

Texas Institute of Letters Summer/Fall 2023 Newsletter



Compiled by Kathryn Jones, TIL Secretary

texasinstituteofletters.org

Greetings from the President

Dear TIL Members:

I hope everyone is staying cool and productive during this very hot summer. Seems like yesterday when we met for our annual banquet in Corpus Christi. Many thanks to all who attended and to those who participated in our TIL in Communities program with events at the Robstown Public Library, Del Mar College, and the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History. It was wonderful to see so many familiar and new faces for a weekend filled with literature, art, and friendship.

Our treasurer, Cliff Hudder, and I have been hard at work planning our next banquet and will be sharing more details soon. For now, please save the date of April 26-27, 2024. We will be shifting from the ocean views of Corpus Christi to the shady trees of The Woodlands. That's one of the things I love best about Texas—its many landscapes.

I also invite you to put the Texas Book Festival on your calendar. This year, it will be held on November 11-12 at the state capitol. Award-winners Laura Villarreal, Ramona Reeves, and Rudy Ruiz will be the featured authors for our annual panel, Texas Institute of Letters Presents.

Everything is on track for our new Giron/Valdez Bilingual Poetry Award, which will first be given in 2025. This will be for a book of at least 45 pages written in English with a Spanish translation or written in Spanish with an English translation. Books published in 2023 or 2024 will be eligible.

I'm also pleased to announce that the Burdine Johnson Foundation has agreed to endow the TIL award for Best Book of Poetry. Bill Johnson, the foundation executive director, is doing this in honor of his mother who was a poet, and the award will now be known as the Burdine Johnson Award for Best Book of Poetry in the amount of \$1,250. Many thanks to council member Wes Ferguson for taking the lead on this and doing the necessary paperwork for getting the endowment approved.

We are just a few weeks from announcing the details of our literary contests. When we do, feel free share the news with publishers and fellow writers so that we can continue to have a strong pool of entries. I also encourage you to enter one of our contests if you have any publications in 2023.

We will be accepting new member nominations in October. Click [here](#) to view a complete list of TIL members. Last year, we had a record number of nominations and would love to see the trend continue.

Please join me in welcoming our new council member, Melissa Studdard, and our new investment officer, Sergio Troncoso. Your TIL Officers and Council Members volunteer their energy and time to make sure that our organization continues to move forward as we celebrate the best of Texas literature. We will be meeting in September and welcome your comments and suggestions. I can be reached at: president@texasinstituteofletters.org.

Much gratitude to all who have renewed your TIL membership. If you haven't had a chance, you can still do so by clicking [here](#).

Wishing everyone many hours of happy reading and inspired writing!

Diana López

President

Texas Institute of Letters





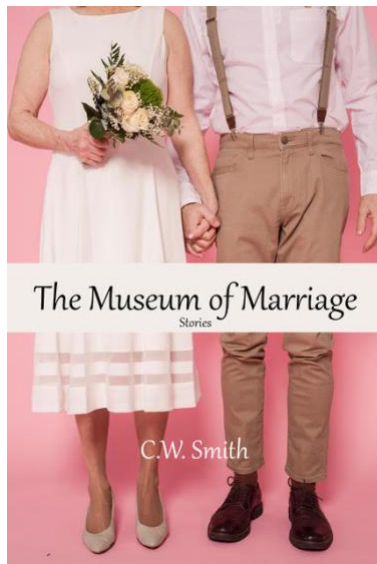
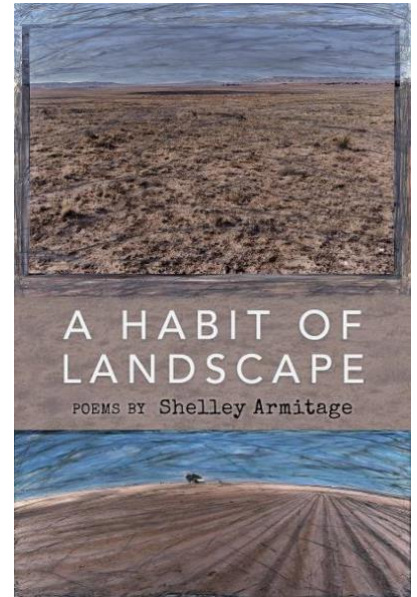
Member News (in order received)

José E. Limón, the Mody C. Boatright Regents Professor of American Literature Emeritus (University of Texas at Austin) presented three invited lectures in the spring of 2023:

- “Américo Paredes: Mexican American Studies, the University, and Modernity.” The University of Texas at Austin, March 30, 2023.
- “From *La Isla* to the World by way of Notre Dame: The Poetry of Orlando Menes” at the *Latinx Poetics Conference* held at the University of Notre Dame, April 12, 2023.
- “Did Modernism Reach Texas, 1914-1945?: Mexican-American Outsiders and the Sexual Space Between” at the *Space Between Conference* held at West Texas A&M University, June 9, 2023.

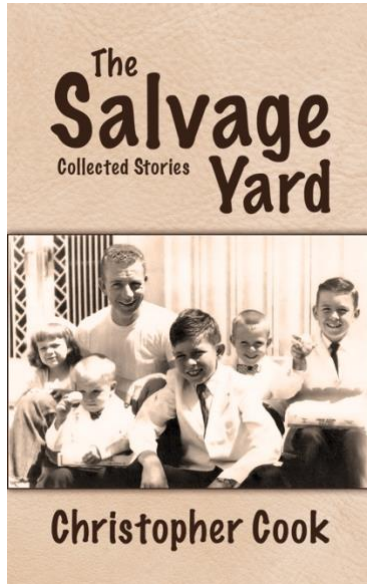
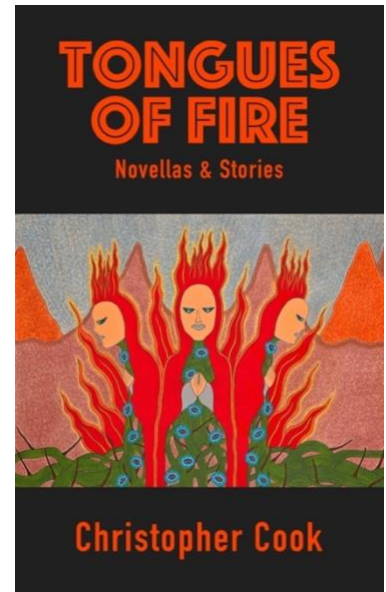
In addition, he has a new and fifth book, *The Streets of Laredo: Texas, Modernity, and Discontent* forthcoming with Texas A&M University Press in its series, *American Wests*, edited by Alex Hunt of West Texas A&M University.

