

Texas Institute of Letters Spring 2026 Newsletter



Compiled by Kathryn Jones

TIL Secretary

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Saludos and Salutations from the President

Dear Members,

I'm delighted to invite you to read our spring newsletter and rejoice in highlights from an active and inspiring season at the Texas Institute of Letters.

As we head from a very difficult winter into a hopeful spring, I truly believe the season will bring both change and celebration. We in the TIL look forward to welcoming new leadership in April, along with a remarkable cohort of newly inducted members whose work reflects the depth and diversity of literary life in Texas. There is much to celebrate, from the recent national honors earned by TIL members to the up-and-coming projects you'll discover in the pages of this newsletter.



Keep in mind that we'll be celebrating these wonderful people and more at TIL's 90th annual conference, which will be held April 17-19 in College Station at the Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center.

[Click here to book a room at the reduced rate.](#)

At the same time, we pause to remember friends and colleagues we've lost, whose writing, teaching, and advocacy helped shape our community in lasting ways. As with the wrenching away of other beloved elements of our society—from norms of free speech to missing neighbors—such losses remind us to relish the good things we have and hold onto them more tightly, defend that which we can with all of our strength.

Thank you for continuing to support TIL's mission to honor excellence in Texas literature and to foster connection among writers, scholars, journalists, and readers across our state. I'm grateful for each of you and for the vibrant community we sustain together. As long as we stand in solidarity—advocating for Texas letters and the free, independent, and critical thought fostered by the literature of this great state—the forces of intellectual darkness cannot hope to prevail.

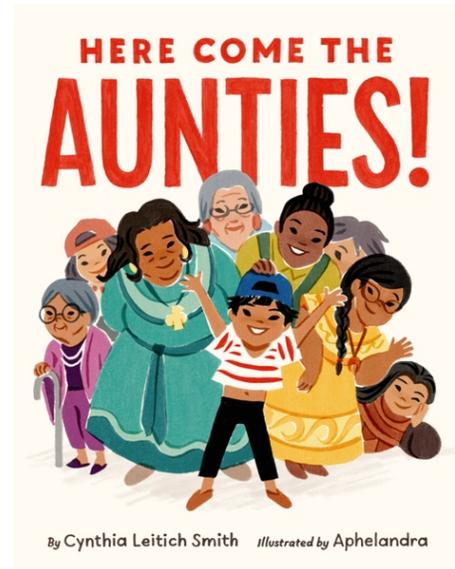
With appreciation and admiration,

David Bowles
President, Texas Institute of Letters

TIL Spring 2026 Newsletter

(in order received)

Cynthia Leitich Smith's *HERE COME THE AUNTIES!* (Heartdum) came out February 10. So far, the book has received two starred reviews. *Kirkus Reviews* calls it “a rapturous reflection on community,” and *Publishers Weekly* says, “A wealth of aunties contribute to an Indigenous child’s day-to-day in this lovingly communal picture book....”

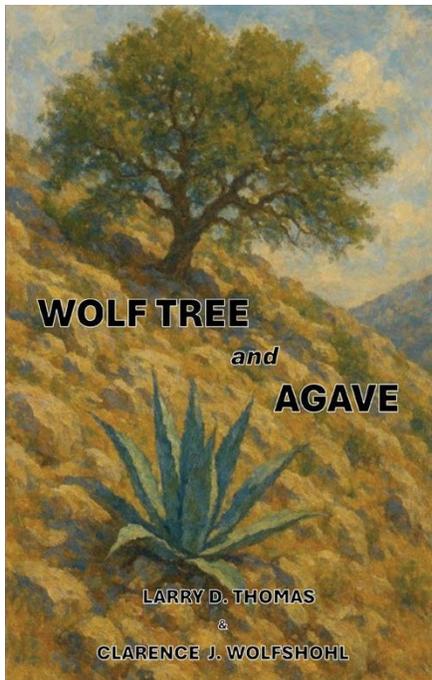
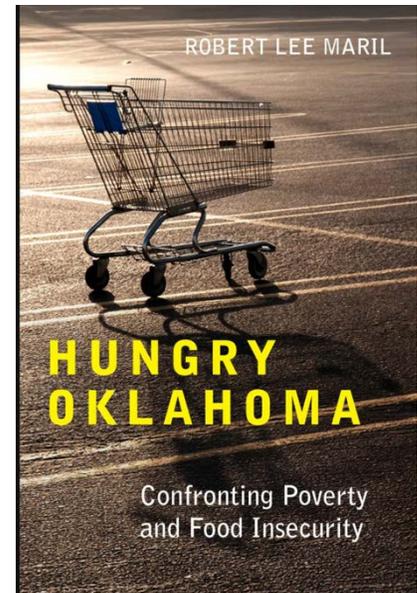


Cynthia Levinson will be at the Tucson Book Festival in March with *Who Owns the Moon?* and *Fault Lines in the Constitution*. Also, she is working on a biography of Lyndon Johnson for readers twelve and up. If you have personal (but not too personal!) stories about him, she would love to hear them.

From **Marian Schwartz**: Since Russia’s horrific invasion of Ukraine on February 22, 2022, I have devoted the majority of my time to translating articles and posts written by anti-war, anti-Putin journalists and activists for publication with the UK-based NGO [Rights in Russia](#), “a community of people committed to supporting the protection of human rights in the Russian Federation.”

Robert Lee Maril has a new book, *Hungry Oklahoma: Confronting Poverty and Food Insecurity*, coming out in late March from the University of Oklahoma Press.

One out of every six Oklahoma residents is poor, and one in five children lives in poverty and faces food insecurity. Drawing on interviews and participant-observation data from his volunteer work at a food pantry, as well as census and sociological data, Maril documents in rich ethnographic detail the status of poverty and low-wage workers in the state today and within historical context. He explores how institutions—such as faith-based organizations, government, and food pantries—structure and shape experiences of poverty.



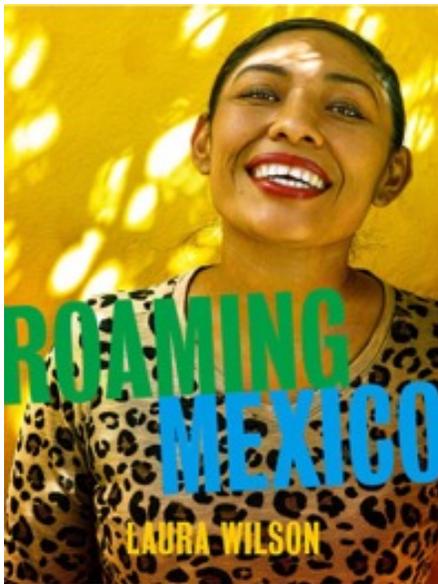
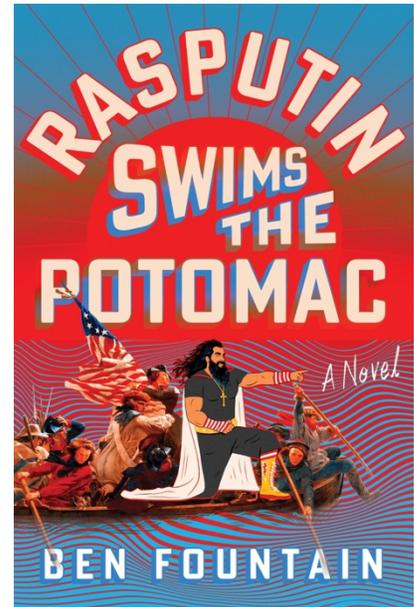
Larry D. Thomas and publisher/poet Clarence J. Wolfshohl are pleased to announce the publication of *Wolf Tree and Agave*, their correspondence in poetry, by Spartan Press in Kansas City, Missouri.

