Crossing Thresholds

42nd Annual ODU Literary Festival

Oct. 6 - 10, 2019 odu.edu/litfest
What can we learn from each other by examining our lives and stories, moving from the outside and coming in, opening a door, extending a hand?

What does it really cost to say something rather than nothing, to listen rather than yelp, then decide to take action rather than holding back?

We’re living in an urgent time: a world on the brink, on the edge of possibility. We look to writers whose work reaches across our imaginary divides, who offer us ways to learn from the past and apply those lessons to the future.

How can we cross into new states of being without losing what we value? How is the threshold a gift? Let’s listen and look again at this world because it is all we have to live in.

— Remica Bingham-Risher and Luisa A. Igloria
2019 Festival Directors
Elaine Castillo was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in comparative literature. *America Is Not the Heart* is her debut novel, and was named one of the best books of 2018 by NPR, Real Simple, Lit Hub, The Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Post, Kirkus Reviews, The New York Public Library and more. It has been nominated for the Elle Award, the Center for Fiction Prize, the Aspen Words Prize, the Northern California Independent Booksellers Book Award, and the California Book Award.

Elaine Fletcher Chapman (formerly Elaine Walters McFerron) is the author of a volume of poems, *Hunger for Salt* (Saint Julian Press) and a letterpress chapbook, *Double Solitude* (Green River Press). She is an adjunct assistant professor teaching literature at Old Dominion University. Chapman worked at the Bennington Writing Seminars at Bennington College for 18 years. She founded The Writer's Studio where she teaches poetry and nonfiction, provides editing services and organizes poetry readings and writing retreats on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. For the last 38 years, she has worked as a therapist in private practice and is a certified iRest Yoga Nidra meditation teacher. Her poems have been published in Rabil Oak, The Tishman Review, The EcoTheo Review, The Cortland Review, Connotation, The Sun, Calyx, Poet Lore, 5AM and Salamander. She was guest blogger on the Best American Poetry Blog and The Solstice Literary Magazine blog. She lives near the James River in Newport News and spends a great deal of time in the San Francisco Bay Area. Trailer and poetry videos for *Hunger for Salt*: www.vimeo.com/elainefletcherchapman or www.elainefletcherchapman.com.

Chen Chen is the author of *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities* (BOA Editions, 2017), which was long-listed for the National Book Award and won the Thom Gunn Award, among other honors. Bloodaxe Books published a UK edition in June. He is also the author of four chapbooks, most recently *You MUST Use the Word Smoothie* (Sundress Publications, 2019) and *Gesundheit!* (in collaboration with Sam Herschel Wein and forthcoming from Glass Poetry Press, fall 2019). His work appears in many publications, including Poem-a-Day, The Massachusetts Review, The Best American Poetry, and The Best American Nonrequired Reading. He has received a Pushcart Prize and fellowships from Kundiman and the National Endowment for the Arts. He holds an MFA from Syracuse University and a PhD from Texas Tech University. He teaches at Brandeis University as the Jacob Ziskind Poet-in-Residence and co-runs the journal, Underblong. He lives in Waltham, Massachusetts, with his partner, Jeff Gilbert, and their pug, Mr. Rupert Giles.

Breena Clarke’s debut novel, *River, Cross My Heart*, was an October 1999 Oprah Book Club selection. Clarke, a native of Washington, D.C., is the recipient of the 1999 award for fiction by the New Atlantic Independent Booksellers Association and the Alex Award, given by the Young Adult Library Services Association. Clarke, who survived the death of her only child, writes with depth and clarity about grief. Her work is marked by compassion and magnificent use of language. Fascinated by the vast array of small and insignificant objects that contain finely detailed denigrating images of African-Americans, Clarke is a passionate collector of black memorabilia. A graduate of Howard University, Clarke is co-author with Glenda Dickerson of “Remembering Aunt Jemima: A Menstrual Show,” which is included in *Contemporary Plays by Women of Color and Colored Contradictions, An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Plays*. Her short fiction is included in *Black Silk, A Collection of African American Erotica*, and *Street Lights: Illuminating Tales of the Urban Black Experience*. Her recollections are included in “Growing Up In Washington, D.C., An Oral History,” published by the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

A 2015 Kresge Artist Fellow, Desiree Cooper is a former attorney, Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist and community activist. She is an evocative speaker on the themes of racial and gender equality,
reproductive freedom, family-positive public policy and the welfare of women and girls. As a full-time caregiver for her aging parents, she writes widely about women, self-care and reinvention. A sought-after creative writing instructor, she conducts readings from her flash fiction collection, *Know the Mother.*

**Safia Elhillo** is the author of *The January Children* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017). Sudanese by way of Washington, D.C., and a Cave Canem fellow, she holds an MFA from The New School. Elhillo received the 2015 Brunel International African Poetry Prize and the 2016 Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poets. She received Stanford University’s Wallace Stegner Fellowship in 2019 and the Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship in 2018. In addition to appearing in journals and anthologies, her work has been translated into Arabic, Japanese, Estonian, Portuguese and Greek, and was commissioned by Under Armour and the Bavarian State Ballet. With Fatimah Asghar, she is co-editor of the anthology *Halal If You Hear Me* (Haymarket Books, 2019).