Shelley Armitage will publish her first book of poetry, *A Habit of Landscape*, in October with Finishing Line Press. She has poems appearing this year in the anthology *New Mexico Poets*, edited by New Mexico's poet laureate, and in *Unknotting the Line: The Prose in Poetry* (Dos Gatos Press) as well as in *Texas Poetry Assignments*. Forthcoming is an essay, "Place Matters" in a collection on women, place, and environment to be published in the Wittliff Collections Literary Series. Her reviews have been featured on High Plains Public Radio, an NPR affiliate.



From **C.W. Smith**: My 14th book – the short story collection *The Museum of Marriage* — was published on June 30 by Lamar University Literary Press. The official launch will come Thursday, August 24, when Southern Methodist University's DeGolyer Library will help me celebrate 50 years of publishing books. In the meantime, the recent novel *Girl Flees Circus* won a Gold Medal IPPY from the Independent Publishers group and a Bronze Medal from Foreword Reviews.

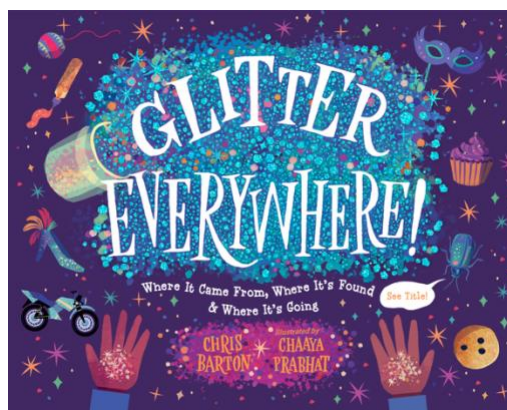
From **Christopher Cook**: I published two new books during the first part of this year, and new editions of two other books. The two new books are *Tongues of Fire – Novellas & Stories* and *The Salvage Yard – Collected Stories*. The first book (*Tongues of Fire*) was previously published in France but this is its first print edition in the USA. I am gratified that Czech artist-poet Kateřina Piňosová (who happens to be my wife) created the lovely artwork for the cover of the book. And to bolster the spirit of family collaboration, the old family photo used for the cover of *The Salvage Yard* was taken by my late mother, Betty.



I've also published new editions of two of my earlier books, the novel *Robbers* and the story collection *Screen Door Jesus & Other Stories*. Each book includes an Author's Preface about the background and writing of the book. The new edition of *Screen Door Jesus* also features a new cover with a photo taken by my grandfather James Kirkland back in 1969. You can easily find all of the books at Amazon.

In more good news, I was able to wiggle out of a movie option on *Robbers* that was proving unattractive to me, but the folks at Sony who previously had the book under option (for a TV series) have approached me again re: a renewal on the project (but this time for a movie, which is my preference). Finally, I'm still living in

Prague, Czech Republic. And if you drop by for a visit, I promise to treat you to an excellent Czech beer.



Chris Barton's newest nonfiction picture book, *Glitter Everywhere! Where It Came From, Where It's Found & Where It's Going* (illustrated by Chaaya Prabhat), was published in late June and quickly followed by his readings and discussions at independent bookstores in Austin, Georgetown, Waco, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio.

At these events, Chris heard repeatedly from school librarians who appreciated his testimony to the Texas Senate Committee on Education against House Bill 900, the book-banning legislation known as the

READER Act that was signed into law in June. You can view his two-minute testimony here: <https://youtu.be/sylo5-GTdpk>

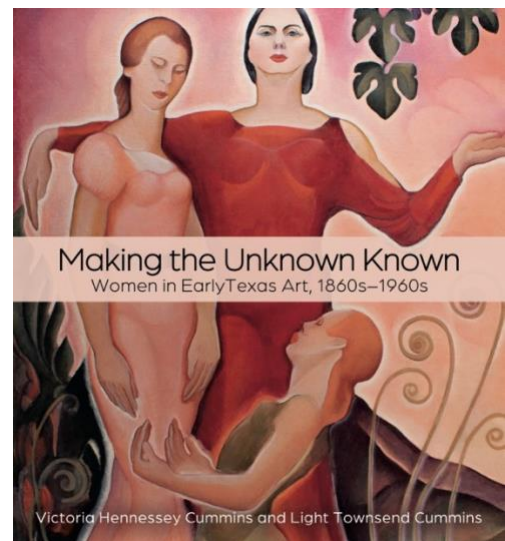
This fall, Chris will participate in book festivals in Colorado, Louisiana, and Texas as well as in librarian/educator conferences in Florida and Ohio. Meanwhile, he has two new nonfiction picture book projects out on submission in addition to a middle-grade manuscript that would dearly love to become his first published novel.

From **Bill Sibley**: Showcased a production of my new play "RAIN/ PRINCESS ELIZABETH/ MALTA" at Manhattan Rep in New York last month. Appears to have been well-received from the Q&A after each performance (despite playwright's quizzical look of incredulity below!). Working steadfastly on completion of new novel, THE HANG OF IT -- spring of '24 publication? Off to cabin in cooler climes of New Mexico next month to once again prime creative well.



