

THE RAINIER WRITING WORKSHOP
MFA @ PLU
Faculty Biographies

Rick Barot has published three books of poetry with Sarabande Books: *The Darker Fall* (2002), which received the Kathryn A. Morton Prize; *Want* (2008), which was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award and won the 2009 Grub Street Book Prize; and *Chord* (2015), which received the UNT Rilke Prize, the PEN Open Book Award, the Publishing Triangle's Thom Gunn Award, and was a finalist for the *LA Times* Book Prize. He has received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Artist Trust of Washington, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, and Stanford University, where he was a Wallace E. Stegner Fellow and a Jones Lecturer in Poetry. He lives in Tacoma, WA and is an associate professor of English at Pacific Lutheran University and is the director of The Rainier Writing Workshop. He is the poetry editor of *New England Review*. For many years he was on the faculty of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. His fourth book, *The Galleons*, will be published by Milkweed Editions in 2020.

Suzanne Berne is the author of four novels: *The Dogs of Littlefield*, *The Ghost at the Table*, *A Perfect Arrangement*, and *A Crime in the Neighborhood*, which won Great Britain's Orange Prize in 1999, as well as a book of nonfiction. She has written frequently for *The New York Times*, and her short stories, reviews and essays have also appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Agni*, *Vogue*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The London Sunday Times* among other publications. She is the fiction editor for *The Harvard Review* and teaches creative writing at Boston College.

David Biespiel grew up in Texas. He is a contributing writer at *American Poetry Review*, *New England Review*, *New Republic*, *New York Times*, *Poetry*, *The Rumpus*, and *Slate*. He is the author of eleven books, including *Republic Café*, published in 2019, *The Education of a Young Poet*, which was selected a Best Books for Writers by *Poets & Writers*, *A Long High Whistle*, which received the Oregon Book Award for Nonfiction, and *The Book of Men and Women*, which was chosen for Best Books of the Year by the Poetry Foundation and received the Oregon Book Award for *Poetry*. His book on creativity, *Every Writer Has a Thousand Faces*, began as an RWW morning lecture. Recipient of Lannan, National Endowment for the Arts, and Stegner fellowships, he has twice been a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Balakian Award. David has taught at Stanford University, University of Maryland, George Washington University, and Wake Forest University, in addition to other colleges and universities. He is Poet-in-Residence at Oregon State University, where he teaches in the MFA Program, and founder of the Attic Institute of Arts and Letters in Portland.

Barrie Jean Borich is the author of *Apocalypse, Darling* (Ohio State University Press), which has been short-listed for a Lambda Literary Award. *PopMatters* said, "*Apocalypse*,

Darling soars and seems to live as a new form altogether. It's poetry, a meditation on life as 'the other,' creative nonfiction, and abstract art." Her memoir *Body Geographic* (University of Nebraska Press/American Lives Series) won a Lambda Literary Award in Memoir, an IPPY Gold Medal in Essay/Creative Nonfiction, and a Forward INDIE Bronze Award for Essays. In a starred review, *Kirkus* called *Body Geographic* "an elegant literary map that celebrates shifting topographies as well as human bodies in motion, not only across water and land, but also through life." Borich is also the author of the LGBTQ classic and American Library Association Stonewall Book Award winner *My Lesbian Husband* (Graywolf), which *Lambda Literary* said, "situates lesbian relationships in a complicated, messy world of long-term intimacy...a place to center attention at the margin to illuminate a whole." Her first book, *Restoring the Color of Roses*, which *Lambda Literary* called "a full-throated defense of femme, femininity, and beauty as relevant and meaningful to lesbians," was published by Firebrand Books, an independent feminist press. She is an associate professor in the Department of English and MA in Writing and Publishing Program at DePaul University in Chicago, where she edits *Slag Glass City*, a journal of the urban essay arts. A Chicago native, Borich lives with her spouse Linnea in the city's historic Bryn Mawr District of the Edgewater Beach neighborhood, one of the most culturally and internationally diverse community areas of the city and recently voted the sixth "gayest" neighborhood in the United States.

Fleda Brown's *The Woods Are On Fire: New & Selected Poems* was chosen by Ted Kooser for his University of Nebraska poetry series in 2017. She has nine previous collections of poems. Her work has twice appeared in *The Best American Poetry* (with a third time upcoming) and has won a Pushcart Prize, the Felix Pollak Prize, the Philip Levine Prize, and the Great Lakes Colleges New Writer's Award, and has twice been a finalist for the National Poetry Series. Her memoir, *Driving With Dvorak*, was published in 2010 by the University of Nebraska Press. She is professor emerita at the University of Delaware, where she directed the Poets in the Schools program. She was poet laureate of Delaware from 2001-07. She lives with her husband, Jerry Beasley, in Traverse City, Michigan.