The book, now available for order at Amazon, is comprised of sixty-six "letters" (thirty-three by each poet) contrasting and comparing the flora, fauna, and cultural ambience of Wolfshohl's residence in the moraine of Missouri with Thomas's former residence in the Chihuahuan Desert of far West Texas. <https://www.amazon.es/dp/B0GKZMS4RY>

Major American poet William Heyen (National Book Award finalist) had this to say about the book: "We're in luck that close friends Larry and Clarence have received and replied to, in intuitive ways, one another's poems. The two poets, as they write, rhythm their ways into memories-childhood, family, trees and flowers, rodeo flings, fields and forests, the evocative Texas and Missouri ecosystems of their lives lived

in the mysterious meanwhile of Time as we all approach our ends. When I read two of the many portraits here, too, read them and the rest of *Wolf Tree and Agave* several times, Larry's "The Vaquero" and Clarence's "Tattoo Palimpsest," I realized, again, the depths of what true poetry could be, and so will you."

Ben Fountain's novel *Rasputin Swims the Potomac* will be published by Flatiron Books on June 9. Maria Semple, author of *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* and *Go Gentle*, says, "Fiction is truer than real life in *Rasputin Swims the Potomac*, an audacious, rip-roaring, and terrifying good time. Don't read ABOUT this book--it will sound too crazy! Dive in and see for yourself. Ben Fountain is a prophet, comic genius, and master storyteller."



Laura Wilson's latest book, *Roaming Mexico*, was published in 2025, and the accompanying exhibition was on view at the Meadows Museum in Dallas in 2025-6.

The exhibition, "The Writers: Portraits by Laura Wilson," is on view at the Fondren Library at Southern Methodist University through October 2026.

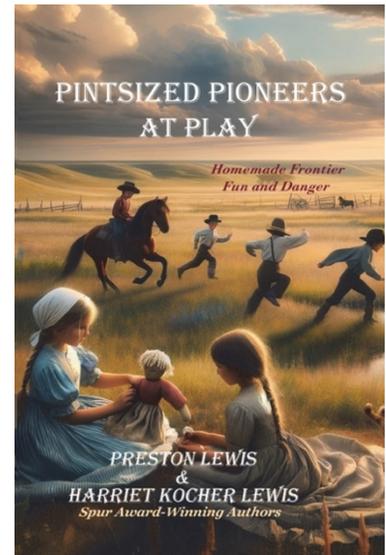
Her next project, "Making Movies," chronicles directors, cinematographers, and actors over the last twenty years. This body of work will be an exhibition and book.

In 2025, **José Antonio Rodríguez** had a new poem, "Bird Song," in *The New Yorker*. His poems, "Shelter" and "Tender," were included in *A Century of Poetry in The New Yorker: 1925-2025*. His poem, "Men's Sexual Trauma Support Group," will be reprinted in the anthology *Breaking into Blossom: Poems with Extraordinary Endings*. His new poems, "Gently" and "Starlight," will appear in the anthology *How to Walk Home in the Dark: Poems on Anxiety, Depression, and Mental Health*.



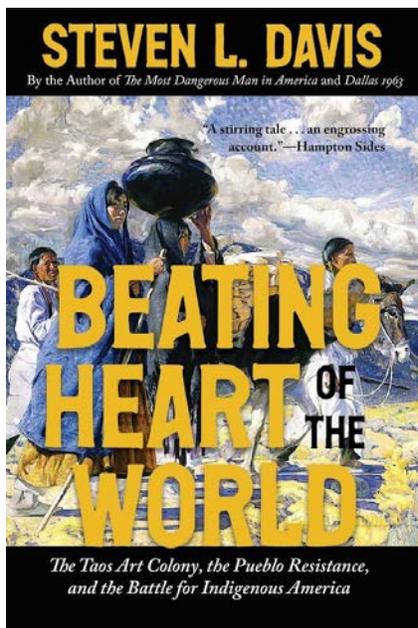
Preston Lewis in November received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Will Rogers Medallion Awards for his contributions to the literature of the American West. Also, at the WRMA meeting in Tulsa, he and his wife, co-author Harriet Kocher Lewis, received the Will Rogers Gold Medallion in the young adult nonfiction category for their *Pint-sized Pioneers: Taming the Frontier, One Chore at a Time*. The book was a TIL Jean Flynn Honor Award recipient in May.

Pint-sized Pioneer's sequel, *Pint-sized Pioneers at Play: Homemade Frontier Fun and Danger*, was released in November by



their Bariso Press. The imprint's 2026 publication schedule includes bringing out three reprints and two new middle reader books in Lewis's new Old West Critters Collection. Bariso Press will also return to print *The Fleecing of Fort Griffin*, his comic western which received an Elmer Kelton Award from the West Texas Historical Association for best creative work.

Lewis's comic western short story "Cat Fight at the No Pay Saloon" was included in the winter 2026 edition of *Saddlebag Dispatches*.



From **Steve Davis**: My new book, *Beating Heart of the World: The Taos Art Colony, the Pueblo Resistance and the Battle for Indigenous America*, is due out in May from UNM Press. This nonfiction account tells the fascinating true story of how Taos Pueblo's Indigenous People recruited prominent bohemians from the famous Taos art colony as political allies in the early 20th century, sparking an extraordinary national movement for Native justice. Ultimately, this lively crusade from Taos would finally temper America's fever for conquest, reshaping federal policy and sending life flowing back in the direction of Indigenous America.



From **Shelley Armitage:**

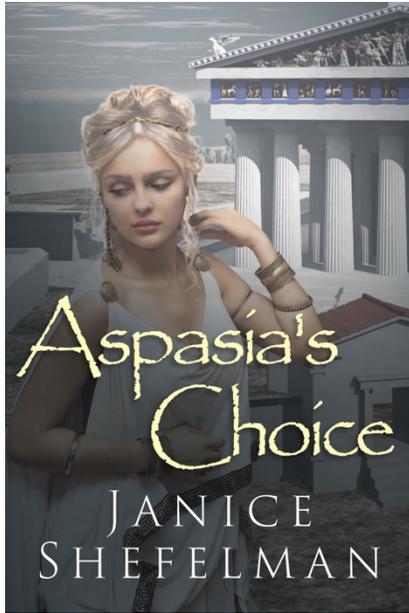
Readings from *A Habit of Landscape* and *From a Sandstone Ledge* with other New Mexico poets around the state, including in Santa Fe at the Teatro Paraques (left and below).

Publication of *From a Sandstone Ledge* by Finishing Line Press (2025).

Essay "Place Matters" in *We Are Nature Defending Itself*, an anthology of Women on Bodies, Borders, and Place (ed. Cordelia Barrera). This book is part of the Wittliff Collection Literary Series, general editor **Steven Davis**.

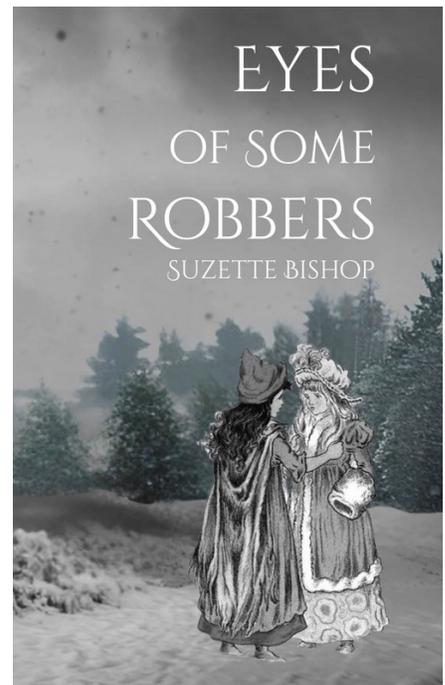


From **Carolyn Banks:** I used to write a weekly humor column for *The Bastrop Advertiser*. I can hardly believe that I had funny ideas to write about every seven days. And the last two years, I wrote two novels. One was *The Death Knot*, a sort of thriller-cum-romance. Before that, I wrote *The Importance of Being Erica*. I consider that my best-ever novel because it enabled me to use Oscar Wilde as a character. A lot of his dialogue was stuff he supposedly said! I published that one myself, because my agent hated the book and refused to send it around. Publishing it myself meant, though I didn't know it at the time, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Publishing World*. If I have any ideas for a new book, I must be repressing them. My mind is blank, and so, too, are my aspirations.