Actor Geoffrey Grady and Sibley. Q&A following Manhattan Rep production of Sibley play, May 2023.

From **Light Cummins**: In June I gave a presentation on early Texas artist Mary Bonner at the annual meeting of CASETA held at the Witte Museum in San Antonio. My forthcoming book *Making the Unknown Known: Female Artists in Early Texas Art, 1860s-1960s*, coedited with Victoria Cummins, is slated for publication in March 2024 from Texas A&M University Press. Research and writing continue on my current book project *Don A. Brown of Caddo Lake*, including research trips to Jefferson and to Centenary University where he was a faculty member.



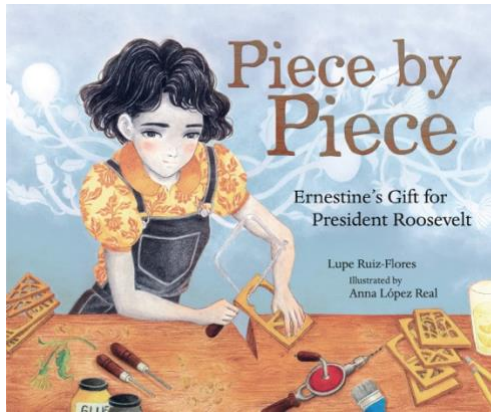


Steven Schneider (center) received the Faculty Excellence Distinguished Career Award from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in spring 2023.

Larry D. Thomas received the 2023 Spur Award from Western Writers of America in the "Best Western Poem" category for his poem titled "New Mexico Bootheel: A Triptych" which appeared in the *San Pedro River Review* (Blue Horse Press). The award was presented to Mr. Thomas during the 70th annual convention of Western Writers of America, which was held in Rapid City, South Dakota, in June 2023. The Spur Awards are the oldest and one of the most prestigious national awards granted for literature which celebrates the contemporary or historical American West

Thomas (left) and R.G. Yoho





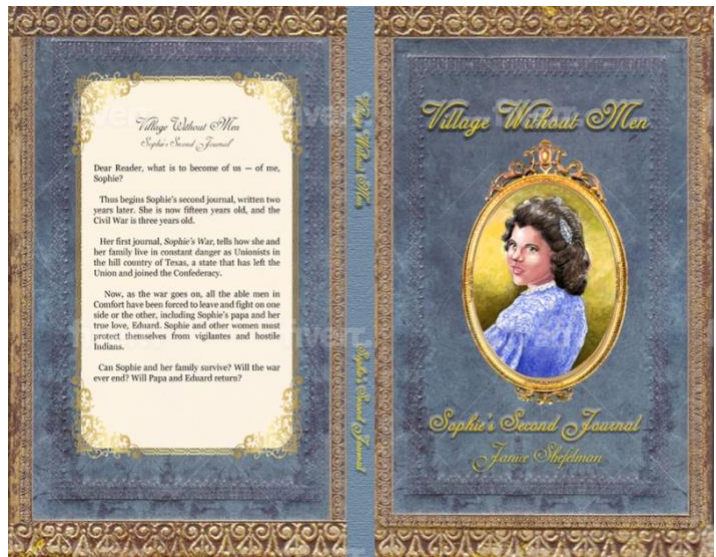
Piece by Piece: Ernestine's Gift for President Roosevelt
By Lupe Ruiz-Flores, Illustrated by Anna Lopez Real

During the Great Depression, Ernestine Guerrero, a Mexican-American teen, created a work of art from discarded wooden boxes that had been used for food relief from the government. Out of 156 pattern pieces, she carved a beautiful clock case that she mailed to President Roosevelt to show her family's appreciation for the food aid they received. The clock case remains on display in the Roosevelt Presidential library to this day.

Preorder now at Amazon or Barnes & Noble or any of your local bookstores. Release date: September 5, 2023.

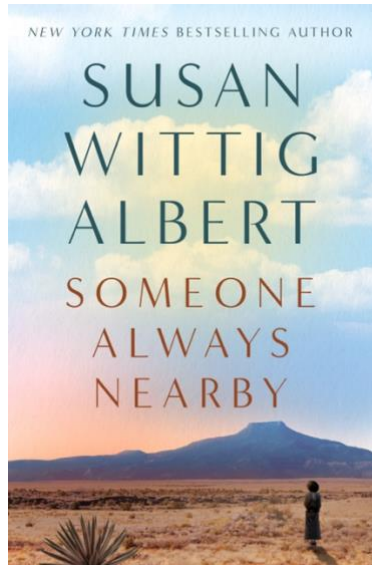
From **Janice Shefelman**: The long-awaited sequel to my *Sophie's War* is now out from Eakin Press. *Village Without Men* continues Sophie's story, but it can stand alone. Both books are set in Texas during the War Between the States. Both are about how the German immigrants living in the Hill Country are persecuted for being Unionists living in a state that has joined the Confederacy.

I feel fortunate that my editor was our very own TIL secretary, **Kathryn Jones**. After all was done, she said, "Your book is so wonderful in characterization, scene setting, and the story is so intriguing." Thank you, Kathryn, for your help in making *Village Without Men* the best it could be.



Deep Vellum Publishing will launch a first work of fiction by veteran Texas journalist **Jim Schutze** in late fall 2023. Schutze's novel – working title "Pontiac" – is set in 1960 and recounts the arrival of the first working class scholarship students at what had proudly been America's most socially exclusive boys' boarding school in New England. "That's when class and breeding and taste basically went to hell in a hand basket," Schutze says, "which I personally was delighted to see."





