HIGHLIGHTS FROM
THE SEASON
NEWS CLIPPINGS AND PUBLICITY
In Print announces 2019-2020 season with Ta-Nehisi Coates, Colson Whitehead

By Andrew Dansby  Published 9:06 am CDT, Monday, July 1, 2019

Ta-Nehisi Coates, the Atlantic correspondent and author of "Between the World and Me," in Baltimore, July 16, 2015. Coates' meditation on the black experience in America is already being hailed as a runaway ... more

In Print Houston announced the lineup for its Margaret Root Brown Reading Series for 2019-2020 on Monday night. Authors visiting Houston to read from their latest works include Ta-Nehisi Coates, Colson Whitehead, Louise Erdrich and Colum McCann.

Whitehead will kick off the series' season on Sept. 16. He'll stop in Houston on his tour for "The Nickel Boys," his ninth novel which is being described as a companion piece to "The Underground Railroad," his 2016 novel that won a Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Whitehead began work on "The Nickel Boys" after reading about the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, an institution in Florida with a dark and dubious history. Whitehead used the reform school as inspiration for his Nickel Academy in a tale about Jim Crow-era Florida.

Coates won the National Book Award for "Between the World and Me," a letter in book form written to his son about growing up black in America. The recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," Coates has largely worked in non-fiction prior to the forthcoming publication of "The Water Dancer," his first novel, due in late-September. He'll read here Oct. 29.

Also appearing this season:

Elizabeth Gilbert, who just published her novel "City of Girls." She sold more than a few copies of her spiritual travel memoir, "Eat Pray Love." She comes to Houston Nov. 11.

Carmen Maria Machado comes to Houston Jan. 27, 2020, with her new memoir "In the Dream House." Her collection of short stories, "Her Body and Other Parties," was a National Book Award finalist two years ago.

Louise Erdrich has published novels, short stories, poetry, children's books and essays in a distinguished career that spans 40 years. She reads here March 9.

In Print brings poets Reginald Dwayne Betts and Natalie Diaz on March 23. Canadian novelist Emily St. John Mandel is here April 27 with Irish novelist Colum McCann to close the 2019-2020 season.

Season tickets will go on sale in the next few weeks, according to In Print executive director Rich Levy. More information can be found on the organization's site.
These Are the 2019-2020 Inprint Readers

The literary nonprofit’s lineup includes big names like Ta-Nehisi Coates, Elizabeth Gilbert, and more.

By Megan Kitchen • 3/2/2019 at 2:03pm

WHICH AUTHORS WILL SHAPE HOUSTON’S LITERARY CONVERSATION IN THE COMING YEAR? We have at least part of the answer as of Monday evening, when local literary nonprofit Inprint announced the 2019-2020 Margaret Root Brown Reading series.

Although reduced from last season’s dozen authors, the 10-person lineup features undeniable heavy-hitters, including Colson Whitehead, who will open the season with The Nickel Boys, the followup to his 2018 blockbuster, The Underground Railroad. Journalist and novelist Ta-Nehisi Coates will read from his new novel The Water Dancer. And Eat Pray Love author Elizabeth Gilbert will visit to promote her latest, City of Girls.

Rounded out by Carmen Maria Machado, Louise Erdrich, Regional Dwyane Betts, Natalie Diaz, Emily St. John Mandel, and Colm Mccann, the season is a living trophy case of winners of (or finalists for) the Pulitzer Prize, Booker Prize, National Book Award, Book Critics Circle Award, and more.

See full line-up (including dates) listed below. For more information about tickets and each reading, visit inprinthouston.org.

Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series | 2019-2020

September 16: Colson Whitehead
October 29: Ta-Nehisi Coates
November 11: Elizabeth Gilbert
January 29: Carmen Maria Machado
March 9: Louise Erdrich
March 25: Regional Dwyane Betts and Natalie Diaz
April 27: Emily St. John Mandel and Colm Mccann

Related Content
NOVELS, POEMS, MEMOIRS!: INPRINT'S MARGARET ROOT BROWN READING SERIES ADDRESSES OUR COMPLICATED WORLD

TAGGA GAINES • JULY 29, 2019

F or the performing arts lover, one of the annual small joys in life can come from a favorite dance, theater or music organization revealing their next season. A bit like arts Christmas, a good announcement offers all the suspense of a dramatically wrapped package, followed by the fun of using that gift for the next year. Yet every summer when Inprint, Houston’s premiere literary arts organization, announces its next Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series it feels a little less like a present and more like a remarkable foreshadowing.

