



THIRTY-TWO NEW MEMBERS INDUCTED INTO THE TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Members of the Texas Institute of Letters have overwhelmingly approved thirty-two new writers to the TIL, a distinguished honor society established in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and recognize distinctive literary achievement.

The TIL's elected membership consists of the state's most recognized and serious writers of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, songwriting, and scholarship. The membership includes winners of the MacArthur Fellowship, Man Booker Prize, Pulitzer Prizes in drama, fiction, and nonfiction, as well as prizes awarded by PEN, and dozens of other regional and national award and grant-giving institutions.

The 2025 honorees are Philip Boehm, Sharon Bridgforth, e.E. Charlton-Trujillo, Sean Cotter, Rodney Crowell, Susan Fletcher, J. Bruce Fuller, Bryan A. Garner, Robert L Giron, John Moran Gonzalez, Jessica Goudeau, Babette Fraser Hale, Gerald Horne, Fady Joudah, Jennifer Lawson, Lyle Lovett, Lupe Méndez, Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, Laurence Musgrove, Rena Pederson, John Pipkin, Andrew Porter, Octavio Quintanilla, David Romo, Robert Schenkkan, Martha Serpas, Chris Tomlinson, Alexandra Vandekamp, Katy Vine, LaToya Watkins, Randall Watson, Monica Youn.

TIL President David Bowles says of the newly inducted members: "We are overjoyed and honored to welcome such a varied and stellar group of literary talents. These folks are some of the very best in their respective fields, and we congratulate not only their nomination and induction, but also the years they have each dedicated to Texas letters."

Introducing TIL's New Members

Here are brief bios and photos of the thirty-two inductees:



Philip Boehm

Playwright, theater director, and literary translator Philip Boehm was born in Texas. Over the course of his literary career, he has lived elsewhere in the U.S. and Europe, but has returned to his childhood home in Houston. Philip has translated more than 30 novels and plays by German and Polish authors, including Herta Müller, Hanna Krall, and Franz Kafka. *(photo by Sophie Kandaouroff)*



Sharon Bridgforth

Poet and playwright Sharon Bridgforth started her career in Austin in 1989 and spent the next 20 years there, writing eight plays/performance works and a book of poems that won a Lambda Literary Award. Sharon has been a United States Artists Fellow, a winner of Yale's Windham Campbell Prize in Drama, a Playwrights' Center Core Member, and a McKnight National Fellow.



e.E. Charlton-Trujillo

Filmmaker, author, and youth literacy activist e.E. Charlton-Trujillo grew up in Mathis and has gone on to win both the Michael L. Printz Award and the ALA Stonewall Award. e.E. has written several award-winning books for teens and children and is the co-founder of the youth literacy nonprofit Never Counted Out, which provides book access and creative mentorship.



Sean Cotter

Scholar and literary translator Sean Cotter has taught for the University of Texas at Dallas's Center for Translation Studies for the past 20 years. Sean has published 13 scholarly articles and brought into English from the Romanian 12 works in poetry and fiction, the most recent of which is *Solenoid* by Mircea Cartarescu. *(photo by Kevin Brown)*



Rodney Crowell

Songwriter Rodney Crowell hails from Crosby and is a Grammy Award winner. His songs have been recorded by Emmylou Harris, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, and Etta James, among others. Rodney is a member of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, the author of memoir *Chinaberry Sidewalks*, and a co-creator of *Kin: Songs by Mary Karr & Rodney Crowell*.



Susan Fletcher

Susan Fletcher, an author of books for young readers, started her life in Houston, began her career in the late 1980s, and returned to Texas in 2015. A recent judge for the NSK Prize, the largest award in the United States for a children's writer, she has also served on the MFA faculty of the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her 2025 YA novel, *Sea Change*, is set in Galveston.



J Bruce Fuller

Poet J Bruce Fuller teaches at Sam Houston State University and has explored Cajun culture in his book *How to Drown a Boy* and chapbooks *The Dissenter's Ground*, *Lancelot*, and *Flood*. J's poems have appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *McNeese Review*, and *Birmingham Poetry Review*, among other publications, and he is director of Texas Review Press.



Bryan Garner

Grammarians Bryan Garner—born in Lubbock and raised in Canyon—writes the columns “Garner the Grammarian” in *National Review* and “Garner on Words” in the *American Bar Association Journal*. Bryan is the sole author of the “Grammar and Usage” chapter in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and his style guide *Garner's Modern American Usage* was first published in 1999.



