

Center for the Study of Southern Culture



Books Pollinate Our Brain Gardens, by Blair Hobbs

THE THIRTY-FIRST  
Oxford Conference for the Book  
April 2-4, 2025  
[oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://oxfordconferenceforthebook.com)

# OXFORD CONFERENCE



## *for the Book*

### TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

#### 5:30 p.m. Prologue

*Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*, with readings by coeditor and poet Ann Fisher-Wirth and Stacey Balkun, Kendall Dunkelberg, Al Favilla, Beth Ann Fennelly, Melissa Ginsburg, Maggie Graber, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, and Leona Sevik  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square  
Oxford Square

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

#### 5:00 p.m. Dedication of the Dr. Ann Julian Abadie Pollinator Garden and Reception

University Museum  
University Avenue and 5th St.

#### 6:00 p.m. Oxford Conference for the Book Authors' Party

Hosted by the Friends of the Library, the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing, and the Oxford Conference for the Book  
Memory House/John Faulkner's House  
University of Mississippi Campus  
406 University Ave.  
(Advance Ticket Required)

### THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2025

*Free parking available for attendees at Overby Center*

#### 9:30 a.m. "Excavating the Bawdy: *Jelly Roll Blues: Censored Songs and Hidden Histories*"

Welcome by Kathryn McKee  
Elijah Wald in conversation with Xavier Sivals  
Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics  
University of Mississippi Campus

#### 11:00 a.m. Welcome Lunch

Hosted by the Friends of the Library  
Baxter Room  
J. D. Williams Library  
(Lunch is free, but registration appreciated)

#### 11:30 a.m. "National Book Foundation Presents: Memorializing Memory"

Hanif Abdurraqib and Vanessa Angélica Villarreal in conversation with Sheila Sundar  
Baxter Room  
J. D. Williams Library  
University of Mississippi Campus

#### 1:00 p.m. "Why I Write"

Natasha Trethewey in conversation with W. Ralph Eubanks  
Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics  
University of Mississippi Campus

#### 2:30 p.m. "The Suspense of Writing"

Lilliam Rivera, Rachel Lyon, and Zach Williams in conversation with Melissa Ginsburg  
Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics  
University of Mississippi Campus

#### 4:00 p.m. "Poetry in the Gallery"

Readings by Philip Metres, Rose McLarney, and Julia Kolchinsky, with Beth Ann Fennelly  
Southside Gallery, 150 Courthouse Square  
Oxford Square

#### 6:00 p.m. *Thacker Mountain Radio* and Book Signing

Readings by Preston Lauterbach and Devreaux Baker, music by Elijah Wald and Jontavious Willis  
The Powerhouse, 413 South 14th St.



**8:00 p.m. “After Songs: An Evening of Poetry and Music”**

Michael McFee, Price Walden, and Michael Rowlett  
Nutt Auditorium  
University of Mississippi Campus

**FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025**

**10:30 a.m. *What Became of Dr. Smith***

Welcome by Robert Saarnio  
Noah Saterstrom in conversation with John T. Edge  
University Museum  
University Avenue and 5th St.  
Museum Opens at 10:00 a.m.

**12:00 p.m. “Poetry’s Magic”: Poetry Talk and Lunch**

Philip Metres, poet, with an introduction by Ann Fisher-Wirth  
Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library  
401 Bramlett Blvd.  
(Lunch is free, but registration appreciated)

**1:30 p.m. “A Legacy of Love, Survival, and Storytelling”**

Bernice McFadden reads from *Firstborn Girls*  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square  
Oxford Square

**3:00 p.m. “Love, Courage, and Art in Occupied Brussels”**

Alice Austen reads from *33 Place Brugmann*  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square  
Oxford Square

**4:30 p.m. Winners of the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing**

Stephen Monroe, welcome  
Monica Weatherly, moderator  
Jamie Quatro (fiction), Boyce Upholt (nonfiction), and Devreaux Baker (poetry)  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square

**5:30 p.m. An Oxford Conference for the Book and Willie Morris Awards Celebration**

Closing Reception and Group Book Signing  
Reception hosted by the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing  
Music by Paul Tate, Slade Lewis, and Jeff Colburn  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square  
(Authors from Friday’s sessions will be available to sign books)

# Special Events

Register for events online at  
[www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com/schedule](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com/schedule)

## Prologue

**Tuesday, April 1, at 5:30 p.m.**

The Oxford Conference for the Book will begin early with a very special event at Off Square Books to celebrate the publication of *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*, with readings by coeditor and poet Ann Fisher-Wirth and Stacey Balkun, Kendall Dunkelberg, Al Favilla, Beth Ann Fennelly, Melissa Ginsburg, Maggie Graber, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, and Leona Sevick.  
Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square

## Oxford Conference for the Book Authors’ Party Wednesday, April 2, at 6:00 p.m.

Held at the historic Memory House, the onetime home of author John Faulkner, on the University of Mississippi campus (406 University Ave.), this much-loved opening reception is a lively event with wonderful food, drinks, and conversation between fellow conference attendees and conference authors. This is a ticketed event.