For the good literary crew at Inprint have a spooky habit of putting together a season of author readings and conversations that predict those books we’ll be obsessing over in the coming year, as well as some likely candidates for the next Pulitzer Prize or National Book Award. And sometimes that new season goes beyond the next must-read to give us glimpses into the coming crop, allowing us to meet the authors whose work forces us and examines who we are becoming, long before the rest of us begin to even question who we are.

To get a better idea of the literary worlds we’ll soon be living to explore, I sat down with director Rich Levy, shortly after Inprint unveiled their 2019-2020 season.

While in recent years, Inprint has alternated between solo reads vs. two author events, the first half of the 10-20 season tips that balance with a lineup of (bibliophiles') household-name authors reading alone, including Pulitzer Prize-winning and former University of Houston professor, Colson Whitehead (Sep. 19), National Book Award-winner Ta-Nehisi Coates (Oct. 29) and best-selling author Elizabeth Gilbert (Nov. 11). Then March 9, 2020 brings another National Book Award runner, Louise Erdrich, reading from her new novel The Night Watchman.

Those fans of a good dot reading event can look forward to early 2020 with a memoir night featuring Carmen Maria Machado and Caroline Forché (Jan. 27). Inprint rings in national poetry month a week early with award-winning poet Reginaid Dwayne Betts and Natalie Diaz (March 23). The season ends with two genre-defying authors, Emily St. John Mandel and Colum McCann (April 27).

“It’s a really diverse set of writers in a lot of different ways and brings a lot of different voices in.”
describes Levy of the season.

Part of that diversity comes from within the individual authors' repertoires, with several jumping into new genres. Coates, the acclaimed journalist, essayist and Black Panther graphic novel author, will read from his first novel, The Water Dancer. Though there will likely be many Eat, Pray, Love fans in the audience for memoirist Elizabeth Gilbert's reading, Levy offers great praise for her fiction writing prowess and calls her latest novel, City of Girls, a "fun, sexy read."

Meanwhile, Machado—whose debut short story collection, Her Body and Other Parties, caused such a sensation two years ago—moves to nonfiction with In the Dream House, which delves into the issue of domestic abuse among same-sex partners. Forché, an acclaimed poet, also moves into memoir territory with a new work, What You Have Heard Is True, chronicling her time in El Salvador during its most brutal contemporary history.

Several of the novels showcased this season bring memoir and nonfiction qualities to them, influenced by real-life events and people. Whitehead's Nickel Boys is based on the horrors of a real reformatory institute in Tim Crow's-era Florida. Erdrich has described The Night Watchman as being based on the life of her grandfather. And the early synopsis of McCann's novel, Apeirogon, which won't be published until February 2020, describe it as "rooted" in the real-life friendship between two men enduring loss—one Israeli the other Palestinian.

Even those writers who aren't basing their fictional worlds on real-life occurrences seem greatly influenced by autobiography and historical research. Coates looked to slave narratives when writing The Water Dancer and Gilbert immersed herself in the columns and reviews of the 1940s New York theater world.

When I mentioned in our conversation that there seemed to be many authors in this season's lineup using history to tell story, Levy agreed perhaps several are working on putting history into context.

"I think one thing that's going on in this work, and I think it is kind of in the culture in general, is that people are questioning received knowledge. They're looking at history through a very different lens and trying to make us come to terms with some of the things that we have willfully or unconsciously ignored for so long," he adds. "There's a lot of fearlessness in these writers. They're not afraid to take on tough stuff."

During our talk on some of the commonalities in this season, we also mused on the differences, especially when it comes to tone, for example between Whitehead's Nickel Boys and Elizabeth Gilbert's City of Girls.

