

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*, was 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 teaches creative writing at Boston College.

David Biespiel is a contributing writer at *American Poetry Review*, *New Republic*, *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Politico*, *The Rumpus*, and *Slate*. He is the author of six collections of poetry, four books of nonfiction, and is the editor of two anthologies. His most recent books include: *A Place of Exodus: Home, Memory, and Texas*, forthcoming in September 2020, *Republic Café*, published in 2019, and *The Education of a Young Poet*, which was selected a Best Books for Writers by *Poets & Writers*. The Tenth Anniversary Edition of his book on writing, *Every Writer Has a Thousand Faces*, was published in 2020, with a new Foreword by Chuck Palahniuk. Recipient of Lannan, National Endowment for the Arts, and Stegner fellowships, he was 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 and founder of the Attic Institute of Arts and Letters.

Barrie Jean Borich is the author of *Apocalypse, Darling* (Ohio State University Press: Mad Creek Books/Machete Series in Literary Nonfiction 2018) which was shortlisted for a Lambda Literary Award. Her memoir *Body Geographic* (University of Nebraska Press/American Lives Series 2013) won a Lambda Literary Award in Memoir, an IPPY (Independent Publisher Book Award) Gold Medal in Essay/Creative Nonfiction, and a 2013 Forward INDIE Bronze Award for Essays. Borich's book, *My Lesbian Husband* (Graywolf 1999, 2000), an LGBTQ classic, won the American Library Association Stonewall Book Award. Borich's first book, *Restoring the Color of Roses* (1993), was published by independent feminist publisher Firebrand Books. Borich's essays have been anthologized in: *Isherwood in Transit; Critical Creative Writing; Waveform: Twenty-First Century Essays by Women*; and in *After Montaigne: Contemporary Essayists Cover the Essays*, and have been cited in *Best American Essays* and *Best American Non-Required Reading*. She is the recipient of *The Florida Review* Editor's Prize in the Essay and the *Crab Orchard Review* Literary Nonfiction Prize, and her work has appeared in *Ecotone, The Seneca Review, Hotel Amerika, Indiana Review, TriQuarterly, Passages North, The Washington Post, The Rumpus* and many other literary journals. Borich is an associate professor in the English Department and MFA/MA in Writing and Publishing Program at DePaul. She leads nonfiction writing workshops for graduate and undergraduate students at DePaul, teaches courses in LGBTQ memoir, multicultural memoir, and the history and practice of the American literary magazine, and she edits *Slag Glass City*, a digital journal of the urban essay arts.

Wendy Call is co-editor of the craft anthology *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide* (Penguin, 2007); author of *No Word for Welcome: The Mexican Village Faces the Global Economy* (Nebraska, 2011), winner of the Grub Street Book Prize and an International Latino Book Award; and translator of *In the Belly of Night and Other Poems* by Mexican-Zapotec poet Irma Pineda (Pluralia, 2020). Wendy has received grants and fellowships for her creative nonfiction from 4Culture, Artist Trust, Ragdale Foundation, and the Seattle CityArtist Program, and for her translations of poetry, from the Fulbright Commission, Jack Straw Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. She has served as Artist in Residence at two dozen institutions, including the American Antiquarian Society, Harborview Medical Center, New College of Florida, Seattle University, and five national parks. She is Associate Professor of English at Pacific Lutheran University, also affiliated with the university's Environmental Studies, Latino Studies, and Native & Indigenous Studies programs.

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 two collections: *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 with the University of Arkansas. 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 Wetzsteon 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 eleventh book, *In the Key of New York City: A Memoir in Essays*, will be published by Red Hen Press in September 2020. Her work has appeared in *Best American Essays*, *Best American Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Boulevard*,

Brevity, The Sun, River Teeth, and in anthologies published by Simon & Schuster, Beacon, Norton, and Bedford/St. Martin, among others. Recipient of two Pushcart prizes, the Glasgow Award in Nonfiction, the Wood Prize from *Poetry Magazine*, (twice) the Carter Prize for the Essay, and the N.C. Governor's Award for Excellence in Education, she teaches in the MFA programs of Rainier Writing Workshop and Queens University and in the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop.

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. She received her MFA in nonfiction from the Bennington Writing Seminars. 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.

Marjorie Sandor is the author of five books, including the recently published novel *The Secret Music at Tordesillas*, winner of the inaugural Tuscarora Award for Historical Fiction. Her previous books included the linked-story collection *Portrait of my Mother, Who Posed Nude in Wartime*, winner of the 2004 National Jewish Book Award in Fiction, and two essay collections, *The Night Gardener: A Search for Home*, and *The Late Interiors: A Life Under Construction*. She is also the editor of *The Uncanny Reader: Stories from the Shadows*, an international anthology of short fiction. She lives in Corvallis, Oregon with her husband, the writer Tracy Daugherty, and has been a part of RWW's faculty since its founding.

Sejal Shah's debut essay collection, *This Is One Way to Dance*, (University of Georgia Press, June 2020, Crux Series in Literary Nonfiction) explores identity, culture, language, and place. Shah's stories and essays have appeared in *Brevity*, *Conjunctions*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Literary Hub*, *Longreads*, *The Rumpus* and the anthologies, *Strange Attractors: Writers on Chance* (University of Massachusetts Press) and *Under Her Skin: How Girls Experience Race in America* (Seal Press). Her poems have appeared in *Indivisible: An Anthology of Contemporary South Asian American Poetry* (University of Arkansas Press) and *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America* (Temple University Press). She is the recipient of fellowships from Blue Mountain Center, the *Kenyon Review* Writers' Workshop, Kundiman, The Millay Colony, New York University, Ragdale, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Shah teaches creative nonfiction and fiction, with a special interest in hybrid forms, and is on the faculty at Writers & Books, a community-based literary arts center in western New York. She has also taught at Marymount Manhattan College, Luther College, Mount Holyoke College, and the University of Rochester. The recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in fiction, she recently completed a collection of short stories and is at work on a memoir about mental health and academia. Shah's essay, "Even If You Can't See It: Invisible Disability and Neurodiversity" was named a 2019 Editors' Pick at *Longreads*. She holds a BA in English from Wellesley College and an MFA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She lives in Rochester, New York.

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.

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 and was named a best book of 2013 by Amazon, *Publishers Weekly*, *Salon*, *Library Journal*, *Bookpage*, and the Pima County Public Library. His second book, *A Great Love Affair: Truman Capote's In Cold Blood*, is forthcoming in early 2021 from IG Publishing as part of the Bookmarked series. His short nonfiction has 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 in fiction at Stanford University. He lives in Oregon and teaches at Oregon State University.

[Updated May 2020]