*Tickets are \$50 per person. Purchase tickets through the conference website. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door.*

## Welcome Lunch

**Thursday, April 3, at 11:00 a.m.**

This box lunch in the J. D. Williams Library’s Baxter Room is hosted by the Friends of the University of Mississippi Library. The “National Book Foundation Presents: Memorializing Memory” session will begin at 11:30 and will include National Book Awards honorees Hanif Abdurraqib and Vanessa Angélica Villarreal in conversation with Sheila Sundar. The box lunch is free, but advance registration is appreciated.

## Thacker Mountain Radio

**Thursday, April 3, at 6:00 p.m.**

*Thacker Mountain Radio* will have a special OCB show at the Powerhouse, just off the Oxford Square (413 South 14th St.). The live show will feature readings from Preston Lauterbach and Devreaux Baker, and music by Elijah Wald and Jontavious Willis. This event is free, no registration necessary.



## An Oxford Conference for the Book and Willie Morris Awards Celebration

**Friday, April 4, at 5:30 p.m.**

The Oxford Conference for the Book will conclude with a closing reception and group book signing at Off Square Books (129 Courthouse Square), hosted by the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing. Authors from Friday’s sessions will be available to sign books, and music will be by Ricky Burkhead, Greg Johnson, and Paul Tate.

# The Participants



## Hanif Abdurraqib

### *There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension*

Hanif Abdurraqib is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic from Columbus, Ohio. His newest book, *There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension*, is a *New York Times* bestseller and was longlisted for the National Book Award for Nonfiction. His previous book, *A Little Devil in America*, was a winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal and the Gordon Burn Prize. In 2021, Abdurraqib was named a MacArthur Fellow, and in 2024 he was named a Windham-Campbell Prize recipient. He is a graduate of Beechcroft High School in Columbus, Ohio.

**Thursday, 11:30 a.m., Baxter Room, J. D. Williams Library, UM Campus**



BRAVEUX

## Alice Austen

### *33 Place Brugmann*

Alice Austen won the John Cassavetes Award for her debut film *Give Me Liberty* (writer/producer). She is a past resident of the Royal Court Theatre and her internationally produced plays include *Animal Farm* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Water*, *Cherry Orchard Massacre*, and *Girls in the Boat*. She studied creative writing under Seamus Heaney at Harvard, where she received her JD, after which she moved to Brussels and lived on Place Brugmann. Her latest book is the novel *33 Place Brugmann*. Austen currently lives in Milwaukee and is working on a new film.

**Friday, 3:00 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



AMY SCHLARMANN, SIDICKICK PHOTOGRAPHY

## Devreaux Baker

### "Blue Requiem"

Devreaux Baker is the first poet laureate of Mendocino County, California, and a recipient of the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Poetry Award for her book *Red Willow People*. Her poetry collections include *Hungry Ghosts*, *Red Willow People*, *Out of the Bones of Earth*, *Beyond the Circumstance of Sight*, and *Light at the Edge*. She currently directs the Mendocino Poets Reading Series and Open Mic at the Mendocino Art Center. Her poem "Blue Requiem" won this year's Willie Morris Award for Southern Writing in the poetry category.

**Friday, 4:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



BENJAMIN ALESHIRE

## Stacey Balkun

### *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*

Stacey Balkun is the author of *Sweetbitter* and coeditor of *Fiolet & Wing*. Her work has appeared in *Best New Poets*, *Mississippi Review*, *Pleiades*, and several other anthologies and journals. She holds a PhD from the University of Mississippi and an MFA from Fresno State. She lives in New Orleans and teaches online at The Poetry Barn. Her work appears in the collection *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Rebecca earned her BA in journalism and a MA in Southern Studies, both from the University of Mississippi. She is the communications specialist at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. At the Center, she writes news releases as well as feature articles for the *Southern Register* on topics ranging from profiles of alumni to the research conducted by visiting scholars. She handles the Center's social media, helps students with class registration, and assists with the Oxford Conference for the Book and the Eudora Welty Creative Writing contest.