"It makes you realize how complicated the world is," mused Levy on those specific novels, but perhaps also this season's lineup in particular and the wonder of reading all together forever. "There's a lot of suffering; there's also occasionally some joy and pleasure. I guess you can't have one without the other. You've got to have both."

—TARRA GAINES

TARRA GAINES

Terra Gaines is a writer and teacher in Houston.
READINGS

AUGUST
10 Tamika Pizzo: Author will discuss “Pillar to the Sky” (Conundrum Press) at the Texas Book Festival. Blue Willow Bookshop.
21 David Marlett: Author will discuss “American Red” (Murder by The Book).
22 Lisa Lutz: Author will discuss “The Swallows” (Murder by The Book).
23 Johnny Sharan: Author will discuss “Out of the Good” (Asia Society Texas Center).
23 Billy Jensen: Author will discuss “Ghostly Darkness With Me” in conversation with Kathryn Casey (Mystery by The Book).
25 Idris Andrews: Author will discuss “Sapphire Flames” (Murder by The Book).
26 Rachel Monroe: Author will discuss “Savage Appetites” (Brasos Bookstore).
27 Caroline Frendt: Author will discuss “The Democracy Fix” presented in conjunction with the American Constitution Society (Brasos Bookstore).
29 Teresa Sataraya: Author will discuss “The Posy Book” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
30 David Lagana: Author will discuss “The Girl Who Lived Twice” (Murder by The Book).

SEPTEMBER
3 David Shannon: Author will discuss “Mr. Nogginbottom Gets a Hammer” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
3 Timothy Faust: Author will discuss “Health Justice Now!” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
4 Ryan Higgins: Author will discuss “Dr. Seuss’s Big Storm” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
6 Caleb McDowell: Author will discuss “Sweet Taste of Liberty” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
8 Yehuda Bacon: Author will discuss “Count Me In” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
9 Mika and Marika Moulite: Authors will discuss “Dessert Love Alchemies” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
10 Marc Barnett and Greg Pizzo: Authors will discuss “14, Jack” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
11 Asher Price: Author will discuss “Tard Campbell” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
12 Conor Bracken: Author will discuss “Scorpion’s Sun” in conversation with translation enthusiast and Brasos’s own Mark Habib (Brasos Bookstore).
13 J.K. Houston: Houston’s second annual presentation of the world-famous literature festival that began in Jaipur, India, bringing together a collection of diverse thinkers, writers and entertainers to discuss the issues of our time. Presented in collaboration with ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival and Inprint (Brasos Bookstore).
13 Sarah Alqer Jelien: Author will discuss “The Ungodlyful Refugees” (Brasos Bookstore).
15blasja: Author will discuss “The Lampblack Blues of Memory” (Brasos Bookstore).
17 Shannon Hale and Lecky Pham: Author and illustrator will discuss “Best Friends” (Brasos Bookstore).
18 Astros: Houston’s second annual presentation of the world-famous literature festival that began in Jaipur, India, bringing together a collection of diverse thinkers, writers and entertainers to discuss the issues of our time. Presented in collaboration with ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival and Inprint (Brasos Bookstore).
19 An Evening of Poetry: Featuring Joseph Campana and David Baker, authors of “The Book of Life” and “Swift” (Brasos Bookstore).
24 Jennifer Mathieu: Author will discuss “The Lion’s Mane” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
25 Attica Locke: Author will discuss “Haven, My Home” (Brasos Bookstore).
25 Bob Shea and Zachariah OHora: Author and illustrator will discuss “Who We Met from the Past” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
26 Marcella Forias: Author will discuss “Everything Is Figureoutable” (Christ Church Cathedral).
26 Trenton Lee Stewart: Author will discuss “The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Riddle of Ages” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
27 Megan Cabot: Author will discuss “The Judgments” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
26 Rick Riordan: Author will discuss “The Tyrant’s Tomb” (Morton Ranch High School, Katy).
27 Marion Winik: Author will discuss “The Big Book of the Dead” (Grosset Bookstore).
28 (Home)land: A reading and conversation with Angela Sano and Monica Sain that examines the meanings to be had by the children of refugees (Brasos Bookstore).
28 Houston SCBWI Annual Conference: Event will feature keynote speaker Vanessa Brantley-Newton as well as agents, editors and illustrators, the Marriott Houston Westchase, Through Sept. 28.
29 Meg Medina: Will read “Mercy” (Scholastic) in part of the Inprint Cool Britain Series. Morton Performing and Visual Arts Middle School.