From **Janice Shefelman**: My new historical novel, *Aspasia's Choice*, is out from Next Chapter. It is set in ancient Athens during the golden age, but not all is golden. When Aspasia, a young orphan girl, arrives in Athens in 458 BC to live with her older sister and husband, she rebels against the custom of girls being kept in the home to learn domestic skills instead of attending school, and then having to submit to arranged marriages. No, Aspasia wants more. She wants to change the world! Little does she know the struggle to come or the friends she will make like a young Socrates and even General Pericles. Based on a historical character, this novel is a timeless tale of one girl's fight to live—and love—on her own terms.

Suzette Bishop's poetry chapbook, *Eyes of Some Robbers*, was recently released by Dancing Girl Press & Studio, and she had poems published in *The Writing Disorder*. Her chapbook, *Unbecoming*, is forthcoming soon from Ethel Press.



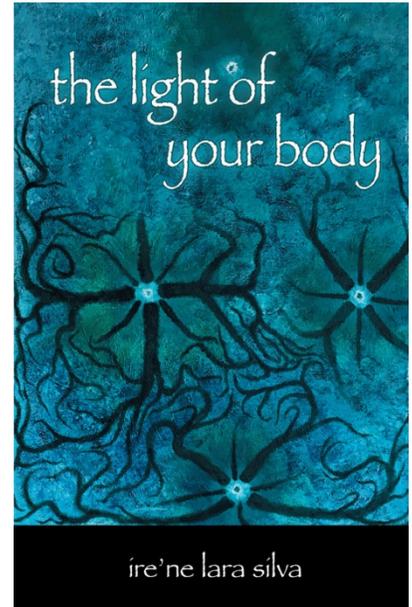
Professor **Steven Schneider** delivered a lecture and presentation entitled “The Neuroaesthetics of Ekphrasis: Crossing Borders with Poetry and Art” for the Brain and Beyond series. The series is hosted by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine Department and the Alzheimer’s Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research. The Brain and Beyond Seminar Series have hosted distinguished leaders and scientists from advocacy groups, community-based organizations, health care providers, state and federal agencies, and other academic institutions in the United States and internationally. Steven also had his poems published in the journals *Cirque*, *ABQinPrint*, and in the anthologies *Blue: A Hue Are You Anthology* and *All the Men Came and Danced*.

From **Nicolás Kanellos**: On September 1, 2025, I stepped down from the directorship of Arte Público Press and passed the baton to Dr. Gabriela Baeza Ventura, who was previously the executive editor of the press and director of Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage program.

In 2025 I published the reference book *Latino Firsts: Trailblazers and Milestones in United States History* with Visible Ink Press. See <https://www.visibleinkpress.com/t247/Latino-Firsts-Trailblazers-and-Milestones-in-United-States-History>.

Also, in March, I was presented with the award for “Mérito Editorial” at the UANLeón book fair and writers festival sponsored by the National Autonomous University of Nuevo León (Monterrey, México). Arte Público Press and six of its authors were the honored special guests of the fair. Among these was Texan **Alicia Gaspar de Alba**.

Arte Público is honored to announce the publication in March of **ire’ne lara silva**’s book of poetic stories *The Light of Your Body*. <https://artepublicopress.com/product/the-light-of-your-body>, currently available for review.



T. Lindsay Baker has signed a pre-publication contract with the University of Oklahoma Press for his next book-length study, a history and heritage tourists’ driving guide to historic U.S. Highway 66 across its most “boring” segment, the Texas Panhandle. Having lived in the region for two decades, he hopes to make the High Plains into the most rewarding portion of the road. This will be his third peer-reviewed book on the roadway.

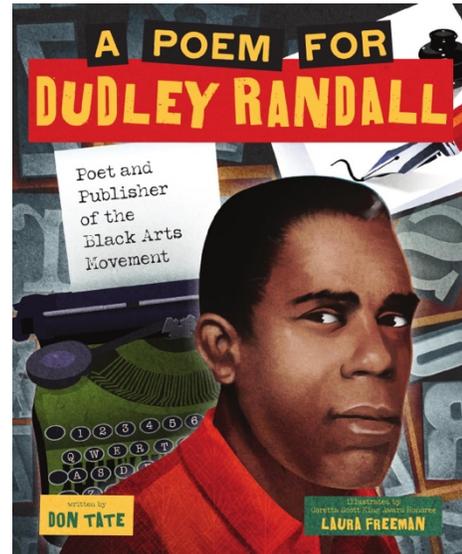


In September and October 2025, T.L. joined seven other owners of 1928-31 Ford Model A automobiles in making a full-length motor tour on the historic pavement of former Highway 66 the 2,400 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica. As he quipped, “There is nothing like driving the historic pavement in the type of motorcar that it was designed and built for.”

Now he is preparing for a busy speaking season in 2026, the centennial of the historic Mother Road.

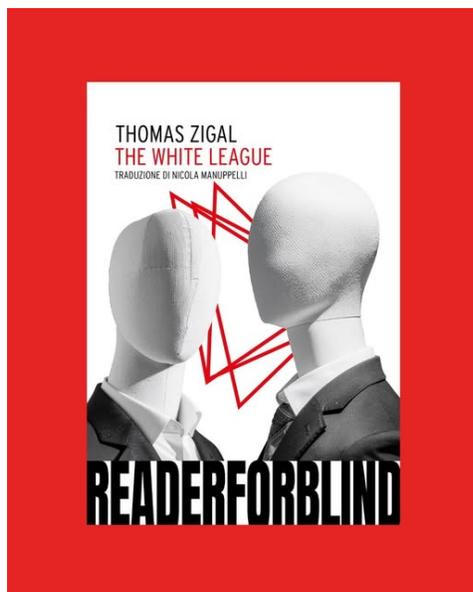
Author-illustrator **Don Tate** reveals the cover of his forthcoming book, *A Poem for Dudley Randall: Poet and Publisher of the Black Arts Movement*, (Abrams, Sept. 15, 2026). Don is the author, and Laura Freeman is the illustrator.

A Poem for Dudley Randall is a picture-book biography of Randall, a poet, publisher, and leader of the Black Arts movement of the 1960s. Randall's first published poem appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* when he was only 13 years old. He continued to write, and as he grew older, he realized his voice could be powerful. As calls for equal rights grew louder during the civil rights movement, he wrote the poem "Ballad of Birmingham" in response to an incident of senseless violence against a Black community in Alabama, where four children were killed—suddenly, the world was paying attention to his words. But most publishing companies were ignoring Black writers.



So, in 1965, Randall founded the groundbreaking Broadside Press to give a platform to Black creatives such as Audre Lorde, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and Sonia Sanchez, as well as his own work. Randall and his fellow writers used their literary voices to express pride in Black history and culture, emphasizing Black identity, self-determination, and beauty through art, literature, and music, and to advocate for art for and by Black people, regardless of how the dominant culture viewed it.

Integrated throughout the story and the back matter, Randall's most famous poems help bring the story alive.

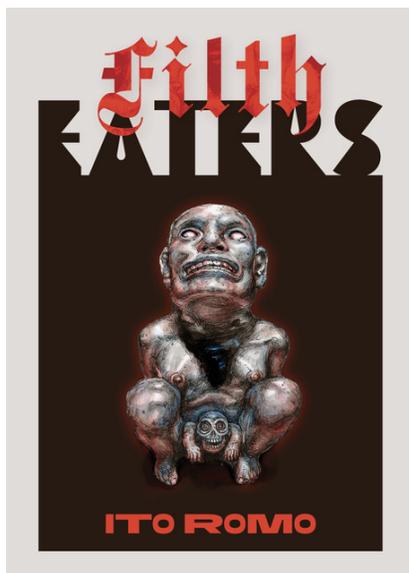
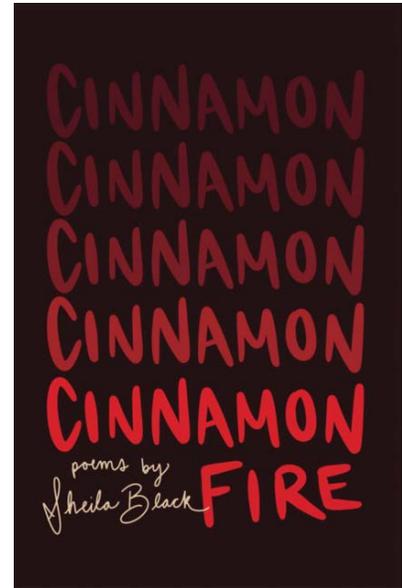


An Italian translation of **Tom Zikal**'s novel *The White League* (2005) was published by Edizioni readerforblind (Rome) in October 2025. The novel is receiving excellent reviews in Italy. In January, Tom was interviewed by Fabrizio Forno on his radio program on Radio Città Aperta (Rome) with the book's translator, Nicola Manuppelli. "It was a terrific discussion about the history of racial struggle in New Orleans, and Mr. Forno even played some New Orleans music," Zikal said. "The conversation was in both Italian and English, and I'm glad I took Latin and French in high school and college—I could almost follow what they were saying at times."