Susan Wittig Albert: Coming November 7, the latest historical/biographical novel in my “Hidden Women” series: *Someone Always Nearby: Georgia O’Keeffe and Maria Chabot* (Persevero Press, Greenleaf Book Group, Dreamscapes Media). The novel is set in New Mexico, where the two women were engaged in a tumultuous friendship during the 1940s and beyond. The series includes books about Rose Wilder Lane and Laura Ingalls Wilder, Lorena Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt, and Kay Summersby, Mamie Eisenhower, and (well, yes) Ike. Launching August 7: *Place & Thyme*, a newsletter published in four issues/month at Substack. My website: www.susanalbert.com

In April, **W.K. (Kip) Stratton** won the Western Heritage Award a/k/a the Bronze Wrangler for his book of poetry, *LAST RED DIRT EMBRACE* (Lamar University Literary Press). It is the fifth volume of a poetry cycle he calls the DREAMING SAM PECKINPAH QUINTET. The statuette (photos below) that comes with the award (and it weighs 25 pounds!) was sculpted by noted Osage artist Jim Free. "It was great," Kip says. "I was able to meet Mo Brings Plenty (Lakota), an actor whose work I've admired, who served as the program's master of ceremonies. I was able to meet Lou Diamond Phillips, who was inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners, as well as members of the family of Daniel '80 John' Webster Wallace, a historically very important Black rancher in Texas. And that led to an assignment



from TEXAS MONTHLY to write about 80 John. I hung out

with Walter Hill, who has written and directed some terrific movies that I value a great deal. I also hung out with the wonderful actor Barry Corbin, who was in *LONESOME DOVE* and bunches of other good pictures and series. I'm still laughing at his story about what it's like to be directed by Tommy Lee Jones. During my speech accepting the award, I spoke Comanche in public for the first time. It was an amazing weekend all the way around."



David Lee's *Rusty Barbed Wire: Selected Poems* is out from Samara Press, and his new manuscript, *The Canonical Hours*, is in search of a publisher. He is in advanced training and close to achieving his lifelong goal of becoming a world-class piddler.

Ann Weisgarber: I'm on a new adventure as I tackle a non-fiction project rather than fiction. During the height of the pandemic, I found over 300 letters written by my father and my uncle to their parents during World War II. I transcribed each letter – the handwriting was a challenge -- and donated the originals to the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. I figured that was the end of it but the letters haunted me so you know what that means. I wasn't finished. The project continues but in manuscript form as I select key passages from the letters and fill in the blanks with backstory about the war and the home front. It's a fascinating and emotional experience to hear the young voices of two brothers as they traveled from boot camp to combat to their return home to the States.

Bastille Day, **Greg Garrett's** fifth novel, was released April 4 from Raven Books. The book follows TV journalist Calvin Jones, who reflects on his time covering the Iraq War and his return to serious journalism in Paris just as

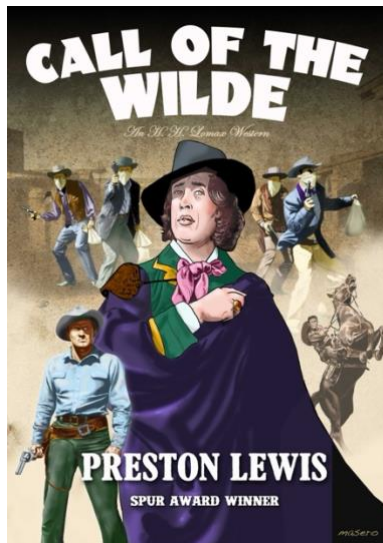


a terrorist drives a panel truck into a packed holiday crowd in Nice. Three-time Grammy winner and master storyteller Bruce

Hornsby, who provides the book's epigraph, called *Bastille Day* "a real page-turner. Soulful and compelling." Greg sent off *The Gospel according to James Baldwin* for September release and is halfway through *White Lies: Ten Racist Myths that Are Destroying America* for Oxford University Press.



Ben Fountain's novel *Devil Makes Three* is being published September 26 by Flatiron Books.



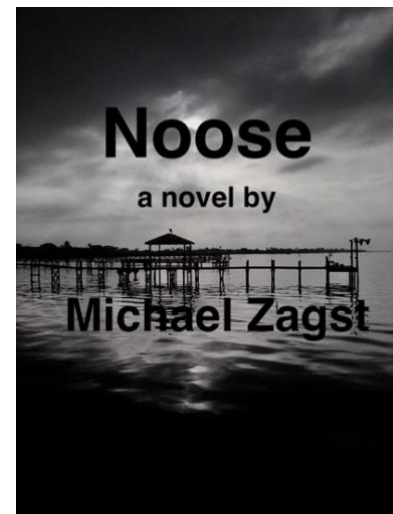
Preston Lewis: *Call of the Wilde*, the eighth book in Lewis’s comic western series “The Memoirs of H.H. Lomax,” was published in March by Wolfpack Publishing. The previous book in the series, *Outlaw West of the Pecos*, is a finalist for a Will Rogers Medallion Award (WRMA) in the western humor category. Two other Lewis works are WRMA finalists as well. *Rio Hondo*, the third book in his “Three Rivers Trilogy” on the Lincoln County War published by Five Star, is a finalist in the traditional western category. His article “There’ll Be a Caterwauling in the Old Town Tonight,” published in the Winter 2023 edition of *Wild West* magazine, is a finalist in the short nonfiction category. WRMA winners will be announced in October in Fort Worth.

The new novel by **Michael Zagst** is NOOSE. It deals with race and crime, told through the chief of police raising his mixed-race granddaughter in a small town on the Texas coast.

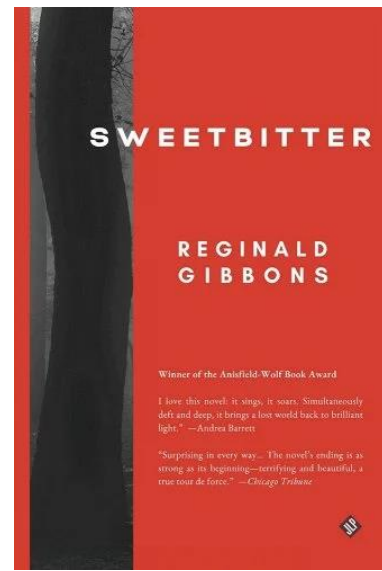
Published by a small press, the novel is available through Amazon in all formats at this link.