OCTOBER
1 Fierce Reads Tour: Featured authors include Sara Farren, J.L. McKinney, Margaret Owen and Katie Rose Poet (Brasos Bookstore).
3 Leslie Jamison: Author will discuss “Make It Scream, Make It Burn” (Blue Willow Bookshop).
4 Mark Haber: Author will discuss “Reinhardt’s Garden” (Brasos Bookstore).
6 River Oaks Dance Presents Swan Lake: Reading of the New York City Ballet’s “Swan Lake” picture book, aspiring ballerinas of River Oaks Dance will be in attendance (Brasos Bookstore).
7 Charlotte Fort Pitt Davis: Author will discuss “The Good Luck Girl” (in conversation with Costa Carmona, author of the Stormheart novels, Brasos Bookstore).
8 Malcolm Gladwell: Author will discuss “Talking to Strangers” (The Balloon at Bayou Place).
9 Anne W. Newton: Author will discuss “The Future of Another Time” (Brasos Bookstore).
9 Houston Poetry Fest: Readings and workshops. Welcome Center at the University.

Readings continues on H23
AUTHOR APPEARANCE

Whitehead returns to Houston stomping grounds with ‘Nickel Boys’

By Chris Vogna

Staff Writer

L
ike most peo
ple, Colson
Whitehead was
shocked when
he heard about
the atrocities
committed at the Dou
rier School for Boys. At Do
er, a
reform school of sorts
ucked away in the Florida Pan
handle, students were raped,
matlaced and buried in a
secret graveyard for more
than a century. Now, White
hed wondered, had he not
known about this?

Whitehead, whose 2016
slavery novel "The Under
ground Railroad" won both
the Pulitzer Prize and the
National Book Award, turned
his obsession into a new
book. In "The Nickel Boys," the
Dorier School has be
come the Nickel Aca
demy. It’s the early 1960s, and an
idealistic black teen, Elwood
Curtis, has been railroaded
into what can only be called
incarceration. He keeps his
optimism intact longer than
you might think possible.

"He’s grown up in a time
when there have been some
advancements in terms of
racial equality," says White
head, who will discuss the
book Monday at the Uni
versity of Houston’s Cullen
Performance Hall as part of the
Inprint series. "He sees him
self as part of a generation
that is changing America.
He’s definitely a good
geody. But he’s not alone.
There are other folks his age
and older who are doing the
types of things he’d like to
do.

Indeed, part of the tragedy
of "The Nickel Boys" lies in
the collision between high
ideas and brutal reality. And
part of the Dorier story’s
power over Whitehead lies in
his certainty that there are
more Nickels out there to be
discovered. The Dorier atro
cities took an archeological
dig by University of South
Florida students to unearth.
What else, Whitehead won
ners, might be out there?

"I was shocked at the
extent of the depravity, and I
felt if there was one place
like this, there must be
more," he says. "More re
form schools or orphanages
where this kind of stuff
would go on. That made it
stay with me, the fact that
there’s this unknown tragedy
that must point to other ones
that we still don’t know
about."

Many have drawn a line
between "The Underground
Railroad" and "The Nickel Boys;" American stories of
horror inflicted upon the
black body and mind. It’s
easy to see the two books as
literary kin, even if White
head didn’t plan it that way.

"It wasn’t my intention,
but if you put them back to
back you have that thread of
investigating institutional
racism in its various forms
and permutations over the
decades and centuries," Whitehead says. "I didn’t
want to do two heavy books
in a row, but I definitely felt
quite compelled to do 'The
Nickel Boys' next."

Sometimes, a novel is as
much about the time it was
written as the time in which
it’s set.

"It was the spring of 2017,
and I was sort of adrift about
where the country was go
ing," Whitehead says. "I was
wondering if we were mak
ing progress, or were the
retrograde energies that have
defined so much of Ameri
can history too strong."