## Kendall Dunkelberg

### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Kendall Dunkelberg directs the Low-Residency MFA in Creative Writing Program and the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium at Mississippi University for Women. He is editor of *Poetry South* and has published three collections of poetry — *Barrier Island Suite*, *Time Capsules*, and *Landscapes and Architectures* — as well as the textbook *A Writer's Craft: Multi-Genre Creative Writing*. His poetry collection *Tree Fall with Birdsong*, will be published in May. His poems have recently appeared in *Tar River Poetry*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Juke Joint*, *River Mouth Review*, *Peauxdunque Review*, and *Salvation South*, and he has poems in *Southern Voices: The Power of Place* and *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



PHOTO COURTESY THE HAMBRIDGE CENTER AND PHOTOGRAPHER MANDA GREENE

## John T. Edge

John T. Edge, author of the forthcoming *House of Smoke: A Southerner Goes Searching for Home*, writes and hosts the television show *TrueSouth* and serves *Garden & Gun* as a columnist. His previous books include *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*. Edge directs the University of Mississippi's Mississippi Lab, where he leads development of Greenfield Farm Writers Residency, and he serves as writer-in-residence for the UM Department of Writing and Rhetoric. Edge lives in Oxford with his wife, the artist Blair Hobbs, who painted the cover artwork for this year's Oxford Conference for the Book.

**Friday, 10:30 a.m., University Museum, University Avenue and 5th St., UM Campus**



## W. Ralph Eubanks

W. Ralph Eubanks is the author of *A Place Like Mississippi*, which takes readers on a tour of the real and imagined landscapes that have inspired generations of authors. The book honors and explores the landscape of Mississippi—and the Magnolia State's history—and reveals the many ways this landscape has informed the work of some of America's most treasured authors. Eubanks is Faculty Fellow and Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

**Thursday, 1:00 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**



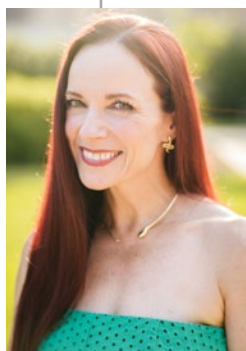


### Alyson "Al" Favilla

#### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Alyson "Al" Favilla is an MFA student and a Grisham Fellow in poetry at the University of Mississippi. They have been published in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Diode*, *Electric Literature*, *McSweeney's*, and, most recently, *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



### Beth Ann Fennelly

#### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Beth Ann Fennelly, a 2020 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow, was the poet laureate of Mississippi from 2016 to 2021 and teaches in the MFA Program at the University of Mississippi. She's won grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States Artists, a Pushcart, and a Fulbright to Brazil. Fennelly has published six books, and her newest, *The Irish Goodbye: Memoirs and Micro-Memoirs*, is forthcoming from W. W. Norton in 2026. She has also contributed work to the collection *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**

**Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Southside Gallery, 150 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



### Ann Fisher-Wirth

#### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Ann Fisher-Wirth's eighth book is *Into the Chalice of Your Thoughts*, a poetry/photography collaboration with Wilfried Raussert, with facing-page translations into Spanish by the Women in Translation group. Her seventh book is *Paradise Is Jagged* and her fifth, a poetry/photography collaboration with Maude Schuyler Clay, is *Mississippi*. With Laura-Gray Street, Fisher-Wirth coedited *The Ecopoetry Anthology* and the recently published *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*. Fisher-Wirth retired in 2022 from the University of Mississippi, where she taught and directed the environmental studies program. In 2023, she received the Governor's Award for Excellence in Poetry from the Mississippi Arts Commission.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



### Melissa Ginsburg

#### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Melissa Ginsburg is the author of the novels *The House Uptown* and *Sunset City*, the poetry collections *Runoff* (forthcoming in 2026 from Milkweed Editions), *Doll Apollo*, and *Dear Weather Ghost*, and three poetry chapbooks, *Arbor*, *Double Blind*, and *Apollo*. She is winner of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters poetry award and has been named the South Arts 2024 Mississippi State Fellow for Literary Arts. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Image*, *Guernica*, *Kenyon Review*, *Fence*, *Southwest Review*, and other magazines. She is director of graduate creative writing programs at the University of Mississippi.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**

**Thursday, 2:30 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**



## Maggie Graber

### *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*

Maggie Graber is the author of *Swan Hammer*, winner of the 2021 Wheelbarrow Poetry Prize and a 2023 nominee for a Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award. She has received fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission and the Luminarts Cultural Foundation, and she lives and teaches in Oxford, Mississippi, where she earned her PhD. Her work appears in the collection *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Natalie Green

Natalie Green is the senior manager of public programs at the National Book Foundation. Previously, Natalie was the manager of Los Angeles Programs at PEN America. She holds a BA in English and creative writing from UCLA, is a Brooklyn Book Festival Bookends committee member, and she organizes with North Brooklyn Mutual Aid.