<https://www.amazon.com/Noose-Michael-Zagst->

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From **Reginald Gibbons**: My novel *SWEETBITTER*, which won the TIL award for best novel in 1995, is getting its third paperback reprint, this time from JackLeg Press, and will be published on August 1. I have two new books of poems coming out, also. Finishing Line Press will publish my book *THREE POEMS* (they're long ones) later this year. LSU Press will publish another new book of my poems in late 2024 or early 2025 (title to be determined). I'm currently working on a book of essays about poetry & life. Also, on August 31, I'll be officially retiring from Northwestern University, where I've taught creative writing and literature classes since 1981.



Cynthia Leitich Smith's new YA novel *Harvest House* (Candlewick Press) so far has received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, School Library Connection, and Shelf Awareness. This spring she was a keynote speaker at the University of the Redlands Children's Literature Festival and a featured speaker at Multnomah County Library in Portland, OR; Gaithersburg Book Festival in Maryland, and the online Native American Read-In. Cynthia also has announced a deal with Heartdrum (HarperChildren's) for the publication of *Davy June's Legendary Fry Bread Drive-In*, a YA anthology that she's editing.

From **Edward Vidaurre**:

By Throat, By Miracle: New & Selected Poems is a collection joining selected poems from my first book, *I Took My Barrio On A Road Trip*, all the way to my most recent *Cry, Howl*, eight poetry collections along with new poems spanning from 2013-2023. This collection is forthcoming from Luchadora Press.

“Edward Vidaurre is one of our most uplifting poets and shining spirits. Everything he does is worthy of celebration.”

—**Naomi Shihab Nye**, author of *Cast Away: Poems for Our Time* and *The Tiny Journalist*

“Edward Vidaurre fills his pen with love and rage and blood.

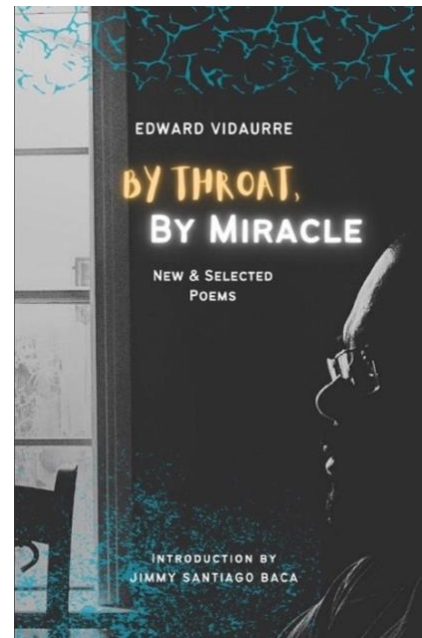
Then he pours in music. And like Jimi Hendrix, when you least expect it, he sets it all on fire as he sacrifices his songs in our honor.” —Luis Alberto Urrea, author of *Piedra & Good Night, Irene*

“Here he is, the newly crowned Poet Laureate of the Barrio: Vidaurre’s poetry is like the fine line of a jail tattoo, the detailed mural on a lowrider car, the jerky slow dance of a cholo. The poems swing to their own beats, yet carry style, color, and breathtaking beauty. ¡Son de aquellas, ese!”

—Luis J. Rodriguez, author of *Always Running* and *It Calls You Back*

"I love reading and savoring Edward Vidaurre's poetry. *By Throat and By Miracle: New and Selected Poems* shows the earthy as well as the ecstatic range of his poetry. I'm always taken to the borderlands with Vidaurre's poetry, to McAllen, to the Rio Grande Valley, but also to that liminal existence that is the air we breathe in la frontera. I feel I am reading my brother in words, and I can't stop listening to his magic on the page. Bravo." —**Sergio Troncoso**, author of *Nobody's Pilgrims* and *A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son*

In his newest collection, *By Throat, By Miracle: New and Selected Poems*, Edward Vidaurre both praises and laments what it has meant to be a child of the barrio—whether tattooed teardrop or stray bullet or the mother’s hands that smell of pan dulce....These poems howl, they weep, they sing, they prophesy, that is, they carry within them the complex depth of what it means to be human. I have long admired the poems of Edward Vidaurre for their ferocity and tenderness, their precision of craft, and their deep wisdom—they are love in action. *By Throat, By Miracle* is the work of a profoundly wise poet at the height of his artistic power, and he has shown us what it means to live in the skin of another, and to love. —**Robin Davidson**, 2015 – 2017 Houston Poet Laureate and author of *Mrs. Schmetterling*





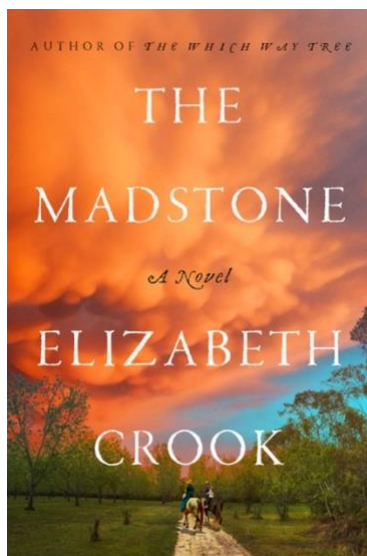
From **ire'ne lara silva**, the 2023 Texas Poet Laureate:

Three readings:

- **August 12, 6 p.m.** Reading with Amanda Galvan Huynh, Jen Yanez-Alaniz. and ire'ne lara silva, BookWoman, Austin
- **August 24, 6:30 p.m.** Celebration of 2023 Texas State Poet Laureate, Gemini Ink, San Antonio
- **September 10, 5 p.m.** Reading with Jen Yanez-Alaniz, Octavio Quintanilla, and ire'ne lara silva, Resistencia Bookstore, Austin

The ARC of my next book of poetry, *the eaters of flowers*, will soon be available for anyone interested in reviewing it!