Whitehead is no stranger
to Houston. He taught at the
University of Houston in

"I took taxis around be
cause I don’t drive," he says.
"I didn’t have children then,
and it was the early part of
my career. It’d be nice to go
back a little older, a little
fatter and sadder. It’d be nice
to see Houston."

Novelist Colson Whitehead, the author of the award-winning "The Underground Railroad," explores the dark history
of a segregated Florida reform school in "The Nickel Boys."
Thirteen

He said he was a user, not a loser.
But I saw no needle marks
in his arm. What he may have been
could have meant a lot of things.
I wondered how many birds
stayed in the nest of his beard.
I wondered why the moon seemed
larger some nights — basketball big.
Spring came late and quickly into summer.
One and one was still two anywhere in the world.
I knew nothing of what accountants did
—all day long — swiveling in their chairs.
I knew nothing of how bees could dance
before other bees, resolute and meaningful.
My father scolded me for putting
his favorite vine grips somewhere
he couldn’t find them. (I forget where?)
I grew. Like a wildflower. Like sin.
And no one had it any better.


Send poems (40-line limit) to poetry editor Jim LeVilla-Havelin, San Antonio Express-News, P.O. Box 228, San Antonio, TX 78207
OCTOBER

H-TOWN PICKS

Martha Graham Dance Company

For its first visit to Houston in 15 years, the naturalistic New York-based troupe will draw its repertoire from the EVE Project, its two-year initiative of new and vintage works collectively celebrating the centennial of the constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote. Oct 18 at 8. From $39. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. 713-227-4772. spahouston.org

BOOKS

Ta-Nehisi Coates

In *The Water Dancer*, the National Book Award-winning author of 2015's *Between the World and Me* plunges readers into the world of protagonist Hiram, an escaped Virginia slave who must reconcile his desire to return to his adopted family with his need to understand the supernatural power that appeared after he nearly drowned. Oct 29. UH Cullen Performance Hall, 4300 University Dr. 713-521-2026. uwhouston.org

VISUAL ART

Miss Ima Hogg & Modernism

Featuring works by Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, José Clemente Orozco, and many others, this exhibition of some 50 prints and drawings by major early-20th-century artists commemorates the 80th anniversary of the Houston philanthropist’s donation, which quickly became a cornerstone of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston’s permanent collection. Thru Nov 3, $17 (non-members), 100/Bliss Street. 713-639-7300. mfh.org

THEATER

Spring Awakening

Winner of eight Tony awards, Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik’s 2006 musical dramedy has us in the driving, emo-esque score amplifies the raw emotions and painful consequences a group of German boarding-school students experience during their rather harshly dawning adolescence. Oct 8–20. From $40. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St. 713-315-2025. tuls.com

MUSIC

Lizzo

A surprise August visit to alma mater UH was millions of fans’ first clue that the freshly minted “Truth Hurts” and “Juice” star is also an ex-Houstonian. By then the singing rapper’s relentless positivity had even spread to New York Times columnist Jennifer Weiner, despite our troubling era, she wrote, “thankfully, we have Lizzo.” Oct 4 at 8. From $39. Revolution Music Center, 520 Texas Ave. 713-230-1500. revolutionmusiccenter.com
Writer Ta-Nehisi Coates worked on debut novel “Water Dancer” for a decade.
Coates ably picks up Toni Morrison’s mantle with ‘Water Dancer’

By Craig Lindsey
CORRESPONDENT

With his debut novel “The Water Dancer,” it appears that Ta-Nehisi Coates wants to pick up the mantle Toni Morrison left when she died earlier this year.

It can’t be denied that the Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winner had been a serious influence on Coates and his work. Before she passed, Coates gave her an early copy of “Dancer” to read. (She later sent an email to her Coates’ book editor saying, “I’d been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died. Clearly, it’s Ta-Nehisi Coates.”)

Coates has already established himself as a modern-day Baldwin when he dropped that cautious firebomb “Between the World & Me” a few years back. With “Dancer,” it seems he wants to continue in the tradition Morrison famously established in “Beloved” — telling harrowing, eloquent tales of 19th-century slave life, garnished with a hopeful serving of magical realism.