ANNA BELOPOLSKAYA KOSHI

## Julia Kolchinsky

### *Parallax*

Julia Kolchinsky (formerly Dasbach) emigrated from Dnipro, Ukraine, when she was six years old. She is the author of the poetry collections *The Many Names for Mother*, *Don't Touch the Bones*, and *40 WEEKS*. Her fourth poetry collection, *Parallax*, offers a lyrical narrative of parenting a neurodiverse child under the shadow of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Her writing has appeared in *POETRY*, *Ploughshares*, and *American Poetry Review*. She is assistant professor of English and creative writing at Denison University in Granville, Ohio.

**Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Southside Gallery, 150 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



ELISE LAUTERBACH

## Preston Lauterbach

### *Before Elvis: The African American Musicians Who Made the King*

Preston Lauterbach is author of the American music classic *The Chitlin' Circuit*, as well as *Beale Street Dynasty* and *Bluff City*. His latest, *Before Elvis: The African American Musicians Who Made the King*, was published in January of 2025. Lauterbach has coauthored three memoirs with significant figures in Black music, including *Brother Robert* with the stepsister of bluesman Robert Johnson; *Timekeeper*, with Memphis soul drummer Howard Grimes; and the Blind Boys of Alabama biography *Spirit of the Century*. His works have earned book-of-the-year recognition from *The Wall Street Journal*, NPR, and *Rolling Stone*.

**Thursday, 6:00 p.m., The Powerhouse, 413 South 14th St.**



PETER M. VAN HATTEM

## Rachel Lyon

### *Fruit of the Dead*

Rachel Lyon is the author of *Self-Portrait with Boy*, a finalist for the Center for Fiction's 2018 First Novel Prize, and *Fruit of the Dead*, an *Oprah Magazine* best book of 2024 and which *The New York Times* called "superb" and "refreshing." Lyon's short stories have appeared in *One Story*, *The Rumpus*, *Electric Literature*, and other publications. She has taught creative writing most recently at Bennington College and at the American University of Paris, where she was the 2024 Paris Writer in Residence. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, she lives with her family in Western Massachusetts.

**Thursday, 2:30 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**

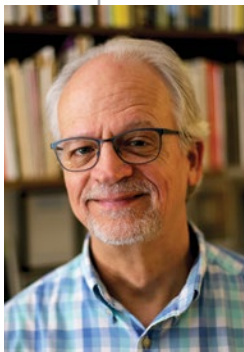


BRETT SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

## Bernice L. McFadden

Bernice L. McFadden is an assistant professor of creative writing at Tulane University and the author of several critically acclaimed novels, including *Sugar*, *The Warmest December*, *Loving Donovan*, *Nowhere Is a Place*, *Glorious*, *Gathering of Waters*, *The Book of Harlan* (winner of a 2017 American Book Award and the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work, Fiction), and *Praise Song for the Butterflies* (longlisted for the 2019 Women's Prize for Fiction). A memoir of many threads, *Firstborn Girls*, her latest book, is an extraordinarily moving portrait of a life shaped by family, history, and the drive to be something more.

**Friday, 1:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Michael McFee

### *A Long Time to Be Gone: Poems*

Michael McFee is the author or editor of seventeen books, most recently *A Long Time to Be Gone: Poems* and *Appointed Rounds: Essays*. A native of Asheville, North Carolina, he taught in the creative writing program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1990 to 2024.

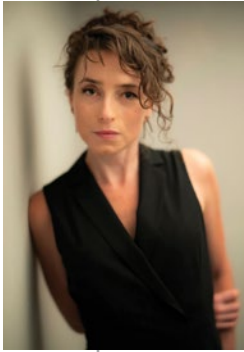
**Thursday, 8:00 p.m., Nutt Auditorium, UM Campus**



## Kathryn McKee

Kathryn McKee is the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and Professor of English at the University of Mississippi. She is the author of *Reading Reconstruction: Sherwood Bonner and the Literature of the Post-Civil War South*, and her work has appeared in various journals, including *American Literature*, *Legacy*, *Southern Literary Journal*, and *Mississippi Quarterly*. She has a PhD in American literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.





## Rose McLarney

### *Colorfast*

Rose McLarney's collections of poems are *Colorfast*, *Forage*, *Its Day Being Gone*, and *The Always Broken Plates of Mountains*. She is coeditor of *A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia* and the journal *Southern Humanities Review*. She has been awarded fellowships by MacDowell and Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers' Conferences and has served as Dartmouth poet-in-residence at the Frost Place. Her work has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Southern Review*, *New England Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Orion*, and the *Oxford American*. She is currently the Lanier Endowed Professor of Creative Writing at Auburn University.

**Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Southside Gallery, 150 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Philip Metres

### *Fugitive/Refuge*

Philip Metres is the author of ten books, including his latest, *Fugitive/Refuge*. His other works include *Shrapnel Maps*, *The Sound of Listening*, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the translation *I Burned at the Feast: Selected Poems of Arseny Tarkovsky*, and *Sand Opera*. His work has garnered fellowships from the Lannan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the Hunt Prize, the Adrienne Rich Award, two Arab American Book Awards, the Watson Fellowship and the Lyric Poetry Award. He is professor of English and director of the Peace, Justice, and Human Rights Program at John Carroll University.

**Thursday, 4:00 p.m., Southside Gallery, 150 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**

**Friday, noon, Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library, 401 Bramlett Blvd.**



## Stephen Monroe

Stephen Monroe is chair and assistant professor in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Mississippi. He is an affiliated faculty member in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and a steering committee member at the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies. Monroe serves as director of the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing and is the author of *Heritage and Hate: Old South Words and Symbols at Southern Universities*.

**Friday, 4:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Aimee Nezhukumatathil

### *Attached to the Living World: A New Ecopoetry Anthology*

Aimee Nezhukumatathil is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling collection of nature essays *World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments*. She also wrote four previous poetry collections, including *Oceanic*. Honors include a poetry fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pushcart Prize, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in poetry. She is poetry editor for *Sierra* magazine, the storytelling arm of the Sierra Club, and is a professor of English and creative writing in the University of Mississippi's MFA program. Her most recent book is a collection of food essays, *Bite by Bite: Nourishments and Jamborees*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**

STEPHEN ALVAREZ



## Jamie Quatro

### *Two-Step Devil*

Jamie Quatro is the *New York Times* notable author of *I Want to Show You More*, a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award and the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize. Quatro's fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *Ploughshares*. Her latest book, *Two-Step Devil*, is a *New York Times* Editor's Choice and this year's winner of the Willie Morris Award for Southern Writing in the fiction category. She teaches in the Sewanee School of Letters MFA program. She lives with her family in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**Friday, 4:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**

JJ GEIGER



## Lilliam Rivera

### *Tiny Threads*

Lilliam Rivera is a MacDowell Fellow and author of eight works of fiction: four young-adult novels, three middle-grade books, and a graphic novel for DC Comics. Her books have been awarded a Pura Belpré honor and featured on NPR and in *The New Yorker*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and multiple "best of" lists. Her novel *Never Look Back* is slated for a movie adaptation. A Bronx, New York, native, Lilliam Rivera currently lives in Los Angeles. Her latest book, *Tiny Threads*, is a slow-burn novel of supernatural suspense.

**Thursday, 2:30 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**



## Michael Rowlett

Michael Rowlett is associate professor of clarinet and music literature at the University of Mississippi. His recent appearances have included invited recitals in Vancouver, British Columbia, and a performance of William Bolcom's *Clarinet Concerto* at the University of North Carolina. He has appeared regularly with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. His CD, *Close to Home*, features the music of a diverse group of contemporary American composers. He holds a Doctor of Music degree in clarinet performance from Florida State University and degrees from the University of Iowa and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Thursday, 8:00 p.m., Nutt Auditorium, UM Campus**



## Noah Saterstrom

### *What Became of Dr. Smith*

Noah Saterstrom was raised in Mississippi and educated in the University of Mississippi's Department of Art (BFA) and at Scotland's Glasgow School of Art. His work has recently been exhibited at Carol Robinson Gallery in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Julia Martin Gallery in Nashville, Tennessee, among other venues. Saterstrom has held residencies at HRH Prince Charles's Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, Scotland; Morris and Spottiswood in Glasgow, Scotland; and Exploded View Microcinema in Tucson, Arizona. His work *What Became of Dr. Smith*, an immersive narrative painting of 183 canvases, exhibited at the Mississippi Museum of Art from April to September 2024. He lives in Nashville with his wife and kids.

**Friday, 10:30 a.m., University Museum, University Avenue and 5th St., UM Campus**





## Leona Sevick

### *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*

Leona Sevick's work appears in *Orion*, *The Southern Review*, *The Sun*, and *Poetry Northwest*. Sevick serves on the advisory boards of the Furious Flower Black Poetry Center and the Longleaf Writers Conference. She is provost and professor of English at Bridgewater College in Virginia, where she teaches Asian American literature. Her second collection of poems, *The Bamboo Wife*, was published by Trio House Press in 2024. She contributed poetry to the collection *Attached to the Living World: A New Eco-poetry Anthology*.

**Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Xavier Sivals

Xavier Sivals is an instructor in Southern Studies and the undergraduate coordinator and Academic Common Market advisor for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. He earned his BA in history and philosophy from Virginia State University and a doctorate in history from Mississippi State University. His dissertation is "Freakish Man: Sexual Blues, Sacred Beliefs, and the Transformation of Black Queer Identity, 1870–1957." Previously, Sivals was an instructor of early US history, Mississippi history, early world history, and African American history at Mississippi State University.

**Thursday, 9:30 a.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**



## Sheila Sundar

### *Habitations*

Sheila Sundar is the author of the novel *Habitations*. Her writing has appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and elsewhere. She is an assistant professor of English and creative writing at the University of Mississippi.

**Thursday, 11:30 a.m., Baxter Room, J.D. Williams Library, UM Campus**



## James G. Thomas, Jr.

James G. Thomas, Jr. is the associate director for publications at the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture and director of the Oxford Conference for the Book. He holds a BA in English and philosophy, an MA in Southern Studies, and an MFA in documentary expression, each from the University of Mississippi. He is editor or coeditor of several works, including *Conversations with Barry Hannah* and, with Jay Watson, the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha series. He is past president of the Board of Governors for the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters and serves on the board of directors for the University Press of Mississippi.

JILL NORTON



## Natasha Trethewey

### *The House of Being*

Pulitzer Prize–winner Natasha Trethewey served two terms as the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States (2012–14) while also serving as the Poet Laureate of the State of Mississippi (2012–16). She is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*; a book of nonfiction, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*; and five collections of poetry: *Monument: Poems New & Selected*; *Thrall*; *Native Guard*, for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize; *Bellocq's Ophelia*; and *Domestic Work*. From 2015 to 2016 she served as poetry editor of *The New York Times Magazine*. *The House of Being* is her latest memoir.

**Thursday, 1:00 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**

C DANIEL PIERRE-LOUIS

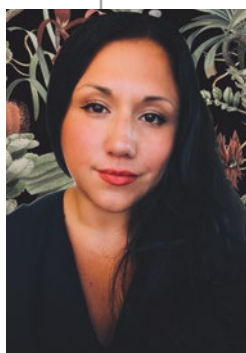


## Boyce Upholt

### *The Great River: The Making and Unmaking of the Mississippi*

Boyce Upholt is a writer and nature critic whose writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, the *Oxford American*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*, among other publications. He is the winner of a James Beard Award for investigative journalism, and he lives in New Orleans, Louisiana. Upholt is this year's winner of the Willie Morris Award for Southern Writing in the nonfiction category for *The Great River: The Making and Unmaking of the Mississippi*. *The Great River* is his first book.

**Friday, 4:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



## Vanessa Angélica Villarreal

### *Magical/Realism: Essays on Music, Memory, Fantasy, and Borders*

Vanessa Angélica Villarreal is the author of *Magical/Realism: Essays on Music, Memory, Fantasy, and Borders*, which was longlisted for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Beast Meridian*, which was a 2019 Whiting Award winner and the winner of the John A. Robertson Award for Best First Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters. She was a 2021 National Endowment for the Arts Fellow and holds a doctorate in English literature and creative writing from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where she lives with her son.

**Thursday, 11:30 a.m., Baxter Room, J. D. Williams Library, UM Campus**

SANDRINE SHON



## Elijah Wald

### *Jelly Roll Blues: Censored Songs & Hidden Histories*

Elijah Wald is a musician and author of more than a dozen books, including *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues*, *The Dozens: A History of Rap's Mama*, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of Popular Music*, and the bestselling *Dylan Goes Electric!* His latest book, *Jelly Roll Blues: Censored Songs & Hidden Histories*, is a journey through the censored world of early blues and jazz, with Jelly Roll Morton as a guide. He has a PhD in ethnomusicology and sociolinguistics and a Grammy for production and liner notes. He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Thursday, 9:30 a.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**





### Cecil Price Walden

Cecil Price Walden writes music “of powerful emotional intensity and passion . . . that is almost impossibly gorgeous.”—*Journal of Singing*. Named a “Hero of the New South” by *Southern Living* magazine, Walden draws on the rich musical, literary, and culinary legacies of place to create work that is both familiar and new.

**Thursday, 8:00 p.m., Nutt Auditorium, UM Campus**



### Monica Lee Weatherly

Monica Lee Weatherly is a poet, writer, and professor of English at Georgia State University’s Perimeter College. She is the 2023 winner of Georgia Author of the Year for her chapbook of poetry *It Felt Like Mississippi*, a 2023 Key West Literary Seminar Fellowship recipient, and the 2021 winner of the Willie Morris Award for Southern Writing for poetry. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including *Tulane Review*, *Plainsongs*, *Nzuri Journal*, *Merge Literary Magazine*, *Obsidian*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and *Auburn Avenue*. Her writing often focuses on the culture and experiences of people of color in the American South.