Sheila Black's latest poetry book *Cinnamon Fire* will be released this spring from Next Page Press. *Cinnamon Fire* is a book of praise songs and elegies—a celebration of the dark wood of midlife of which Dante wrote, “How hard it is to say what it was like.” These poems move through landscapes of illness, love, and its aftermath, finding the luminous edge where pain becomes perception.

“*Cinnamon Fire* is darkly steeped in saudade, a haunting longing, rich with complexities of tangled perspectives, a skein of aubades, internalized pressures sometimes stilled by environmental mirroring, love, loss, and rare abundance in the natural world and the always surrounding counterpoints to what ails. Sheila Black has taken us beyond the typical poetic portal and into the unfolding of what weaves us into being, what holds our shape, no matter how misshapen our current existence. This book is magic—pure and simple—a brilliant and bold awakening.”

—**Allison Adelle Hedge Coke**, author of *Look at This Blue*



Ito Romo's *Filth Eaters*, is due out from Deep Vellum Publishing in May.

Granada, 1865. After centuries of scrounging in the shadows, the vampire Radamés discovers an ancient Aztec codex revealing that the vampires of the “New World” live a more “human” life—they marry, they give birth. Radamés schemes his way onto a ship to Mexico. There, in the underbelly of the forgotten city of Teotihuacán, the Andalusian vampire falls in love with a member of this ancient sect of vampires called Filth Eaters. From their union, the mestizo vampire Doro is born.

Hopping back and forth in time from the Indus River Delta in 1099 to the Muslim Spanish empire of the 1400s, to the Mexico City of Maximilian and Carlota, to a flooded cyberpunk New York City of the future, *Filth Eaters* pulls at

the threads of empire, greed, and climate collapse. A novel from a celebrated writer of “Chicano Gothic” stories, this surprising, gory saga turns a new page for a centuries-old genre.

From **Christian Wallace**: I’m currently co-writing *Set in the West* for Clarkson Potter (an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group) with legendary production designer Cary White, whose work helped define the look of Westerns from *Lonesome Dove* to *Yellowstone* and *1883*. We’re aiming to bring the book to market in 2027, celebrating how the American West has been imagined on screen — and what that vision gets right (and wrong) about the real history.

I'm also currently working in the writers' room for *The Challenger*, a forthcoming Amazon limited series chronicling NASA's 1978 astronaut class, from their historic selection through the Challenger disaster and the Rogers Commission investigation that followed. The series is showrun by Maggie Cohn and stars Kristen Stewart as Sally Ride, the first American woman in space.

Landman was recently honored with the Made in Texas Award at the ATX TV Festival (photo right). Our second season broke Paramount+ records for the biggest season debut and finale. Production will resume this spring, as we return to shoot Season 3 in and around Fort Worth and across the Permian Basin.



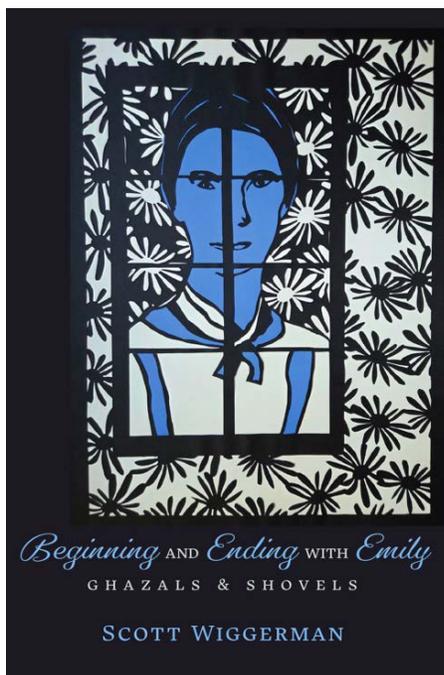
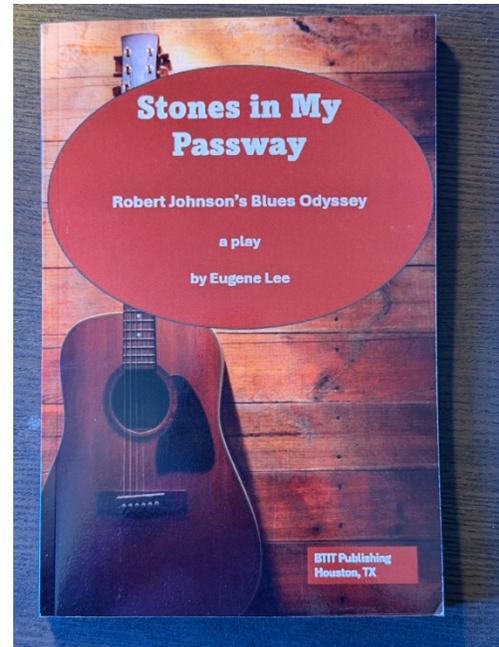
From **Kip Stratton**: My next book will be a collection of personal essays entitled *Buffalo Tattoo*. The essays are all original, though some parallel articles I've written for *Texas Monthly* and other magazines. Topics range from restoring Bud Shrake's leather office chair to a reflection on the last time I knowingly committed a felony. *Buffalo Tattoo* is under contract to University of New Mexico Press's High Road imprint with a fall 2027 pub date.

Through a Peckinpah connection living in Mexico, I've been recruited by a producer in L.A. to adapt a well-known **John Graves** short story into a feature-length screenplay. The carrot at the end of the stick: a well-known actor is interested in making a Western. Will this go anywhere? The odds say not a chance in hell. But it's been an interesting experience, though breaking down Graves's eloquent prose into the nuts and bolts of a script has been daunting.

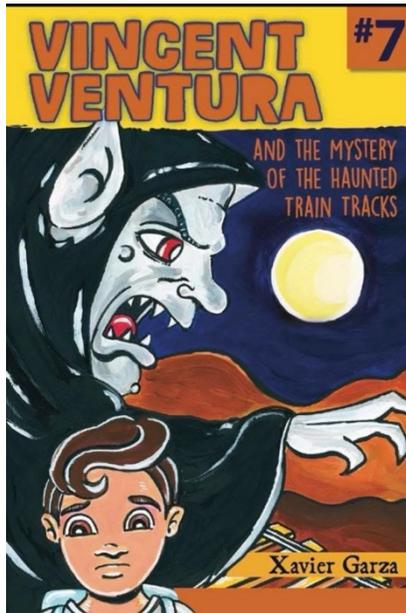
From Edward Vidurre: Big news from FlowerSong Press! We're thrilled to share a lineup of exciting titles hitting shelves soon. *JOTA: A Queer Latina y Latinx Anthology* arrives in February, spotlighting powerful queer voices and stories. We're also celebrating a brand-new release, *BLOODLINES* by Bianca V. Gonzalez Perez. And coming in February, we can't wait to welcome *When You Were Human* by **Natalia Treviño**. FlowerSong Press is proud to champion bold, community-rooted literature and to uplift Texas writers through publishing, readings, and ongoing literary collaborations. Stay tuned—there's more to come!