Robert Giron

Poet and publisher Robert Giron has lived and taught extensively in Texas throughout his career, with stints at El Paso Community College, the University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary's University, and Austin Community College. Robert's personal poetry is often set here, and his Gival Press has given exposure to many Texas authors.



John Moran Gonzalez

Scholar John Moran Gonzalez was born and raised in Brownsville. A longtime English professor at the University of Texas at Austin, John has also served as director of UT's Center for Mexican American Studies. His scholarship deals with Mexican American literary traditions and the struggles for social and racial justice in the Texas-Mexican borderlands.



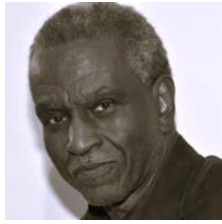
Jessica Goudeau

Nonfiction author Jessica Goudeau grew up in San Antonio and Abilene and now lives near Austin. Her first book, *After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America*, won the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize. Jessica teaches creative nonfiction at Wilkes University and co-hosts *The Beautiful and Banned*, a podcast about banned books, plays, and films. (photo by Lisa Woods)



Babette Fraser Hale

Fiction writer, memoirist, and publisher Babette Fraser Hale cofounded Texas' own Winedale Press. Her collection *A Wall of Bright Dead Feathers* won TIL's 2022 Sergio Troncoso Award for Best First Book of Fiction. Babette is also the author of *This Familiar Heart: An Improbable Love Story*. Her accolades include the *Southwest Review* David Nathan Meyerson Prize for Fiction.



Gerald Horne

Gerald Horne teaches history and African American studies at the University of Houston. His 30-plus books include *Paul Robeson: The Artist As Revolutionary*, *Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music*, and *The Dawning of the Apocalypse: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism, and Capitalism in the Long Sixteenth Century*.



Fady Joudah

Poet and translator Fady Joudah was born in Austin. A practicing physician in internal medicine at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center in Houston, Fady brings the rare perspective of both healer and artist to his work. His recent collection, *[...]*, was shortlisted for the National Book Award in Poetry in 2024, and he has translated three volumes by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. (*photo by Cybele Knowles*)



Jenny Lawson

Essayist, memoirist, and humorist Jenny Lawson (aka The Blogess) grew up in the tiny west Texas town of Wall. She now lives in San Antonio, where she owns Nowhere Bookshop and Bar. Jenny's bestselling books include *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*, *Furiously Happy: A Funny Book About Horrible Things*, and *Broken (in the best possible way)*.



Lyle Lovett

Songwriter and singer Lyle Lovett was born in Klein and graduated from Texas A&M with degrees in journalism and German. In his 14 albums, Lyle has coupled his gift for storytelling with elements of country, swing, jazz, folk, gospel, and blues in a convention-defying manner that breaks down barriers. He's won four Grammy Awards and been named Texas State Musician. (*photo by Michael Wilson*)



Lupe Mendez

Poet, educator, and activist Lupe Mendez is originally from Galveston and now lives in Houston. His book *Why I Am Like Tequila* won TIL's 2019 John A. Robertson Award for Best First Book of Poetry. Lupe is the founder of Tintero Projects, which works with emerging Latinx writers and other writers of color within the Gulf Coast Region. He was the 2022-2023 Texas Poet Laureate.



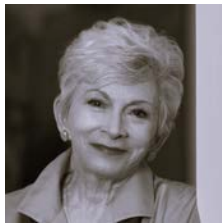
Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton

Writer and performer Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton was Houston's first Black Poet Laureate. Her book, *Black Chameleon: Memory, Womanhood, and Myth* won TIL's Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Nonfiction in 2024. Deborah's other literary roles include playwright, short story writer, essayist—and librettist. *She Who Dared*, her latest opera, will debut in Chicago this June.



Laurence Musgrove

Poet Laurence Musgrove is a Houston native and a professor of English at Angelo State University. He has published more than 130 poems in dozens of periodicals. Laurence's collections include *A Stranger's Heart* and *Bluebonnet Sutras*. Chapbook *The Dogs of Alishan & Other Poems from Taiwan*, based on his Fulbright in 2023, will be published in 2025.