“Dancer” is told from the perspective of Hiram, a Virginia slave living on the ironically named plantation of Lockless. It’s a time when there are two types of people: the Quality (aka the white people who are in charge) and the Tasked (the Black folk who aren’t). The Tasked, like Hiram, have to serve their masters. For Hiram, that master also happens to his father, who acknowledges the young man as his own. But he still has him take on slave duties, including being the errand boy/sidekick to his permanently bratty (and pale-skinned) brother Maynard.

The novel starts off with Hiram almost drowning. On a rainy night, he crosses a bridge on a carriage (carrying Maynard and a “fancy girl who held him rapt with her wiles”) that eventually falls into the river Goose. Before that happens, Hiram sees someone he didn’t expect to see: his mother, who was sold away long ago. This sets off a series of lost remembrances that somehow keeps him from going under.

That brush with death sets off a chain of events that somehow keeps him from going under. Hiram would’ve continued to handle the psychological pain and scarring that came with it. Even as he’s walking around Philadelphia, a free man among other people doing what they please, he appears more concerned with how slaves like Hiram would’ve continued to handle the psychological pain and scarring that came with it.

Coates ably picks up Toni Morrison’s mantle with ‘Water Dancer’

Author appearance
Who: Ta-Nehisi Coates
When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday
Where: Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston, 4300 University
Details: Sold-out; Coates will not be participating in a book-signing; inprinthouston.org

‘The Water Dancer’
by Ta-Nehisi Coates
One World
416 pages, $28

... men and women who served their masters. For Hiram, that master also happened to be his father, who acknowledged him as his own. But he still had him take on slave duties, including being the errand boy/sidekick to his permanently bratty (and pale-skinned) brother Maynard.

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That brush with death sets off a chain of events that somehow keeps him from going under. Hiram would’ve continued to handle the psychological pain and scarring that came with it. Even as he’s walking around Philadelphia, a free man among other people doing what they please, he appears more concerned with how slaves like Hiram would’ve continued to handle the psychological pain and scarring that came with it.

Coates also makes it very clear that, without black people, things can quickly fall to pieces. When he returns to Lockless in the last third of the book, in order to retrieve something he’s trying to get out of there, he finds that this once flourishing plantation is in shambles. Most of the slaves he knew as a youngin’ are long gone, and his old man doesn’t seem to know what to do without them.

With this, Coates expresses that African-Americans deserve more than just reparations for slavery. By melding disturbing fact with dramatic fiction, Coates uses his first novel to remind readers that we need to be acknowledged as the men and women who were literally on the ground, destroying our bodies as we worked to make this land look like a real country. White people’s hands will forever be dirty for enslaving an entire race of people. But black people’s hands are dirty, too – from all the years of manually building this place.

Craig Lindsey is a Houston-based writer.
Elizabeth Gilbert’s new novel is a valentine to New York

By Joy Sewing

Joy.sewing@chron.com

Q&A

Q: Elizabeth Gilbert is the author of “City of Girls.”

A: She left a job, got fired, or something happened, but things didn’t go as planned, and she’s now living a new life for a year or two on an island. I think that’s an amazing thing to go through at any age. I don’t think there’s something that you can do better to make your heart grow.

Q: Do you ever get tired of women on TV that are going to Bali to find their “Eat, Pray, Love” moment?

A: I just think that the world has gotten to be pretty good friends.

Q: What brings you joy?

A: I have gotten to be pretty good friends. My best friend from fourth grade was in that room. … These are people who are fighting this battle, in the Supreme Court, for instance, right now, who don’t have the luxury of saying, ‘You can’t tell me what I’m going to do. I just want to go my way.’ … There are real costs that people face in their lives. And I’m in full support of those people, but generally I’m not saying that it’s a problem.

Q: What’s something surprising about you?

A: I’m doing a lot of traveling.coming up. I’m going away for those months in the winter in India, Fiji and Australia on a trip by myself. I’m thinking about it, I think that I really like it. And I think I’m going to end up liking it, and it’s going to be a great experience. I think that I’m going to be able to do that.

Q: What’s something surprising about you?