From **Eugene Lee**: Now available on Amazon, the published version of my play about legendary blues man Robert Johnson: *STONES IN MY PASSWAY: Robert Johnson's Blues Odyssey*.

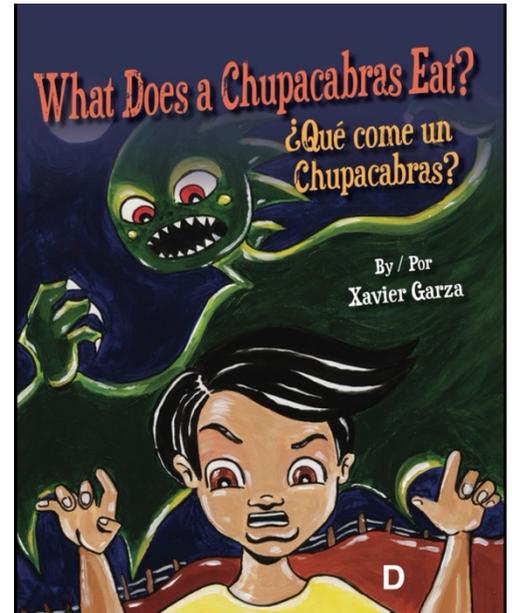
Also available on Amazon is an anthology of ten of my plays: *TRUTH BE TOLD: Black Texas Plays* by Eugene Lee.



Scott Wiggerman is thrilled to announce that his fourth full collection of poems, *Beginning and Ending with Emily: Ghazals and Golden Shovels*, will be published in March 2026 by Casa Urraca Press (Abiquiu, NM). It is currently available at a presale discount through the publisher: [Beginning and Ending with Emily: Ghazals and Golden Shovels - poetry by Scott Wiggerman — Casa Urraca Press](#) (Yes, cover art is by the author!)

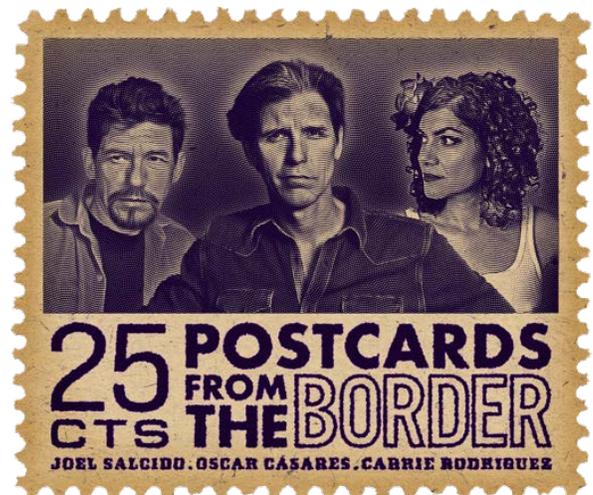


Xavier Garza will have two new books in 2026 from Arté Publico Press. One book will be *Vincent Ventura and the Mystery of the Curse of the Haunted Train Tracks*, and the other is a picture book titled *What Does a Chupacabras Eat?*



Oscar Cásares, an acclaimed novelist from the Rio Grande Valley, wanted to tell his ten-year-old daughter, Elena, about his experience of growing up on the Texas-Mexico border. To tell her this story, Cásares and photographer Joel Salcido traveled the length of the Rio Grande, from El Paso and Juarez to Brownsville and Matamoros, to share his roots and the subtle and profound details of those who live there.

Originally appearing as an essay in *Texas Monthly*, these postcards and the human stories they reveal come to life in a new stage production with music composed and performed by the celebrated singer-songwriter Carrie Rodriguez along with her five-piece band. Narrated by Cásares, the performance includes Salcido's stirring images and documentary footage by Luke Jacobs that immerse the audience in the life and culture of the Texas-Mexico border.



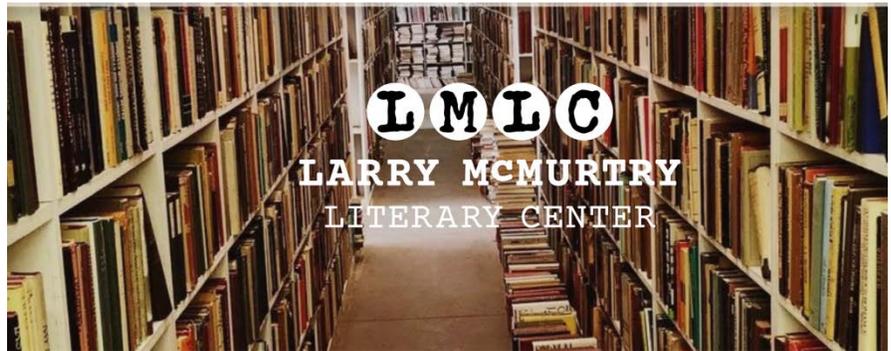
From **Ellen Temple**: My PBS one hour documentary film *Citizens at Last: Texas Women Fight for the Vote* will show on the big screen at the Bullock Texas History Center in Austin on March 1, 2026, at 2 p.m. with a panel of the filmmakers afterward. Admission is \$12 for non-members of the Bullock; please check their website in the coming weeks.



From **Patrick Cox**: With my mother and stepfather Doris and Beven Varnon, we founded *The Wimberley View* newspaper on St. Patrick's Day in 1976. Serving as the editor for six years, we won numerous awards for news writing, features, editorials, photography. The Texas Press Association awarded us the Best Weekly Newspaper Award in 1981. This tremendous experience launched my professional career as a journalist and later as historian and author.

We will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of *The Wimberley View* on Friday, March 20, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Wimberley Library Community Room. I will be speaking on the history of the *View*, and we will have a video of many of our editions from 1976 to 1981. I still have the very first edition (photo left) and many other issues with memorable characters and stories. The event is free and open to the public.

From **George Getschow**: **Larry McMurtry's** long-dormant bookshop in Archer City, reincarnated as The Larry McMurtry Literary Center (LMLC) about a year ago, is hosting several high-profile literary events this spring. On April 10, TIL Secretary **Kathryn Jones**



will talk about her upcoming biography, *Tall in the Saddle: The Life of Ben Johnson, Hollywood's Real Cowboy*. Johnson is the only man to win a rodeo championship and an Academy Award for his performance in the movie adaptation of McMurtry's novel *The Last Picture Show*. Attendees will include eight auction winners from the 2025 Texas Book Festival who, the same weekend, will enjoy a private viewing of *The Last Picture Show* inside the historic Royal Theater, a bus-and-walking tour of the actual sites and scenes from the movie (such as Cloris Leachman's and Timothy Bottom's steamy affair) and a guided tour of the LMLC by the center's executive director, **George Getschow**.

A few weeks later, **James Wade**, a new TIL member who has won two Spur Awards from the Western Writers of America for his McMurtryesque novels, is leading a writing workshop in Archer City, April 22-26. Wade's workshop is designed to provide writers with indispensable tools to employ in their own work, advance the motivation and discipline necessary to live the writing life, and examine the practical side of the publishing industry. For more information about the workshop, go to: <https://www.lmcmurtrylitcenter.org/workshops/fiction-workshop-with-james-wade-and-glenn-stout>

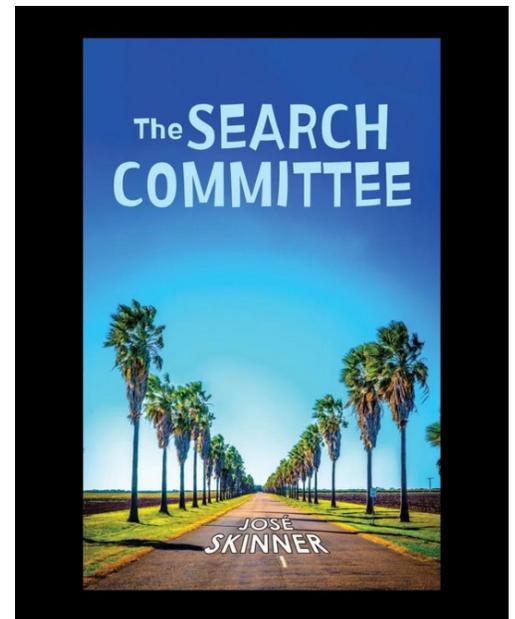


The fourth season of **Wes Ferguson**'s true-crime podcast [The Unforgotten](#) reached No. 1 on Apple Podcasts' Top Series chart in January. Wes hosted and produced the season in collaboration with *The Dallas Morning News*. Titled "Kill Site," it tells the story of a Texas man whose death was blamed on a mountain lion, despite evidence he was murdered. The next season of *The Unforgotten* is coming this spring and is a partnership with the *Texas Observer*.