Rena Pederson

Journalist Rena Pederson is a lifelong Texan and was a longtime editorial page editor at *The Dallas Morning News*. Rena is the author of four books, most recently *The King of Diamonds: The Search for the Elusive Texas Jewel Thief*. She served on the Pulitzer Prize Board and during her career interviewed Margaret Thatcher, Fidel Castro, Princess Grace, and Julia Child. (photo by Brenda Ladd)



John Pipkin

Novelist John Pipkin earned his PhD in British Literature from Rice University, has taught creative writing at Southwestern University, and is the Director of Undergraduate Creative Writing at the University of Texas at Austin. His debut novel, *Woodburner*, won TIL's Steven Turner Award for First Book of Fiction in 2010, and John was a Dobie Paisano Fellow in 2011.



Andrew Porter

Novelist and short story writer Andrew Porter has taught at Trinity University since 2003 and is the director of its Creative Writing Program. His books include the collection *The Theory of Light and Matter*, which won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction; the Houston-based novel *In Between Days*; and *The Disappeared*, stories set largely in San Antonio and Austin. (photo by Sarah E. Cooper)



Octavio Quintanilla

Former San Antonio Poet Laureate Octavio Quintanilla was born in Harlingen. His literary works and community literary outreach largely deal with the issues and experiences of the border region. Octavio's Alabrava Press publishes chapbooks, and he hosts VersoFrontera, an annual festival that brings together San Antonio poets and national poets for a two-day celebration.



David Romo

Author, teacher, and activist David Romo has lived in El Paso for decades. His literary work has focused on El Paso history and Mexican American history of the borderlands. David's publications include *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juarez* and his 2024 book for young adults, *Borderlands and the Mexican American Story*.



Robert Schenkkan

Tony Award-winning playwright Robert Schenkkan grew up in Austin. He's written three plays set in Texas, including *All the Way* and its sequel, *The Great Society*, which focus on the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. Robert first rose to national attention with *The Kentucky Cycle*, which won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Theater before it ever received a New York production.



Martha Serpas

Poet, theologian, and professor of English Martha Serpas teaches at the University of Houston. Her own poetry focuses on the Gulf Coast, and she is the editor of *Improbable Worlds: An Anthology of Texas and Louisiana Poets*. She has recently founded the Scripts Program at the University of Houston School of Medicine, bringing together medical students and local writers. *(photo by David Brown)*



Chris Tomlinson

Journalist Chris Tomlinson is a columnist for the *Houston Chronicle* and the *San Antonio Express-News*, addressing topics far beyond the expected confines of the Business sections in which his work appears. He's also an author/co-author of two bestselling works of Texas-centric nonfiction, *Tomlinson Hill* and *Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth*.



Alexandra van de Kamp

Poet Alexandra van de Kamp came to San Antonio in 2014. She soon began working at Gemini Ink, the city's writing arts center, becoming executive director in 2018. Since then Alexandra has played a central role in building literary programs and community in the San Antonio area while continuing to write and publish poetry, including her most recent collection, *Ricochet Script*.



Katy Vine

Journalist Katy Vine has worked for *Texas Monthly* as a staff writer and executive editor since 1997. Katy has written dozens of features on topics ranging from rocket scientist Franklin Chang Diaz, hip-hop legend Bun B, and cult leader Warren Jeffs to refugees in Amarillo, the Kilgore Rangerettes, and an accountant who embezzled \$17 million from a fruitcake company.



LaToya Watkins

Fiction writer LaToya Watkins, a born-and-raised Texan, has authored two renowned books of fiction: novel *Perish* and short story collection *Holler, Child*. She has also taught at the University of Texas at Dallas and Collin College. Beyond the page and the classroom, LaToya has contributed to the literary community as a mentor and as an advocate for emerging writers. *(photo by Chanel Mitchell)*



Randall Watson

Fiction writer and poet Randall Watson came to Texas to pursue his PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Houston. Since then, he has taught at both the University of Houston and Houston Community College; served as writer-in-residence for Houston-area schools; and edited *The Weight of Addition: An Anthology of Texas Poetry*, which featured 118 Texas poets.



Monica Youn

Poet Monica Youn, the daughter of Korean immigrants, was born and grew up in Houston. A Rhodes Scholar who became an attorney and was admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court, she pivoted to poetry. Three of her books have been recognized by the National Book Award: *Ignatz* (finalist, 2010), *8/ackacre* (longlisted, 2016), and *From From* (finalist, 2023). (photo by Beowulf Sheehan)