**Friday, 4:30 p.m., Off Square Books, 129 Courthouse Square, Oxford Square**



### Zach Williams

#### *Beautiful Days*

Zach Williams is a Jones Lecturer in Fiction at Stanford University, where he previously held a Wallace Stegner Fellowship. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *McSweeney’s Quarterly Concern*. His story “Trial Run,” published in *The Paris Review*, was one of three winners of 2023 ASME Awards for Fiction. Originally from Wilmington, Delaware, he currently resides with his family in San Francisco. His first collection of short stories, *Beautiful Days*, was one of Barack Obama’s Favorite Books of 2024.

**Thursday, 2:30 p.m., Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, UM Campus**

JEMMAH WEI

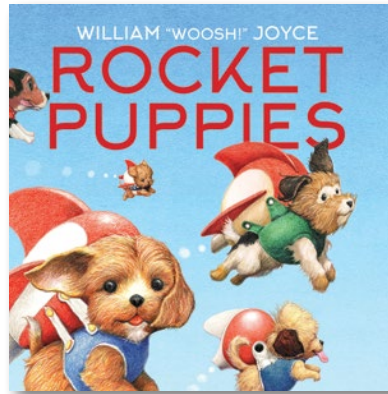


# Children's Book Festival

The 2025 Children's Book Festival took place on Friday, March 21, at the Ford Center for Performing Arts. The festival serves more than 1,200 first- and fifth-graders from schools in Lafayette County and Oxford. Committees made up of local school librarians, teachers, and representatives from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Lafayette County Literacy Council (sponsor of the first grade), Junior Auxiliary (sponsor of the fifth grade), and Square Books, Jr. choose the books each year. The Oxford Conference for the Book then invites those authors to present programs at the Ford Center to each grade.

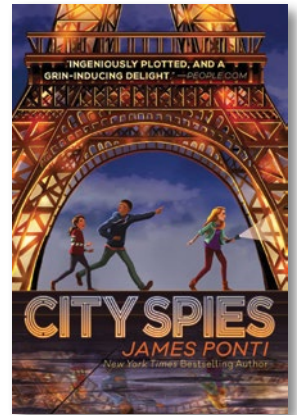
The first-grade author was William Joyce. Joyce does animated films (*Tôy Story*, *Meet the Robinsons*), but children's books are his true bailiwick. His books include *The Guardians of Childhood* series, *Dinosaur Bob and His Adventures with the Family Lizardo*, *George Shrinks*, *Rolie Polie Olie*, and *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore*. His most recent book is *Rocket Puppies*.

The fifth-grade author was James Ponti, with his book



*City Spies*. His novels have been named to forty-five state awards lists, optioned by Hollywood, and translated into fifteen languages. He's a two-time Edgar Award-nominee, winning in 2018 for *Vanished*.

The Children's Book Festival is underwritten by the Elaine Hoffman Scott Memorial Fund.



## The Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing

The Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing, housed in the Department of Writing & Rhetoric at UM, recognizes writers whose works grapple with the complexities of the US South and reflect the spirit of the late Willie Morris.

The 2024 Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing winner for fiction is Jamie Quatro, author of *Two-Step Devil* (Grove Atlantic). This year's winner for nonfiction is Boyce Upholt for *The Great River: The Making and*

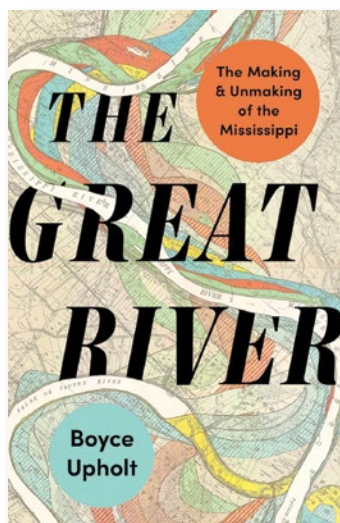
*Unmaking of the Mississippi* (W. W. Norton and Co.). The winner in the poetry category is Devreaux Baker, for her poem "Blue Requiem."

David Crews, an Oxford author and nonfiction judge for the competition said, "This year's awards recognize fine writers for the resonance, texture, and power of their works. Willie would be delighted to know that we are nurturing southern literature and writers with an award carrying his name."