A: I have gotten to be pretty good friends. My best friend from fourth grade was in that room. … These are people who are fighting this battle, in the Supreme Court, for instance, right now, who don’t have the luxury of saying, ‘You can’t tell me what I’m going to do. I just want to go my way.’ … There are real costs that people face in their lives. And I’m in full support of those people, but generally I’m not saying that it’s a problem.

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Q: What’s something surprising about you?

A: I have gotten to be pretty good friends. My best friend from fourth grade was in that room. … These are people who are fighting this battle, in the Supreme Court, for instance, right now, who don’t have the luxury of saying, ‘You can’t tell me what I’m going to do. I just want to go my way.’ … There are real costs that people face in their lives. And I’m in full support of those people, but generally I’m not saying that it’s a problem.
POETRY by Caryn Leigh Wilkens

A woman is empowered ...

When she knows what she has to give and best to give it;
When she exposes her abuser and then forgives him,
along with the ones who allowed it;
When she stands up to someone she has loved and says,
"I’ve had enough, I’m leaving";
When she suffers failure, loss, rejection and comes out stronger and kinder;
When she has the courage to be her true self, following her highest aspirations;
When she reaches for her dreams
and helps others reach theirs too;
When she is a safe haven,
a solid rock,
a bright beacon;
When her compassion becomes
a rushing waterfall;
Then she is empowered.

— Originally Appeared in Art, Souls, Hearts 2018

Caryn Leigh Wilkens facilitates a quarterly gathering, Poetry for Peace, for present CENTER, a grassroots organization in San Antonio that advocates for compassion and justice.

EVENTS

SUNDAY

Antonette M. Danne will sign and discuss "If Three Soldiers Could Talk," 4:30 p.m., Brazos Bookstore, 2427 Bissonnet; 713-527-0701, bhzscalebookstore.com.

MONDAY

Carolyn Forché and Carmen Maria Machado will sign and discuss "What You Have Heard is True" and "The Dream House," 7:30 p.m., Tickets $15, Alley Theater, 655 Texas Memorial Auditorium.

THURSDAY

Ralph Hirsle will sign and discuss "Houston 20,000," 6-9 p.m., River Oaks Bookstore, 3320 Westheimer; 713-520-0006, riveroakbookstore.com.

Layla F. Saadi will sign and discuss "Me and White Supremacy," 6:30 p.m., Brazos Bookstore.

FRIDAY

Daniel Smith will sign and discuss "Homie," 6:30 p.m., Brazos Bookstore.

SATURDAY

Dean "Miranda" James and Ellery Adams will sign and discuss "Dear, Sugar Magic," 6-9 p.m., Brazos Bookstore.

Anna Manoian will sign and discuss "Love, Sugar Magic," 6-9 p.m., Brazos Bookstore.
PAIN TURNED PROSE

Carolyn Forché on Writing About Her Experience During El Salvador’s Civil War

The poet and author of *What You Have Heard Is True* talks about her new memoir ahead of her InPrint reading.

By Ryan Pait 1/27/2020 at 3:26pm

_Courtesy of Penguin Random House_

CAROLYN FORCHÉ MADE HER MARK in literature with her poetry and translations, but her 2019 book, *What You Have Heard is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance,*
called upon a different set of skills. It required her to dig decades into her past and fulfill a promise made to two friends. Forché was just 27 when a stranger showed up on her doorstep and asked her to join him in El Salvador to witness the political upheaval taking place there. She accepted, and her memoir, *What You Have Heard is True*, which is up for the 2019 National Book Award, recounts her time in the Central American country during the beginnings of its civil war, which spanned from 1980–92, and how this choice changed both her life and her art forever.

On Monday, Jan 27, Forché will read from *What You Have Heard is True* as part of Inprint’s 2019-2020 Margaret Root Brown Reading Series alongside Carmen Maria Machado. We caught up with Forché to talk about her memoir.

“*Witness*” is a common thread across your writing in various genres. How did that idea look or feel different when writing a memoir?

“Writing witness is writing in the aftermath of extremity. So, it’s not really something one can intend to do, and it’s not an identity. What we do is read for witness when we’re reading such work. In terms of writing the memoir, I believe there was considerable extremity involved in the experience, and that I am bearing witness to that. It’s of a piece with the rest of my work, although I haven’t really focused attention on my own work in that way—I’d rather study the work of others.”