David Allan Cates is the author of five novels, most recently *Tom Connor's Gift*, a gold medalist in the 2015 Independent Book Publishers Book awards. His chapbook of poetry, *The Mysterious Location of Kyrgyzstan*, was released in the spring, 2016. His other novels include: *Hunger in America*, a New York Times Notable Book, *X Out of Wonderland*, and *Freeman Walker*, both Montana Book Award Honor Books, and *Ben Armstrong's Strange Trip Home*, a gold medalist in the 2013 Independent Book Publishers Book Awards. The winner of the Montana Arts Council's Artist Innovation Award in 2010, his stories and poems have appeared in numerous literary magazines, and his travel articles in *Outside Magazine* and the *New York Times Sophisticated Traveler*. For 18 years, Cates was the executive director of Missoula Medical Aid, a non-profit that provides public health and surgery services in Honduras. In Missoula he has worked with the Missoula Writing Collaborative, teaching classes on short story writing in high schools, and the 406 writing workshop. For many years he worked as a fishing guide on the Smith River and raised cattle on his family farm in Wisconsin.

Kevin Clark's book, *Self-Portrait with Expletives*, won the Pleiades Press book contest. His first full-length collection, *In the Evening of No Warning*, was published by New Issues Press. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *The Southern Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Georgia Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Ploughshares*, *Crazyhorse*, and *The Iowa Review*. He also won the Angoff Award from *The Literary Review* for best contribution in a volume year. Kevin's textbook, *The Mind's Eye: A Guide to Writing Poetry*, is published by Pearson Longman. Author of four chapbooks, his most recent chapbook, *The Wanting*, won the Five Oaks Press contest. Kevin has published essays about numerous contemporary American poets. His critical articles and reviews have appeared in many journals and collections, among them *The Iowa Review*, *Papers on Language and Literature*, *The Southern Review*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *The Georgia Review*, and *Poetry International*. He was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, CA, where he taught poetry writing and modern and contemporary American literature. Still attempting slow pitch softball and fast pitch baseball, he lives in San Luis Obispo with his family.

Geffrey Davis is the author of *Night Angler* (BOA Editions), winner of the 2018 James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets, and *Revising the Storm* (BOA Editions), winner of the 2013 A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. He also coauthored the chapbook *Begotten* (URB Books, 2016) with poet F. Douglas Brown. Named a finalist for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, Davis has received the Anne Halley Poetry Prize, the Dogwood Prize in Poetry, and the Wabash Prize for Poetry, as well as fellowships from Bread Loaf, Cave Canem, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Whiting Foundation. His work has been published in *Crazyhorse*, *Mississippi Review*, *New England Review*, *New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Nimrod*, *PBS NewsHour*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, and elsewhere. A native of the Pacific Northwest, Davis teaches at the University of Arkansas during the academic year. He also serves as poetry editor for *Iron Horse Literary Review*.

Oliver de la Paz is the author of five collections of poetry: *Names Above Houses*, *Furious Lullaby*, *Requiem for the Orchard*, *Post Subject: A Fable*, and *The Boy in the Labyrinth*. He also co-edited *A Face to Meet the Faces: An Anthology of Contemporary Persona Poetry*. A founding member, Oliver serves as the co-chair of the Kundiman advisory board. His work has been published or is forthcoming in journals and anthologies such as *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*, *American Poetry Review*, *Tin House*, *The Southern Review*, *New England Review*, and *Poetry*. He teaches at the College of the Holy Cross and in the Low-Residency MFA Program at PLU.

Jennifer Elise Foerster received her PhD in English and Literary Arts at the University of Denver, her MFA from the Vermont College of the Fine Arts, and is an alumna of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA). She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, a Lannan Foundation Writing Residency Fellowship, and was a Robert Frost Fellow in Poetry at the Breadloaf Writers Conference

and a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University. In addition to teaching in The Rainier Writing Workshop, Jennifer teaches in the IAIA MFA Creative Writing Program and currently serves as its Interim Director. Jennifer also co-directs, with the poet Joy Harjo, an arts mentorship program for Mvskoke youth in Oklahoma, and is a Project Director with the non-profit organization InnerCHANGE WORKS. She is the author of two books of poetry, *Leaving Tulsa* (2013) and *Bright Raft in the Afterweather* (2018), both published by the University of Arizona Press. Foerster is of German, Dutch, and Mvskoke descent, is a member of the Mvskoke (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, and lives in San Francisco.