In completely unrelated news, Wes is also thrilled to have added a cabin at his [Good Guad](#) campground near the foot of the Guadalupe Mountains in Far West Texas. All are welcome!

From CrimeReads Best Books of 2025:

The Search Committee is a hilarious and biting send-up of university culture and border politics from **José Skinner**, legendary Texas bookseller, professor, and author. In Skinner's latest, a prospective instructor for a South Texas university gets kidnapped on the other side of the border during a louche lunch. After realizing his charge has vanished, her frantic escort decides to lie to the hiring committee and pretend she never showed up in the first place. What follows is a nasty little gem of a novel that may be the best satire of the 21st century. For more books as strange as this one, check out...pretty much the entire catalogue of Alienated Majesty, the Austin bookstore that Skinner owns with his wife, and that I can no longer go to with my wallet (because I spend waaaaaay too much money there). —MO

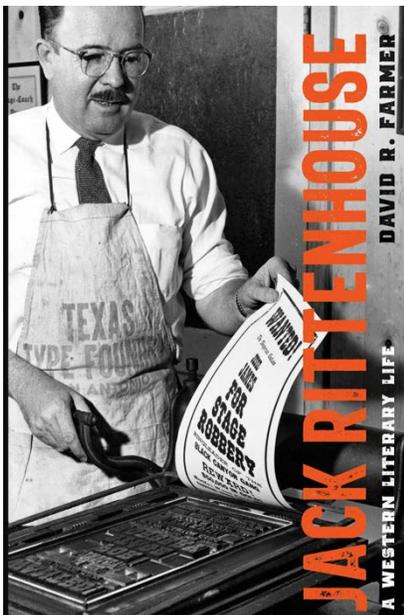
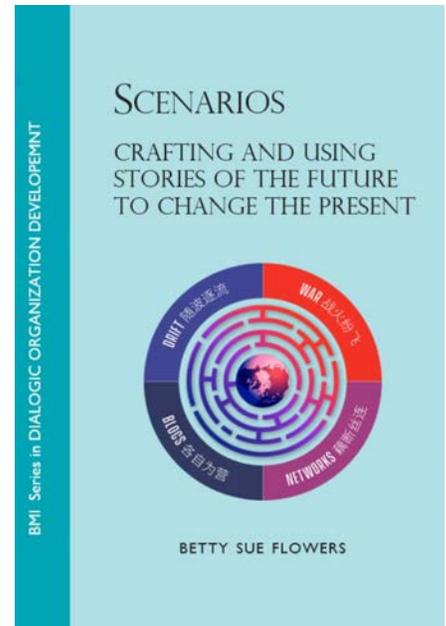


Kevin Prufer's new book of poems, *Good People*, will be published next year by Copper Canyon Press.

Betty Sue Flowers' latest book *Scenarios: Crafting and Using Stories of the Future to Change the Present*, came out late last year from BMI. A reviewer noted that while “most business schools teach case studies of the past,” executives must navigate the future of their organization, the environment in which it operates, and the future they aspire to create. In her book, Flowers “argues that scenarios are the ultimate leadership tool. They aren’t forecasts or prescriptions. They are plausible stories of what could happen, designed to spark strategic conversations and generative dialogues.

“By imagining multiple futures, leaders build flexibility, resilience, and the ability to seize opportunities as they arise. Scenarios help teams disagree without conflict, challenge the tyranny of the ‘official future,’ and initial real change.

Why read this book? Because it’s great, well-written, and accessible – a practical guide for anyone motivated to become a better leader and shape better futures.”



David Farmer's new book, *Jack Rittenhouse, A Western Literary Life*, will be published by UNM Press in May 2026. Living in Houston from 1951 to 1962, Rittenhouse became a partner in one of the largest advertising companies in the United States, which allowed him to follow his true passion – books. He traded with all the Texas antiquarian booksellers of the time. He collected 19th century type, which he tracked down in small printing shops in East and South Texas and then used with graceful effects for books produced on his historic printing presses. His Stagecoach Press established a reputation for excellence in book design and sound content, winning national awards for distinction in the private press movement. Rittenhouse’s friends included E. L. DeGolyer, Carl Hertzog, J. Frank Dobie, Lawrence Clark Powell, Fritz Toepperwein, and George Fuermann, among many others. See the publisher’s announcement here: <https://www.unmpress.com/9780826369550/jack-rittenhouse/>

From **Babette Hale**: First, my new book, *NARCISSI*, comes out in September from Winedale. It’s a novel-in-stories about the effects of a traveling Texas writer on the eight women he meets while trying to put his life back together after a disastrous divorce. Here’s an excerpt from the jacket copy: “The women he encounters in *Narcissi* find his attention compelling, and they all get hurt, or cause hurt, to a greater or lesser degree. But hurt is never the whole story.

Each woman brings her own complicated life into her time with Cole, conflicts with husbands, traumas survived, needs postponed, children. And children grow up.”

In fall also, Winedale is putting **Leon Hale**'s EASY GOING back in print. First published by Shearer Publishing in 1983, this is a column collection from *The Houston Post*.

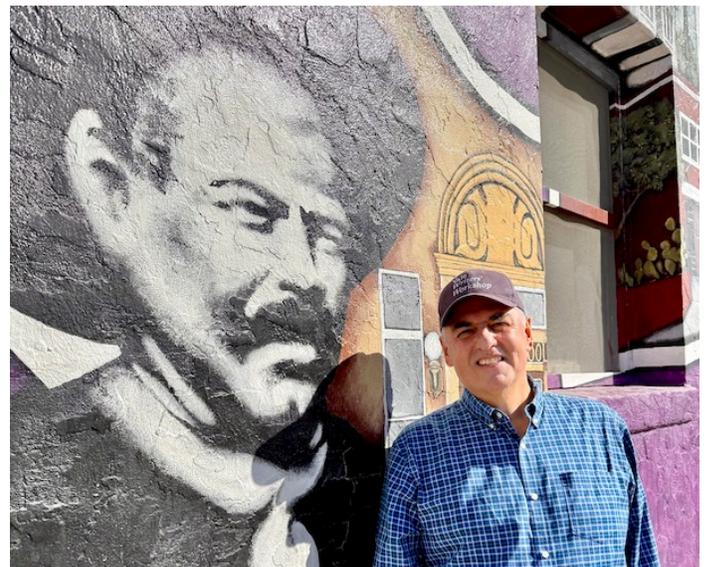
A new generation of readers will find that Hale is special. His view is clear and wide and always alert to the potential for joy in common day experience. A balm to soothe today's sore spirits.



Robert Schenkkan's newest play, *ReCON\$truXion*, will have its world premiere in Montgomery at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival on April 24, directed by Steve Broadnax. John Lynch was 17 years old and enslaved on a Louisiana cotton plantation when he was liberated by Union troops. Ten years later, he was elected Speaker of the House in Mississippi. Self-taught, a brilliant once-in-a-generation political talent, Lynch would go on to Congress where he fought valiantly against opponents of Reconstruction and the eventual betrayal of the Freedmen. How did the United States beat the Confederacy and still lose the war?

Isn't history always written by the "Winners"? *ReCON\$truXion* is a "History" play with shocking contemporary resonance.