WILLIE  
MORRIS  
AWARDS

FOR SOUTHERN WRITING



Morris served as the University of Mississippi's writer-in-residence from 1980 to 1991. He is known for encouraging his students' creativity and passion for the written word. His own works, including *North Toward Home* and *My Dog Skip*, reflect his home state with honesty and optimism. Willie's college roommate, Dave Williams, and his wife, Reba White Williams, began the awards program to continue Willie's legacy and support authors writing about the South.

Since moving to UM in 2020, the Willie Morris Awards have become an increasingly revered part of the southern literary landscape. Hear the winners read at the concluding session Friday, April 4, at 4:30 at Off Square Books, with a book signing and reception to follow.



# Center for the Study of Southern Culture



The Center for the Study of Southern Culture, founded in 1977, is an educational institute at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi, and the first regional studies center in the country. The Center's mission is to investigate, document, interpret, and teach about the American South through academic inquiry and publications, documentary studies of film, photography, oral history, and public outreach programs. The interdisciplinary Southern Studies faculty and the undergraduate and graduate degree programs are the core of the Center's work.

Since its founding, the Center has become a focal point for innovative education and research on the American South, strengthening the University's instructional program in the humanities, promoting scholarship on many aspects of southern culture, and encouraging public understanding of the South as a diverse and complex space.

The Center will celebrate its fifty years on the University of Mississippi campus in 2027. Keep an eye on the Center's website and social media for events leading up to the anniversary.

## Conference Dedicated to Ann Abadie

Ann Abadie admittedly did not like the spotlight, but she was a behind-the-scenes champion of culture, of literature, and of community.

Director emerita of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, Abadie died on July 30, 2024, and left a legacy of visionary leadership at the University of Mississippi and beyond. Instrumental in the founding of the Center in the mid-1970s, she served as interim founding director and then associate director from 1979 to 2011.

Abadie co-created the Oxford Conference for the Book with Richard Howorth, owner of Square Books. The first conference happened in 1993. Howorth remembers, "I approached her at one point and said, 'What if we had a different kind of conference that celebrated writers and invited them to Oxford?' She said it would take a few years, and sure enough, two or three years later, she said, 'Okay, what are we going to do?' That's how the book conference started."

She helped found the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference and was an early member of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters. "Ann Abadie is the reason why so much of what we celebrate in Mississippi's arts



and letters communities exists today," said James Thomas, the Center's associate director for publications and current director of the Oxford Conference for the Book.

Those wishing to support the Oxford Conference for the Book in memory of Ann Abadie, please see the back of this program for information on how to do so.

## Oxford Artist Creates Conference Artwork

Blair Hobbs was born in Oxford, Mississippi, and grew up in Auburn, Alabama. For twenty-eight years, she taught writing and literature for the University of Mississippi's English Department. Now a senior lecturer emerita, she is pursuing her art career full time.

Although Hobbs pursued writing and poetry as an academic, she always felt that artwork was also a necessary form of communication. As an artist, she likes to turn ekphrasis—poetry about art—on its head and creates art that is based on po-



etry or lyric narratives. She is drawn to all things sparkly and enjoys reimagining sewing-kit and craft-aisle things.

For this year's artwork, *Books Pollinate Our Brain Gardens*, Hobbs said, "I was honored to create art for the Oxford Conference for the Book. The portrait is a gentle nod to Ann Abadie, a dear friend and a founder of the conference. The woman, wearing staple pearls, is nestled in a garden, and Ann's favorite books butterfly around her."

# The Thirty-First Oxford Conference for the Book

The University of Mississippi • Oxford, Mississippi

The Oxford Conference for the Book is organized by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and supported by the University of Mississippi College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, the Department of English, the Department of Music, the School of Journalism and New Media, the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, the Friends of the UM Library, the University of Mississippi Museum and Historic Houses, University of Mississippi Lecture Series, the University of Mississippi Foundation, the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing, Square Books, Southside Gallery, *Thacker Mountain Radio*, the Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library, the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, Visit Oxford, the National Book Foundation, the R&B Feder Charitable Foundation for the Beaux Arts, and the Mississippi Humanities Council.



OVERBY CENTER  
FOR SOUTHERN JOURNALISM AND POLITICS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI



writing &  
rhetoric



SOUTHSIDE GALLERY



We are proud that the conference is free and open to the public. This does, however, require fundraising in support of author travel, stipends, venue rental, and the many other things necessary for planning a three-day-long event. Any amount helps in our mission to bring celebrated writers to Oxford. If you wish to support the conference, visit [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com) for information about online giving. If you prefer to send a check, you may mail it to the following address: The University of Mississippi Foundation – OCB General Support, P.O. Box 249, University, MS 38677-1848.

For more information concerning the conference, contact:

## Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

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