José Skinner and Melynda Nuss will open Alienated Majesty Books this fall in the space formerly occupied by Malvern Books at 613 W. 29th Street, Austin. (The name derives from a quote by Emerson: "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.") Alienated Majesty follows in Malvern's footsteps, selling a unique mix of poetry, literary fiction, and works in translation, and featuring works published by small independent presses. The Majesty will also host book groups, readings, and other events. See more at www.alienatedmajestybooks.com



From **Elizabeth Crook**: After several years with no news, I'm happy to have some: My novel, *The Madstone*, will be out in November from Little, Brown. Here's a fun story about the jacket art: <https://lithub.com/exclusive-cover-reveal-elizabeth-crooks-the-madstone/>

I'm currently scheduled to be at Book People on the pub date of Nov 7, at the Texas Book Festival on the 11th, The Twig in San Antonio on Nov. 14, the Miami Book Festival the weekend of Nov 17th, and at The Wittliff on Nov. 30. I would love to see any fellow TIL members who can make it to any of these events! Meanwhile I'm delighted and grateful to be receiving the Texas Writer Award from the Book Festival on Nov. 11 and to find myself in the company of previous recipients, so many of whom

are friends and fellow members of the TIL. I feel very fortunate that we have this great festival every year.

<https://www.texasbookfestival.org/2023-texas-writer-award-recipient-elizabeth-crook/>

As for *The Madstone*, it's too soon for reviews, but I'm deeply thankful for these early blurbs:

“... The tale that Elizabeth Crook conjures out of the most basic materials—a man goes on a trip, things happen, and the trip becomes a quest—should take its place alongside the very best novels of the American West, a top rank that includes *Lonesome Dove*, *Little Big Man*, *News of the World*, and *Blood Meridian*. Yes, it’s that good; I didn't want it to end. Benjamin Shreve and his compatriots affected me as few characters have in recent years, and I think of them still.”

—Ben Fountain, National Book Critics Circle Award winner, National Book Award finalist, and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk*

“Elizabeth Crook is a magician of a novelist, bringing the past to life with a tale of epic proportions. The voice of Benjamin Shreve stands alone in recent fiction, and all of Crook’s characters linger long after you’ve finished reading. *The Madstone* is a marvel.”

—Nathan Harris, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Sweetness of Water*

“It would be unfair to call Elizabeth Crook the true heir to Paulette Jiles, Charles Portis, and Larry McMurtry, because Crook’s style is emphatically her own, but I want to anyway because she’s just so damn good. *The Madstone*, one long riveting epistle that reads like music, has a fully formed voice in its young narrator, pitch-perfect dialogue, and wit as dry as a mesquite tree. I would read, and will continue to read, anything Crook writes.”

—Nathaniel Ian Miller, author of #1 Indie Next selection *The Memoirs of Stockholm Sven*

“*The Madstone* is a treasure: a brilliant, beautiful page-turner of a book. Elizabeth Crook has reimagined the Western, giving us a poignant love story and a riveting road novel. I devoured it—and you will, too.”

—Chris Bohjalian, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Double Bind* and *The Flight Attendant*

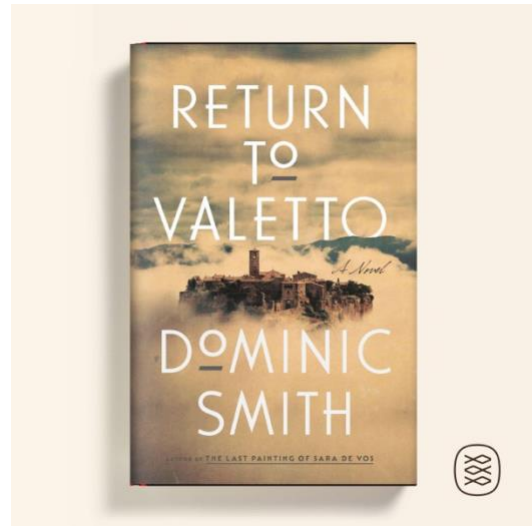
From **Mike Mewshaw**: After the publication in early June of *My Man in Antibes: Getting to Know Graham Greene*, my wife and I left to spend the summer in London. I’m scheduled to speak in September at the Graham Greene Festival in his childhood hometown of Berkhamsted. While in the UK I’ve had occasion to take off my fiction writing cap and put on my journalist fedora and cover Wimbledon. The highlight for me was an article I did for the *London Daily Telegraph* about the eventual champion, Carlos Alcaraz. The piece figures to live as long men speak and read English—or at least until Alcaraz starts losing matches. The link is:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/authors/m/mf-mj/Michael-Mewshaw/>

Heath Dollar gave a reading at Čajovna Na Kopečku (Teahouse on the Hill) in the town of Rumburk, Czech Republic, in June. Dollar is now back from Bohemia and hard at work on a novel set in North Texas.



Dominic Smith published his new novel, *Return to Valetto*, with Farrar, Straus & Giroux in June. The book takes places in the world of nearly abandoned towns in Umbria.