On April 25, **Sergio Troncoso** will be the Grand Marshall of a parade in Ysleta, Texas celebrating El día de los niños, El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day). He will also be teaching another fiction workshop at the Yale Writers' Workshop in June. Finally, in late October, he will be traveling to Shanghai and Hong Kong to give a series of workshops and lectures, a once-in-a-lifetime invitation he received after giving a writing workshop at the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, Connecticut last year. He has a forthcoming memoir in 2027.

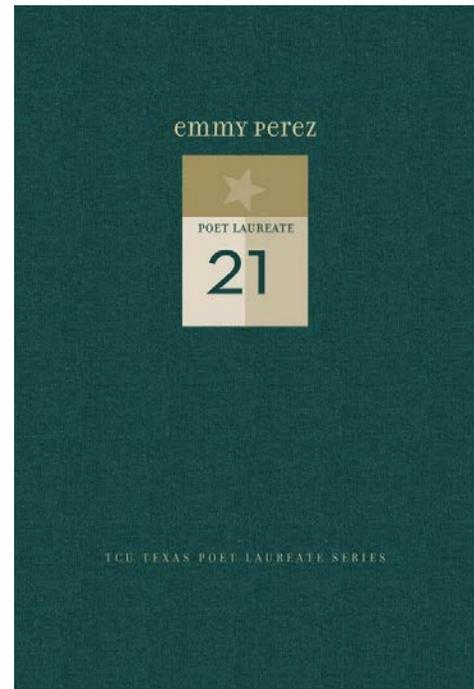


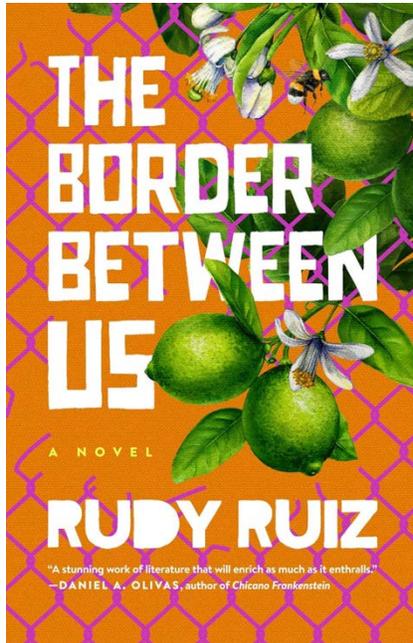


From **Gene Fowler**: The Texas Medical Association's steering committee for its History of Medicine Gallery recently approved my proposal for an exhibition on Texas' mineral water health traditions. I will co-curate the exhibition with the gallery director. It will open next fall and be on view for a year. This image of a gent guzzling the elixir Crazy Water in the hills of Mineral Wells may be in the exhibit. The exhibition will be partly based on my 1991 book, *Crazy Water*.

Among other projects, I am currently doing initial research for a potential book on the history of Texas' agricultural harvest festivals, focusing on events that began (and sometimes ended) before 1960.

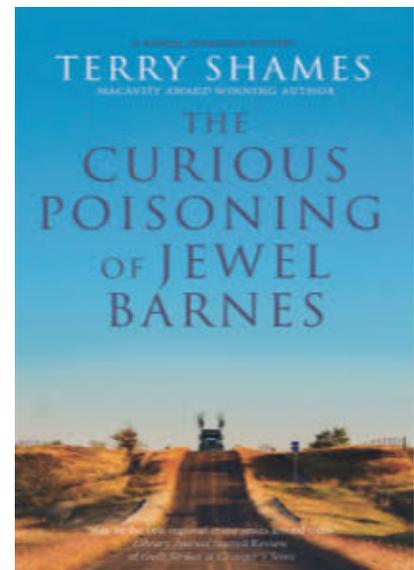
Emmy Pérez's book *Paper america: New and Selected Poems* will be published this March as part of the Texas Poet Laureate Series with TCU Press. In fall 2025, her poetry chapbook *Boxes with Zero Tolerance* was published by Mouthfeel Press, and her lyric essay "Carried by Seeds" was published in *We Are Nature Defending Itself: An Anthology of Women on Bodies, Borders, and Place* edited by Cordelia E. Barrera (Texas A&M Press). She presented "Writing in the Land," a two-part lecture with Gemini Ink and made presentations with Humanities Texas and at the El Mundo Zurdo Conference. This spring, she'll present at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference in Baltimore and at other gatherings. She is a professor and chair in the Department of Creative Writing at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where she has taught for twenty years.





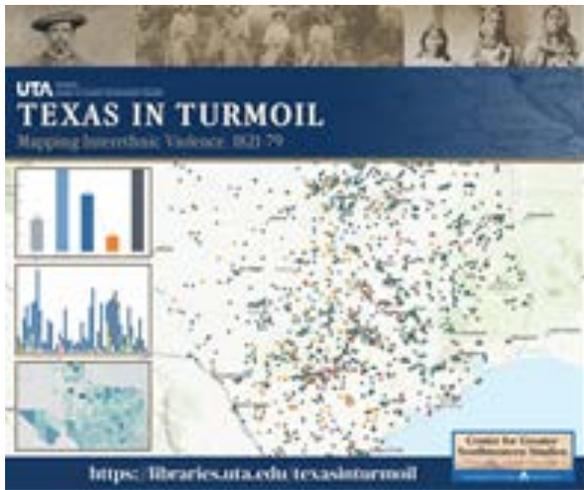
Rudy Ruiz's *The Border Between Us* was selected as the 2025 fiction winner of the Philosophical Society of Texas Book Prize. It also received the Gold Medal for the Rudolfo Anaya Prize at the 2025 International Latino Book Awards.

In December, the twelfth in **Terry Shames'** Samuel Craddock series, *The Curious Poisoning of Jewel Barnes*, was published by Severn House Publishing. In a starred review last year, Library Journal said the Craddock series “may be the best regional crime series around today.” In January, the paperback of the second in her Jessie Madison thriller series, *Deep Dive*, was issued. Booklist called it “A must-read thriller.”



From **Jay Brandon**: A California producer is trying to make a movie or TV series of my novel *Executive Privilege*. *EP* is about a First Lady of the United States who thinks her evil husband is up to no good and so goes on the run from him with their young son, aided by her (now gone rogue) female Secret Service agent and a young San Antonio divorce lawyer. Seems like an idea whose time has come.

A different producer has recently expressed interest in my novel *Local Rules*, about an out-of-town lawyer defending a murder case in South Texas, in a town where everyone except him seems to know something secret about the case. This is one of my favorites of my twenty novels, so I hope the screen does well by it.



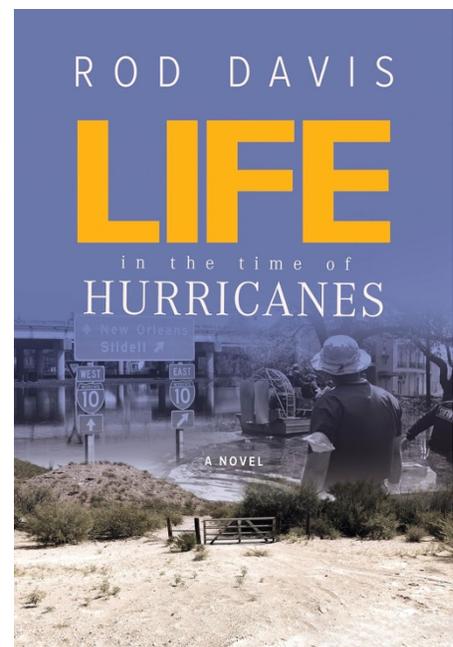
Sam W. Haynes was interviewed last month by *Fronteras* host Norma Martinez, Texas Public Radio, to discuss his most recent book *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, The Struggle for Texas*, and his role in the development of a new website, Texas in Turmoil: Mapping Interethnic Violence, 1821-1879 <https://libraries.uta.edu/texasinturmoil/>. A joint project involving UT Arlington's Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the UTA Library, the digital project maps and analyzes

almost three thousand sites of violence among the many peoples of Texas. He also served as a historical consultant for the new season of the PBS show *Finding Your Roots*, hosted by Henry Louis Gates.