New York Times best-selling author, **Tayari Jones**, is the author of four novels, most recently *An American Marriage*. Published in 2018, *An American Marriage* is an Oprah’s Book Club Selection and also appeared on Barack Obama’s summer reading list as well as his end of the year roundup. The novel was awarded the Women’s Prize for Fiction (formerly known as the Orange Prize), Aspen Words Prize and an NAACP Image Award. With over 500,000 copies in print domestically, it has been published in fifteen countries. Jones, a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, has also been a recipient of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, United States Artist Fellowship, NEA Fellowship and Radcliffe Institute Bunting Fellowship. Her third novel, *Silver Sparrow* was added to the NEA Big Read Library of classics in 2016. Jones is a graduate of Spelman College, University of Iowa, and Arizona State University. She is a Professor of Creative Writing at Emory University.

**Ilya Kaminsky** wrote the widely acclaimed *Deaf Republic* (Graywolf, 2019), which Kevin Young, writing in The New Yorker, called a work of “profound imagination.” Poems from *Deaf Republic* were awarded Poetry magazine’s Levinson Prize and the Pushcart Prize. He also wrote *Dancing in Odessa* ( Tupelo Press, 2004), and *Musica Humana* ( Chapiteau Press, 2002). Kaminsky has won the Whiting Writer’s Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters’ Metcalf Award, the Dorset Prize, a Ruth Lilly Fellowship, and Foreword Magazine’s Best Poetry Book of the Year award. He was on the short list for the Neusdadt International Literature Prize. His poems have been translated into numerous languages and his books have been published in many countries, including China, where his poetry was awarded the Yinchuan International Poetry Prize. His poems have been compared to work by Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, and Marina Tsvetaeva.


**Mary Jean Kledzik**’s book, *As if Wine Could Pour from Her Nipple*, was called “obsessive, lyrical, tender as a lover’s touch, tender as a bruise,” by former Virginia Poet Laureate Ron Smith. Her poems have appeared in The Paris Review, Hotel Amerika, Agni, Gargoyle, Margie, Western Humanities Review and elsewhere. She won awards from the Barbara Deming Foundation, Virginia Commonwealth University, Kentucky Women Writers Conference and the Poetry Society of Virginia, as well as a fellowship to Ragdale. From a childhood of sexual abuse followed by decades of depression and poverty, Kledzik
supported herself and two children as a single parent while getting a college degree, one course at a time at age 36. Then, after better jobs, she married, retired and got an MFA from VCU at age 64. She believes in poetry and persistence. David Wojahn wrote “superb collection ... with insight, bravado, technical fluency, and bittersweet lucidity.”

A poet and multimedia artist, **Diana Khoi Nguyen**’s debut collection, *Ghost Of* (Omnidawn, 2018), was selected by Terrance Hayes for the Omnidawn Open Contest. In addition to winning the 92Y “Discovery” / Boston Review Poetry Contest and 2019 Kate Tufts Discovery Award, she was also a finalist for the National Book Award, L.A. Times Book Prize and Colorado Book Award. A Kundiman Fellow, Nguyen currently teaches in the Randolph College MFA and Lighthouse Writers Workshop.

**Renee Olander** is author of the poetry collection *American Dangerous* and chapbooks *A Few Spells* and *Wild Flights*. Her work has appeared widely, including in the Split This Rock, Heart Online and The Chronicle of Higher Education Poetry Month blogs, the anthologies *Feminine Rising: Voices of Power and Invisibility, Forgotten Women,* and *Verse and Universe: Poems About Science and Mathematics,* and journals Free State Review, The Café Review, South Loop Review, Hawai‘i Pacific Review Best of the Decade, Rhino, Plainswoman, Dogwood Review, Snake–Nation–Review, 5am and The Writer’s Chronicle. Recipient of the Kate Smith Award from Amelia Magazine, the Benn Award for Creative Writing from Mary Baldwin University, and a Pushcart Prize nomination from Sistersong: Women Across Cultures, Olander works at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, and leads a regional task force focused on climate change and sea-level rise.

**José Olivarez** is the son of Mexican immigrants and the author of the book of poems, *Citizen Illegal,* a finalist for the PEN/Jeann Stein Book Award. In 2018, he was awarded the first Author and Artist in Justice Award from the Phillips Brooks House Association. Along with Felicia Chavez and Willie Perdomo, he is co-editing the forthcoming anthology, *The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 4: LatiNEXT.* He is co-host of “The Poetry Gods” podcast, and a recipient of fellowships from CantoMundo, Poets House, the Bronx Council on the Arts, the Poetry Foundation and the Conversation Literary Festival. His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Chicago Magazine* and elsewhere.


