The Best American Poetry 2023*. His annual magazine, *New American Writing*, published its 42nd issue in August of this year.

**Tahdeh Kennedy** - Transfer is moving forward full steam ahead! Recently, we hosted Dani Hedlund, Editor in Chief of *F(r)iction* and founder of Brink Literacy, to discuss the role of publishing in literacy, the responsibilities of a press, and editorial green flags. Following that, we hosted Assistant Editor of Two Lines Press, Kelsey McFaul, to speak about the Center for the Art of Translation and the importance of translating new voices across the globe. Next month we will host Aubry Norman from Lanternfish Press and Evan Karp from Quiet Lightning.



## Alumni & Current Student News

**Michael Banister** - Published two novels—“A Voyage through the Interstice” and “Tales of Nicolas Flamel, Time Traveler,” both by Andrew Benzie Books (Martinez, CA). I have a book of memoirs that will be published this month, “The Happy Wanderer,” also published by Andrew Benzie Books.

**Tom Bentley** – Had articles published in *Thrillist*, *Globetrotters*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and *Power and Motoryacht* magazine. He also finished the first draft of his memoir about 40 years of correspondence with the Jack Daniel’s Distillery.

**Marianne Brems** – Is the author of the new full-length poetry collection *Stepping Stones*





published in May 2024 by Kelsay Books. Her work also continues to be published in various literary journals such as *The Bluebird Word*, *Front Porch Review*, and *Remington Review*.

**Rachel Bublitz** – Play *Funny, Like An Abortion* received a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere with Mile Square Theatre, Cleveland Public Theatre, and The VORTEX. It will go on to productions with Theatre Unchained and Fat Theatre Project. Additionally, *Burst* was published with Dramatic Publishing, and *The Summer I Howled* with YouthPLAYS.

**Heather Casimere** - Is an author from the San Francisco Bay Area whose work focuses on the intersections of emotional health and spirituality. Heather is the author of *Brave, Warrior, Free: Overcoming Anxiety Amidst My Turbulent Twenties and Shades of Green: A Theology of Loss & Love*. When she's not creating, she can be found in the swimming pool or walking her dogs, Waffles and Flapjack.

**Elsa Dixon** – Became a ghostwriter after getting her MFA from SFSU in 1997, and a memoir she ghostwrote recently won a Lambda Literary Award.

**Ai Ebashi** - Dramaturg/visual artist for Rhinoceros (Stella Adler) and shadow-puppet builder for The Strange Library (Word for Word at Z-Space). Her play was a finalist for Inkwell Theater's LAB Series, and her TV pilot was a finalist for the LA International Screenplay Award.

**Don Falcone's** first book, "One Of The Spirits Burning, A Musical Memoir, with a foreword by Michael Moorcock, will be published by Stairway Press. Additionally, Deko Entertainment released the music album "Live at Kozfest" by Don's Spirits Burning project in December 2024.

**Nicolas Gattig** – Published his short story collection "A Good Place to Leave a Lover," which features ten stories set in Tokyo and San Francisco. The stories have been described as "Sensual, subversive, and masterful."

**Dale Going** - Has a third collection, *The Beautiful Language of Our Disaster*, and it is the 2024 Codhill Press Guest Editor Poetry Series Selection. A chapbook, *For the Anniversaries of All Loving Kinds of Meetings*, is Series 9.4 from Albion Books. She had 40 poems published this year in journals. M.A. Creative Writing, 1990.

**Alisa Golden** – Had stories, essays, and art in *Blink-Ink*, *Apricity Press*, *BathHouse*





*Journal, TILT, and Eunoia*. She continues to publish and edit *Star 82 Review*.

**Josh A.H. Harris** – Published *IN THE EYES OF IRIS* and is releasing an audiobook of his previous novel, *UNORTHODOXY* (Atmosphere Press, 2019).

**Laird Harrison** - Organized a presentation on AI and poetry for Lit Crawl and presented his research on literary magazines' AI policies at the National College Media Convention in New Orleans. He put together a presentation on grants and fellowships for writers of color for the Authors Guild. And he taught writing students in a study abroad program in Arles, France.

**Jilanne Hoffmann** – Wrote the children's book, *A RIVER OF DUST* (Chronicle Books, 2023), that illustrated by Eugenia Mello, was named a Junior Library Guild Gold Selection, a Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Book for 2024, and an American Library Association Notable Children's Book for 2024.

**Jeff Kaliss** – Authored *I Want to Take You Higher: The Life and Times of Sly & the Family Stone*, which became a San Francisco Chronicle best-seller.

**Gloria Keeley** – Will have poems and photos

appearing in journals such as *Cumberland River Review* and *Valley Voices Journal*. She recently earned her Creative Writing Certificate of Achievement after deciding to take online classes during the pandemic.

**Scott Mcmorrow** – His essay *Bird People* won first place in the fifth *Last House* writing competition. He is an alum of the SFSU MFA in Creative Writing program.

**James Merrill** - Moved to Oregon to teach at Chemawa Indian (B.I.A.) School in Salem until 2014. He taught Creative Writing at Chemeketa Community College, until COVID in 2020. He continues teaching ESL to immigrants and enjoys reading poetry at the Salem Poetry Project every Thursday night. Recently his interest has shifted to writing short vignettes of his misadventures and lived experience.