Greg Glazner's books of poetry are *From the Iron Chair* and *Singularity*, both published by W.W. Norton. His awards include The Walt Whitman Award, The Bess Hokin Award from *Poetry*, and an NEA Fellowship. He has published recent poetry, fiction, and non-fiction in magazines including *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Fifth Wednesday*, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. His poetry collection *Cellar Testament* won the 2018 Rachel Wetszteon Chapbook Award from William Paterson University. An electric guitarist as well as a writer, he has collaborated with the classical composer Garrett Shatzer on an extensive blues-influenced piece in the art song tradition, *At the Blinds*. A past Director of Creative Writing at The College of Santa Fe and a former Richard Hugo Visiting Writer at The University of Montana, he teaches at UC Davis and in the low-residency MFA Program at Pacific Lutheran University.

Jenny Johnson is the author of *In Full Velvet* (Sarabande Books, 2017). Her poems have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, *Waxwing*, and elsewhere. Her honors include a Whiting Award, a Hodder Fellowship, and an NEA Fellowship. She has also received awards and scholarships from the Blue Mountain Center, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo. She is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at West Virginia University, and she is on the faculty of the Rainier Writing Workshop, Pacific Lutheran University's low-residency MFA program. She lives in Pittsburgh, PA.

April Ayers Lawson is the author of *Virgin and Other Stories*, which was named a Best Book Of The Year by *The Irish Times* and *Vice*, and a Best Foreign Book of the Year by Spain's *Qué Leer Magazine*. *Virgin and Other Stories* has been (or will be) translated into German, Spanish, Norwegian, and Italian. She has received The Plimpton Prize for Fiction, as well as a writing fellowship from The Corporation of Yaddo. Her fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, *Die Welt*, *ZYZZYVA*, and *Oxford American*, among others, has been cited as notable in *Best American Short Stories*, featured by *Huffington Post*, and anthologized in *The Unprofessionals: New American Writing from The Paris Review*. Her nonfiction has appeared in *Der Spiegel*, *Granta*, *Vice*, and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung Magazine*, and been named a Most Popular Read of the Year by *Granta*. She has taught in the creative writing programs at Emory University and the University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and now teaches at Clemson University.

Rebecca McClanahan's ten published books include *The Tribal Knot* (a multigenerational memoir), *Word Painting*, and *The Riddle Song and Other Rememberings*, winner of the Glasgow Award in nonfiction. Other awards include the Wood Prize from *Poetry Magazine*, a Pushcart Prize in fiction, and (twice) the Carter Prize for the Essay. Rebecca's work has appeared in *Best American Essays*, *Best American Poetry*, *Boulevard*, *The Sun*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Brevity*, and numerous other journals as well as anthologies published by Simon & Schuster, Beacon, Norton, and Bedford/St. Martin, among others. Her newest book, *In the Key of New York City: A Midlife Memoir*, is forthcoming from Red Hen Press in 2020.

Kent Meyers is the author of a memoir, a book of short fiction, and three novels, most recently *Twisted Tree*, which won a Society of Midland Authors award and a High Plains Book award, and was translated into French. *The River Warren* and *Light In the Crossing* were *New York Times* Notable Books, and *The Work Of Wolves* won the Mountain and Plains Booksellers Association Award and an American Library Association Award. Meyers has published fiction and essays in numerous literary journals. He recently retired from many years of teaching at Black Hills State University in South Dakota.

Brenda Miller is the author of five essay collections: *An Earlier Life*; *Who You Will Become*; *Listening Against the Stone*; *Blessing of the Animals*; and *Season of the Body*. She also co-authored *Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining and Publishing Creative Nonfiction* and *The Pen and The Bell: Mindful Writing in a Busy World*. Her work has received six Pushcart Prizes. *An Earlier Life* recently received the Washington State Book Award. She is a Professor of English at Western Washington University, and on the faculty of the Rainier Writing Workshop. She lives in Bellingham, WA, with her dog Abbe and a rotating crew of foster dogs who take up temporary residence.

Marie Mutsuki Mockett was born to an American father and Japanese mother, and graduated from Columbia University with a degree in East Asian Languages and Civilizations. Her memoir, *Where the Dead Pause and the Japanese Say Goodbye*, was a finalist for the 2017 PEN Open Book Award, the Indies Choice for Nonfiction and the Northern California Book Award for Creative Nonfiction. She received a Fellowship from the US/Japan Creative Artist Fellowship, funded by the NEA. Her novel, *Picking Bones from Ash*, published by Graywolf, was a finalist for the Saroyan Prize and the Paterson Prize. Her new book, *American Harvest: God, Country and Farming in the Heartland*, was a finalist for the Lukas Prize, awarded by Columbia and Harvard University's Schools of Journalism; *American Harvest* will be published by Graywolf in April 2020 and follows Mockett through seven agricultural states and a visit to the Mockett farm in Nebraska in the company of Christian wheat harvesters.