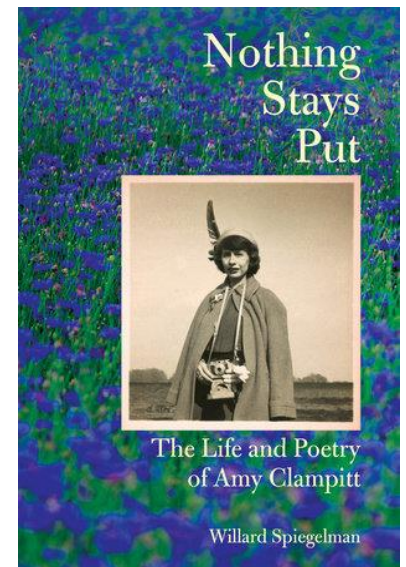


Sam W. Haynes' *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, the Struggle for Texas* (Basic Books) has won four book prizes since its release last year, including two from the Texas State Historical Association. In April he received TIL's Ramirez Family Award for Most Significant Scholarly Book. He is pictured left at the Corpus Christi meeting with Mary Jo O'Rear, runner-up for the Ramirez Award for her book, *Barrier to the Bays: The Islands of the Coastal Bend*.

Poetry scholar **Willard Spiegelman** has had a busy year of events tied to the February publication of his portrait of the beloved and acclaimed poet Amy Clampitt. After her first book of poems was published in her sixty-third year, Clampitt rose meteorically to fame, launching herself from obscurity to the upper ranks of American poetry all but overnight, and living a whirlwind eleven years, until her death in 1994.

Spiegelman's events included back-to-back talks at The Mount (Edith Wharton's summer cottage in the Berkshires). Two other events are scheduled at Oxford (October 25 and 26) and several Manhattan events still are unscheduled.

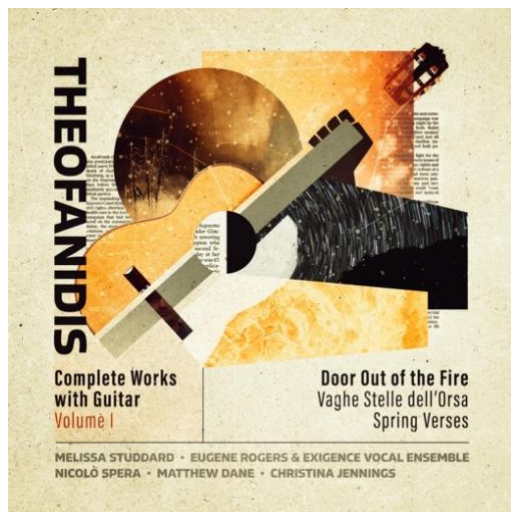
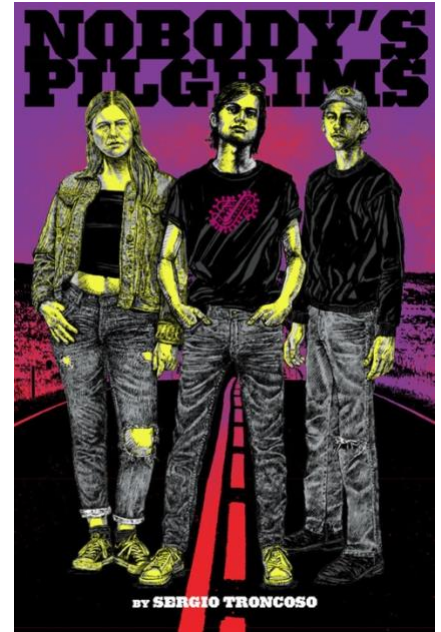
The Washington Post praised the book in a review: "Clampitt comes to life here...Spiegelman's *Nothing Stays Put* embodies a different kind of investigation, not surveillance but a thoughtful examination that at times still spins off into a kind of awe."



Sergio Troncoso was mentioned in *The New York Times* in a piece by Luis Alberto Urrea: "Sergio Troncoso is such a beloved writer of the borderlands, there is a public library branch named for him in El Paso. His *A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son* is simply brilliant." Sergio's recent novel, *Nobody's Pilgrims*, was also selected by the *El Paso Matters* Book Club for the months of June and July.

The nonprofit news organization interviewed Sergio, and Bob Dunton reviewed *Nobody's Pilgrims* for *El Paso Matters*: "The first time I finished Sergio Troncoso's *Nobody's Pilgrims*, I realized that I was absent-mindedly petting the cover. His characters had somehow taken up residence in my heart. It was love at first sight. A second reading, and a rereading of some of his earlier fiction, only confirmed the power of this odyssey of Turi, Arnulfo and Molly."

Finally, Bob Moore, CEO of El Paso Matters and TIL member, moderated a discussion with Sergio about *Nobody's Pilgrims* at the Troncoso Branch Library on Saturday, July 29.



From **Melissa Studdard**: I'm thrilled to be a newly appointed TIL councilmember, and I look forward to serving! I took a year off from submitting work but was happy to see my poem, "A Little Bit Rain" featured on the Best American Poetry blog, as well as four poems sung by Exigence Vocal Ensemble on the CD *Theofanidis: Complete Works for Guitar*.

I also had a lot of fun reading at the *L.A. Times* Book festival, the Gaithersburg Book Festival (founded and hosted by their very cool mayor!), and a bunch of other wonderful venues this past spring and am looking forward to hearing an opera singer recite my poem "If Falling Is a Leaf" as part of a performance of Christopher Theofanidis' orchestral piece by the same

name in early August. I'm currently working on two projects: a libretto scheduled to premiere in 2025 and a collection of poems from the perspective of the severed tongue of the mythological character Philomela. I'm also super excited to have a residency at the Hermitage Artists Retreat in Manasota Key this fall.

Don Tate's forthcoming picture book biography (in which he had the pleasure of reading during his 2022 induction), will officially publish on August 29. **JERRY CHANGED THE GAME! HOW JERRY LAWSON REVOLUTIONIZED VIDEO GAMES FOREVER** (Simon & Schuster) is the story of an African American electronics engineer who led the team to develop

the first interchangeable video game cartridge. He was dubbed “the Father of Modern Video Gaming.” Don will celebrate the publication by having a book birthday party with students at Doss Elementary School in Austin in publication day.

In addition, author Bethany Hegedus and he will participate in a joint book celebration at Book People on September 10th at Book People at 2 p.m.