**Noah Renn** received his MFA in creative writing from Old Dominion University. His poetry and nonfiction can be found in Whurk, Full Grown People, The Quotable, and The Ekphrastic Review, among others. He is a writer and teacher in Norfolk, where he leads a poetry workshop at The Muse Writers Center, a nonprofit organization.

**Deborah Wallace** is an Emmy-nominated writer, director, producer and performer. She has collaborated on the production of more than 40 works for the stage and screen, including the Academy Award-nominated, Emmy-winning documentary film, “Gasland.” Wallace produced its sequel “Gasland, Part II” for HBO, winning the Environmental Media Association Award for Best Documentary, Cinema Eye Honors and an Emmy nomination. She produced and co-wrote “Blood on the Mountain,” which was released by Netflix and was nominated for an Emmy. Most recently she served as executive producer for
Xuan Juliana Wang wrote the debut short story collection, Home Remedies (Hogarth, May 2019). Her writing has appeared in The Atlantic, Ploughshares, Narrative, The Cut, The Brooklyn Rail and The Pushcart Prize and The Best American Nonrequired Reading anthologies. Wang was a Wallace Stegner Fellow from Stanford University and earned her MFA from Columbia University. She has received fellowships and awards from Yaddo, The MacDowell Colony, the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, Cite des Arts International, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Elizabeth George Foundation. She is a fiction editor at Fence. Wang was born in Heilongjiang, China, but after age 7, did most of her growing up in Los Angeles. She currently teaches at UCLA.

Kent Wascom was born in New Orleans and raised in Pensacola, Florida. Wascom's first novel, The Blood of Heaven, was named a best book of the year by The Washington Post and NPR. It was a semifinalist for the VCU Cabell First Novelist Award at Virginia Commonwealth University and long-listed for the Flaherty-Dunnan Award for First Fiction. Wascom was awarded the 2012 Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival Prize for Fiction and selected as one of Gambit's 40 Under 40.

Where great writers of the future connect with the great writers of our time

The Old Dominion University Annual Literary Festival, now in its fourth decade, is the premier event of our MFA Program in Creative Writing and one of the many reasons to study the writer’s craft with us at ODU.

odu.edu/englishdept/mfa-creative-writing

Old Dominion University
College of Arts and Letters
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Events will be held in the University Theatre unless otherwise noted.

SUNDAY, OCT. 6
3 p.m. ODU Literary Festival Opening Reception
Join The Muse Writers Center and Old Dominion University as we gather for an opening reception for the 42nd Annual ODU Literary Festival. Presenters, participants and attendees of the festival along with students, teachers and friends of The Muse and the ODU MFA Creative Writing Program are welcome to enjoy hors d’oeuvres, conversation and a cash bar. The Green Onion, 1603 Colley Ave., Norfolk.

MONDAY, OCT. 7
1 p.m. Ilya Kaminsky (Deaf Republic, Dancing in Odessa)
2:30 p.m. Safia Elhillo (The January Children)
7 p.m. Diana Khoi Nguyen (Ghost Of)

TUESDAY, OCT. 8
1 p.m. Deborah Wallace (HOMEsick)
2:30 p.m. Noah Renn (Sinking City) and Elaine Chapman (Hunger for Salt)
7 p.m. José Olivarez (Citizen Illegal)

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9
1 p.m. Mary Jean Kledzik (As if Wine Could Pour from Her Nipple) and Desiree Cooper (Know the Mother)
2:30 p.m. Xuan Juliana Wang (Home Remedies)
4 p.m. Chen Chen (When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities)
7 p.m. Elaine Castillo (America Is Not the Heart)

THURSDAY, OCT. 10
12:30 p.m. Breena Clarke (Angels Make Their Hope Here)
ODU Virginia Beach
2:30 p.m. Benjamín Naka-Hasebe Kingsley (Colonize Me) and Kent Wascom (The New Inheritors)
4 p.m. Philip Raisor (Headhunting and Other Sports Poems) and Renee Olander (American Dangerous)
7 p.m. Tayari Jones, President’s Lecture Series (An American Marriage) Big Blue Room, Ted Constant Convocation Center
Venues
Support the University Village Bookstore. Titles available in the store as well as at all the readings and signings.

University Theatre
47th Street & Hampton Boulevard

ODU Virginia Beach
1881 University Drive, Virginia Beach

Big Blue Room, Ted Constant Convocation Center
4320 Hampton Boulevard

Events are free and open to the community
Free garage parking for all events.
Do not park in spaces marked reserved.

Visit odu.edu/litfest for updates, and follow the Literary Festival on Facebook: @ODULitFest
For more information, contact the Old Dominion University English Department at 757-683-3991 or email mfagpdassistant@odu.edu.

Special Thanks
John R. Broderick and the Office of the President
Cullen Strawn and Arts@ODU
Marc Katz and the University Village Bookstore
Borjo Coffeehouse
Edith White and the Forrest P. White Endowment
The Muse Writers Center
Renee Olander and ODU Virginia Beach
Dean Kent Sandstrom and the Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Letters
Perry Library
SpringHill Suites by Marriott

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