Scott Nadelson is the author of four story collections, most recently *The Fourth Corner of the World*; a memoir, *The Next Scott Nadelson: A Life in Progress*; and a novel, *Between You and Me*. His stories and essays have appeared in *Harvard Review*, *AGNI*, *Ploughshares*, *Glimmer Train*, *The Southern Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *New England Review*, *Prairie Schooner*,

and *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and have been cited as notable in both *Best American Short Stories* and *Best American Essays*. Winner of the Oregon Book Award, the Great Lakes Colleges New Writers Award, and the Reform Judaism Fiction Prize, he teaches at Willamette University and lives in Salem, Oregon.

Lia Purpura is the author of eight collections of essays, poems, and translations, most recently, *Rough Likeness* (essays) and *It Shouldn't Have Been Beautiful* (poems). Her honors include a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist, National Endowment for the Arts and Fulbright Fellowships, four Pushcart prizes, the Associated Writing Programs Award in Nonfiction, and the Beatrice Hawley, and Ohio State University Press awards in poetry. Recent work appears in *Agni*, *Field*, *The Georgia Review*, *Orion*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Best American Essays*. She is Writer in Residence at The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and teaches in prisons in Baltimore and at writing programs around the country. In early 2019, her new collection of essays, *All the Fierce Tethers*, was published by Sarabande Books.

Marjorie Sandor is the author of four books of short fiction and creative nonfiction, and the editor of a short-story anthology, *The Uncanny Reader* (St. Martins Press, 2015). Her linked story collection, *Portrait of my Mother, Who Posed Nude in Wartime* (Sarabande Books) won the 2004 National Jewish Book Award. Stories and essays have appeared in such journals as *AGNI*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Harvard Review*, and *Opera News*, as well as in several anthologies, including *The Best American Short Stories* and *The Pushcart Prize*. She lives in Corvallis, Oregon, and teaches in the MFA Program at Oregon State University.

Peggy Shumaker's new and selected volume *Cairn* was recently published by Red Hen Press. She was honored by the Rasmuson Foundation with its Distinguished Artist Award, and by the National Endowment on the Arts with a fellowship in poetry. She served as Alaska State Writer Laureate. Shumaker is the author of eight books of poetry. Her lyrical memoir is *Just Breathe Normally*. Professor emerita from University of Alaska Fairbanks, Shumaker teaches in the Rainier Writing Workshop MFA at PLU. She serves on the Advisory Board for Storyknife and on the board of the Alaska Arts and Culture Foundation. Shumaker is editor of the Boreal Books series (an imprint of Red Hen Press), editor of the Alaska Literary Series at University of Alaska Press, contributing editor for *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and poetry editor for *Persimmon Tree*.

Renee Simms received her MFA from Arizona State University, a JD from Wayne State University Law School, and a BA from University of Michigan. She is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, was a John Gardner Fiction Fellow at the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and received fellowships from Ragdale and Vermont Studio Center. In addition to teaching in the Rainier Writing Workshop, Renee teaches at University of Puget Sound, where she is an associate professor of African American Studies and contributing faculty to English. Renee's

debut story collection *Meet Behind Mars* was a Foreword Indies Finalist for Short Stories and listed by The Root as one of 28 brilliant books by black authors in 2018. Renee is currently at work on a novel and a collection of linked essays.

Sherry Simpson has published two collections of essays, *The Way Winter Comes* and *The Accidental Explorer*. Her most recent book, *Dominion of Bears*, won the John Burroughs Medal for Excellence in Natural History Writing in 2015. Her work has appeared in numerous journals, anthologies, and magazines, including *Orion*, *Harvard Review*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Brevity*, *On Nature: Great Writers on the Great Outdoors*, and *In Fact*. She is a professor of creative writing at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Jason Skipper's debut novel *Hustle* was a finalist for the PEN Center USA Award for Fiction. His work has appeared in *Hotel Amerika*, *Mid-American Review*, and *South Writ Large*, and he has received awards and recognition from *Zoetrope: All-Story*, *Glimmer Train*, and *Crab Orchard Review*. He teaches at Pacific Lutheran University.

Justin St. Germain is the author of the memoir *Son of a Gun*, which won the Barnes & Noble Discover Award, was a *New York Times Book Review* Editors' Choice, and appeared on best books of 2013 lists from Amazon, *Publishers Weekly*, *Salon*, *Library Journal*, *Bookpage*, and the Pima County Public Library. His short nonfiction has recently appeared in *The New York Times*, *Tin House*, *The Guardian*, *New England Review*, and elsewhere, and recently won a Pushcart Prize; his short fiction has appeared in various journals and anthologies, including the *Best of the West*. He holds a BA and MFA from the University of Arizona and was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. He has taught writing for fifteen years. He lives in Oregon and teaches at Oregon State.

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