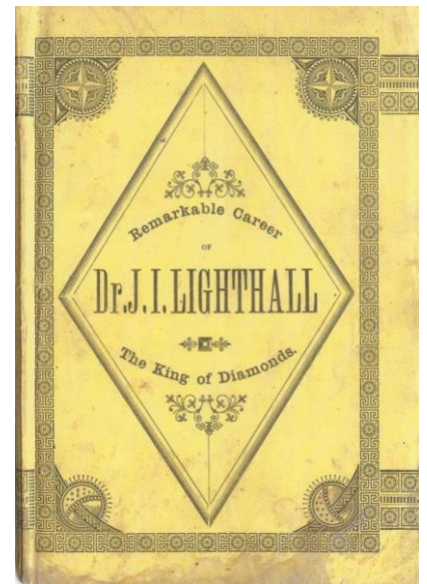
In June, Don participated in a video shooting for PBS Kids and Literacy First’s “If You Like” series. The video highlighted Don’s authored book *POET: THE REMARKABLE STORY OF GEORGE MOSES HORTON* (Peachtree, 2015) and can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/kCYMe6JIRzE?si=DSopd-8J0z1VimO1>

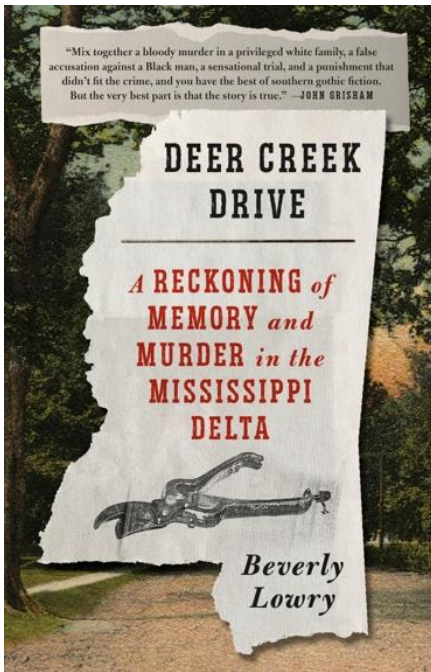
In July, Don was a featured speaker at the University of Findlay’s Mazza Museum Summer Conference, where he discussed his journey as an author and illustrator of youth literature. In addition, Don appeared in the documentary “The Magic of Mazza,” which recently received two Emmy awards nominations.

Don is currently in the process of writing a memoir that details his childhood experience of surviving his parents’ divorce, becoming the man of the family.

Gene Fowler will give an illustrated talk, *The Diamond King - A Medicine Man of Old San Antone*, at the Allen Public Library on October 5. It will be webcast and then archived on YouTube.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ADVENTURE: This booklet about the life of Dr. J. I. Lighthall (aka The Diamond King, 1856-1886) was advertised years ago by an upstate New York rare book dealer for \$1,500, which was, uh, well. I wrote him and told him what a nut I am about this historical figure, and this prince among men made a color photocopy of it for me and would not even accept any payment! His original print copy sold to a Salt Lake City archive, and may be the only one still in existence.... I am working on a visuals-heavy book about medicine shows and I'm considering the (possibly/probably) insane idea of self-publishing it. My "publishing company" might be called Gila Monster Editions.





From **Beverly Lowry**, who was honored at the spring gathering with the TIL's Lifetime Achievement Award: "First of the month, full moon, blazing afternoon, my paperback pub day. Very exciting and guess how much I love this cover and how happy I am to thank my brilliant Alfred A. Knopf team for it. (To John Grisham as well for the quote.)"

Things Get Ugly: The Best Crime Stories of Joe R. Lansdale, will be published August 15 and launch a two-month book tour. Lansdale, the Edgar Award winner and *New York Times*-bestselling author, returns to the piney, dangerous woods of East Texas. "In this career retrospective of his best crime stories, Lansdale shows exactly why critics continue to compare him to Elmore Leonard, Donald Westlake, Flannery O'Connor, and William Faulkner," according to the news release.

August 4th-6th
ARMADILLOCON, Austin, TX

August 6th
Violet Crown Austin
screening of COLD IN JULY
book sales from BookPeople,
book signing 4-5pm, 5:30 film start

August 19th
Murder by the Book
Houston, TX 3pm

September 5th
Los Angeles Public Library
virtual event 4pm PDT / 6pm CDT

September 9th
Texas Theater, Dallas
screening of BUBBA HO-TEP
book sales from Interabang Books,
doors open 6pm, 7pm film start

October 19th
Lone Star College-Montgomery
in person speaking event
Conroe, Texas

THINGS GET UGLY
THE BEST CRIME STORIES
OF
JOE R. LANSDALE
EDGAR AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF MOON LAKE



From **Octavio Solis**:

Oregon Gothic - reading of new work at Interplay New Play Reading Series, PCPA Pacific Conservatory Theatre - September 2023

Quixote Nuevo premiering at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, CA and playing from September 30 - October 28, 2023

Kathryn Jones' biography of Ben Johnson, the world champion rodeo cowboy and Academy Award-winning actor (for *The Last Picture Show*), is in the hands of readers and will be published by the University Press of Mississippi, which specializes in film titles. She also finished a collection of poetry titled *Dwelling Places*, continues to write for *Texas Highways* magazine, and participated in a poetry reading at the Lark & Owl Book Shop in Georgetown. Her poem "The Last Conquistador" appeared in Dos Gatos Press' *Unknotting the Line: The Poetry in Prose*, the fifth in its series, Poetry of the Southwestern United States. Her essay "Bonding Over Books" will appear in a book of essays on Larry McMurtry, *Pastures of the Empty Page*, edited by **George Getschow** and published by UT Press this September. will be part of a McMurtry panel and book signing September 7 at the Dallas Contemporary Museum.