From **Rod Davis**: I got knocked out by cerebral infarction at the end of last October just before the Louisiana Book Festival and was grounded about three months. I'm back in the game and I just wanted to tell you; so is my big-time effort to sell the new novel, *Life in the Time of Hurricanes*, from TCU Press. So just for some responses, here's a great excerpt from the *Texas Observer*, where I was an editor in 1980:

<https://www.texasobserver.org/life-in-the-time-of-hurricanes/>

My daughter and her granddaughters took care of me and then my new friend **Lynn Hoggard** gave me a great place to live. Hope to see you soon!





"Parable of Weeds" by **Christine Granados** was published in *We Are Nature Defending Itself: An Anthology of Women on Bodies, Borders, and Place* by the Wittliff Collections Literary Series in October 2025. See <https://www.tamupress.com/book/9781648433733/we-are-nature-defending-itself/>

The anthology also includes work by TIL members **Shelley Armitage, Norma E. Cantú, Sandra Cisneros, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, ire'ne lara silva, Diana López, Pat Mora, Emmy Pérez, Carmen Tafolla,** and new member **Diane Wilson.**

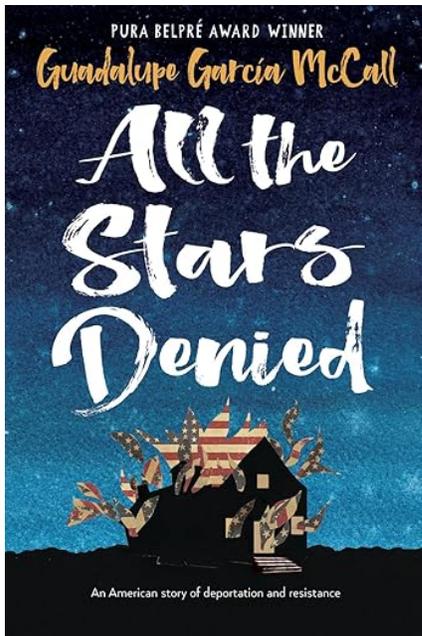
From **Chris Barton**: The pesky thing about having principles — as writers, as people, as Texans — is that there may come a time when we're enticed to abandon them or else risk financial or professional consequences.

My essay "'We received a parent complaint': How my presentations to 1,600 students got canceled" (<https://chrisbarton.info/1-parent-complaint-presentations-to-1600-students-canceled/>) recounts the decision I faced and the choice I made when school administrators in San Antonio asked me to compromise my commitment to intellectual freedom.

That essay also led to a packed house of supportive families at Nowhere Bookshop (owned by fellow TIL member **Jennifer Lawson**), nearly a dozen community members speaking on my behalf at the January meeting of the Alamo Heights ISD school board, coverage in the *San Antonio Current* that exposed the superintendent's misrepresentation of the situation, and parents now organized to keep pushing back against the district's decision. This isn't over. District administrators may have thought that I would go along with their willingness to accommodate a tiny-but-coordinated anti-LGBTQ+ campaign in order to make a small problem go away quietly, without parental or public scrutiny. If so, they thought wrong. I guess that's another pesky thing about principles.

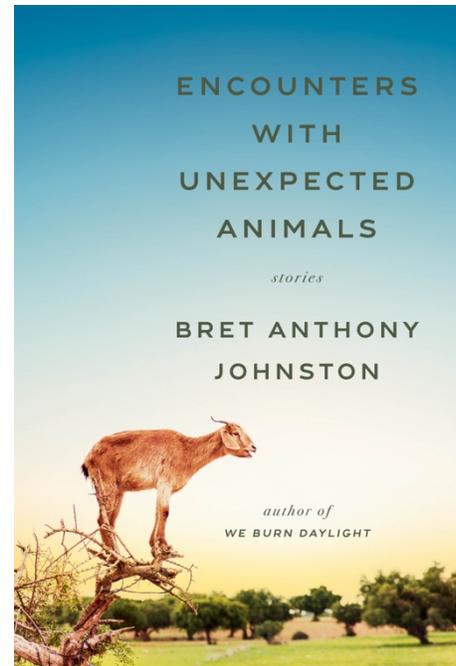
It's much more comfortable to have and espouse our principles when we don't have to put them to the test and see just how determined we are to stick to them. But these past few months, I've seen how ready a community can be to show its appreciation and support for our doing so.

Here's that Jan. 14 crowd at Nowhere. We'll see where things go from here.



From **Guadalupe García McCall**: **ALL THE STARS DENIED** will be available in paperback starting Feb. 24. You can pre-order now!

Bret Anthony Johnston's *Encounters with Unexpected Animals: Stories* will be published by Random House on February 24, 2026. All of the stories are set in Texas, and three of them have received the Kay Cattarulla Prize for the Short Story. More information can be found at www.bret-anthony-johnston.com



From **Celeste Bedford Walker**: My military drama “Camp Logan” (photo below) was presented at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival by the Alabama State University Drama Department on February 6.



As a writer on the documentary “A Star Without a Star: The Juanita Moore Story,” I’m proud to announce that the film has been nominated by the 57TH NAACP Image Awards for Best Documentary. The awards program will air on Saturday, February 28, at 8 p.m. on BET and CBS.

My play “Heirs of Cedar Branch,” a drama about a family dealing with climate change, environmental

justice, and problems with jointly owned property, will have a reading on February 22, with the Essence of Acting Company, New York.

“Sassy Mamas,” my comedy about older women in search of love, will run at Fort Worth’s Jubilee Theatre May 29 to June 28.

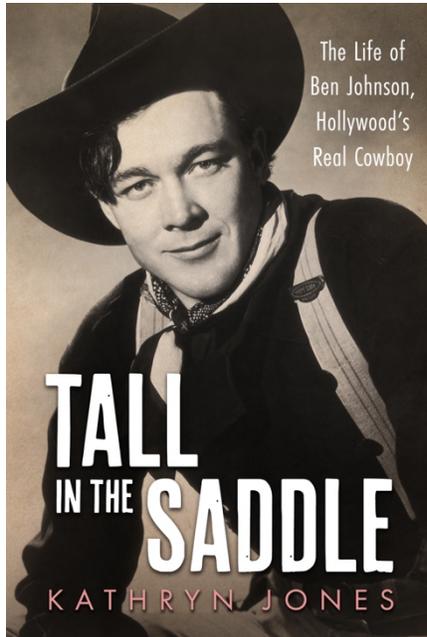
Michael Bracken is the series editor for the annual *The Best Private Eye Stories of the Year*. The inaugural volume was released in December 2025. His short story “Glass Beach” appears in the January/February 2026 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine*.



From **Stephen Harrigan**: Chapter 15 of *The Bowie Knife That Killed Dracula*, the serialized novel that **Bill Broyles** and I are writing for *Texas Monthly*, appears on the magazine's website. One of the fun things about this project is seeing the great illustrations that Studio Duco is creating for the story. In this image, our hero Quincey Morris leads Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and the vampire-hunting priest Father Melchior toward the spectral hacienda of the New World vampire Don Santiago



Kathryn Jones' biography of Oscar-winning actor and world champion rodeo cowboy Ben Johnson will be released March 16 by the University Press of Mississippi as part of its "Hollywood Legends" series. Actor Tom Selleck, TIL Fellow **Kip Stratton**, and others penned positive blurbs.



Kathryn will speak and sign copies at Interabang Books in Dallas at 6 p.m., March 18; at the **Larry McMurtry** Literary Center in Archer City on April 10 (see separate item about the center); at Books on the Bosque in Albuquerque in late May; at the Ben Johnson Cowboy Museum in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, this summer; and at the Durango Cowboy Gathering this fall in Durango, Colorado.

Kathryn launched her new poetry collection *The Solace of Wild Places* (Lamar University Literary Press, 2025) last fall at the Boerne Book Festival and the Texas Book Festival. Also, two of Kathryn's poems were published in *Notes of Light and Dark: Southwestern Aubades and Nocturnes* (Dos Gatos Press, 2025). She will be reading at Book Woman in Austin on April 22 and The Twig in San Antonio on April 27.