**Vanessa Micale** – Their novel excerpt was featured in *The Latinx in Publishing Writers Mentorship Showcase*. They received a Best of the Net nomination for their short story in *Alan Squire Publishing Bulletin* and received an honorable mention for their essay "Boca Del Lobo" in *The Tusculum Review 2024 Nonfiction Chapbook Prize*.

**Jeanie Ngo** - Had two plays (*Oil on Canvas* and *The Love Interview*) produced at





Bindlestiff Studio as part of the Queer As Fuck VI: Escape to Queertopia festival. She has also started a Bay Area Vietnamese women and nonbinary writers collective.

**Allie Rigby** - Had her first poetry collection, *Moonscape for a Child* debuted earlier this year (*Bored Wolves*, 2024). She still teaches occasional writing workshops and recently launched a Substack newsletter titled *Living Poetry*, which examines how living and poetry intersect.

**Canyon Sam** – Had a story published in the Fall 2024 issue of *Sinister Wisdom*. She is completing a memoir about a year in Asia.

**Richard B Simon** – His hybrid short story *Corrido* was published in *Hunger Mountain Journal* (July 1, 2024).

**Marianne Smith** (pen name Goldsmith) – Published her COVID journal in the *National Women's History Museum* archive in 2024 and short takes in *Persimmon Tree*.

**K.M. (Karl) Soehnlein** – Received the Jim Duggins Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist Prize from the Lambda Literary Foundation. Soehnlein's novel *Army of Lovers*, his fourth, was published in 2022 by Amble Press.

**Michael Tassone** – Published *Me and the Senator Search for Captain Jack's Severed Head*,

about his time on the road with former Oregon senator Monroe Sweetland.

**Victoria Tatum** – Alumni whose novel *More Than Any River* will be published by *She Writes* in spring 2026.

**Yukiko Tominaga** - Published her debut novel *See: Loss. See Also: Love.* from Scribner in 2024. She is the finalist of Golden Poppy Book Awards 2024 for Martin Cruz Smith Award: Emerging diverse voices (as of 11/26/24). She was selected to be a Civitella Ranieri writing fellow of 2026.

**Sandra Wassilie** - By invitation, she was Wassilie featured at the First Annual Seward Poetry Festival held in Seward, Alaska, April 25- 27, 2024. She also gave an interview and reading on Seward Sound Words hosted by Sean Ulman, SAK Town Radio, currently available on YouTube.

**Peter Zimmer** – SFSU CW alumni, had recently taught a creative writing course titled “craft of the sentence” this past summer 2024 at Las Positas College in Livermore, CA (as he is an instructor there in the English department). Some of his journalism writing has been featured in Livermore’s *The Independent* newspaper.



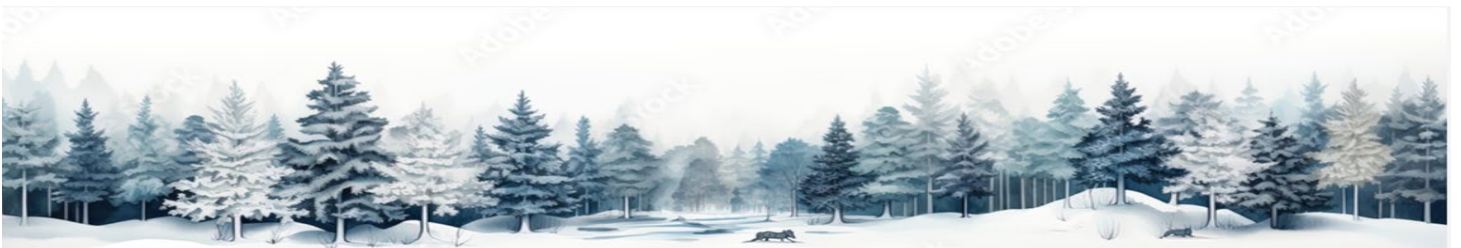


## IN MEMORIAM

Creative Writing and literature and language professor Dan Langton has passed away at the age of 97.

Dan taught at SFSU since 1968 and retired 50 years later in 2018. He was known for his closeness to students and his use of the typewriter to respond by letter to students' writing, the same typewriter he used to compose thousands of poems and author many books. Serving in the military in World War 2, he committed himself to pacifism. His poems are often highly personal, and some idisplay his pacifist views. Known as a member of the original Beat poets , he was a prominent San Francisco presence and a kind and welcoming greeter of our new students. The meeting for new grad students always had a moment in which he explained how they were chosen for being the best applicants.

Plans are being made for a memorial in the new year. We will post an announcement on our website when we have details about the memorial scheduled for late Febuary. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law and was preceded in death by his beloved wife Evie.







## DONATION INFORMATION

### Your Gift Fuels Creative Journeys

Support the journeys of aspiring writers at the SF State Creative Writing Department. Your generous, tax-deductible gift will allow us to invite inspiring guest lecturers, host academic events, and provide essential subscriptions to literary publications. Most importantly, your support ensures that we cultivate a vibrant and nurturing educational environment for our students, faculty, and staff. Together, we can transform lives through the power of creative expression.

To make an online gift: <https://give.sfsu.edu/25E09CREATEA>

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For information on scholarships or planned gifts, please reach out to our Senior Director of Development, Soo Kim, at [soo.kim@sfsu.edu](mailto:soo.kim@sfsu.edu) or call 415-338-7113.