I think, like you said, applying that idea to your own work and your own life versus someone else’s work is very different.

“Yeah. It took me a long time to even begin writing this memoir. Most of the events took place between 1978 and 1980, and I didn’t begin writing the memoir until 2003. I didn’t feel ready to write it either as a writer or as a person who had somehow emerged intact from those years, capable of recreating them on the page. But then I realized that I had promised that I would one day write about it, and I was running out of time. I was already in my 50s when I started it.

“It also took 15 years to finish, partly because it was my first book-length work in prose, so I had to learn how to do that; and there were skills that I hadn’t acquired or attended to as a
It must be especially tough because the topic is so complex, and then you're trying to figure out what your voice sounds like in this form you haven't worked in before.

"Exactly. What I wanted to do was write it in such a way that the reader would never know more than what I knew at the time. So, the story unfolds the way that it unfolded for me, with all that complexity and confusion. And as I was at the time piecing together a great puzzle, I wanted the reader to feel that way, too, and to piece things together with me. I tried to preserve that uncertainty and confusion and complexity in the narrative. So, there are very few moments where the narrator steps back with hindsight or foresight of some kind.

There are moments of great tension throughout the book that you cut through by mentioning the pop culture of the time. The one that jumped out the most to me was the appearance of Abba's “Take a Chance on Me” after a tense interaction. Was it important to remember those small moments of frivolity as you dug into your memories of such a tumultuous period of history?

"Yes. I was trying to make the time live again. And that, of course, includes popular culture—what was on the radio, the music that was playing. I remembered all of that quite vividly. My memories of that time are very precise. And there were strange juxtapositions, like carnage and Abba songs. (Laughs.) I wanted to include that, because to do that was to be true to what it was like. There were odd moments when you couldn’t believe you were hearing this particular song on the radio while you felt this might be the last moment of your life."

Toward the end of the book, you mention how your second book of poems took you across the country and gave you the chance to talk to people about the war in El
Salvador. *What You Have Heard is True* reengages that same history, but in a completely different way. How has the experience of talking about this book been different for you?

"I’m talking about this book in a very different environment. At the time when my poetry book was published in 1981, the United States was supporting a military dictatorship, and by extension, the death squads that were operating during those years. The United States wanted to stick to its policy of support, and Americans, by and large, didn’t know very much about Central America at that time. Most of them had not yet heard of El Salvador—it was just coming into the news stories at the time when my book was published.

“But there was a considerable disinformation campaign, and some of it came from the U.S. government, which accused journalists of inventing stories. It was the early version of “fake news.” To speak to American audiences and publish in the literary world at that time was very fraught. And there were many people who disbelieved what I had to say or questioned it. That, for a young woman poet, was quite painful and disorienting.

“Today, I’m a mature woman, and I’m speaking in a very different environment. Literary culture is not so naïve anymore, and American citizens seem to know a great deal more, especially about Central America, because over the decades we’ve acquired this knowledge. Today, of course, it’s important to them because of the refugees approaching our border for asylum. People are very interested in those issues, whether they oppose open asylum granting or not. But we do bear a responsibility to the people who are today fleeing the aftermath of the war that we paid for. I don’t have time to go into all the ways that that’s true, but today I don’t face the same credibility challenges that I faced in the past. The situation is very different now.”

*Jan 27. Tickets $5. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. More info and tickets at [inprinthouston.org](http://inprinthouston.org)*

*[This interview has been edited for length]*

Filed under

Memoirs, Book Reading, Books, Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series
Machado memoir sees dream become nightmare

By Andrew Dansby

H aving written a collection of short stories that was a finalist for the National Book Award, Carmen Maria Machado next turned to a long-form piece that gave her fits. She started writing a memoir about a relationship and a house, both of which she entered with excitement that swiftly steered toward claustrophobic feelings of abuse and entrapment.

“In the Dream House” was the resulting book, but the process proved more labored than she’d expected. Machado, 33, assumed a linear narrative would suffice. It would not.

“I struggled for years to write the story in a straightforward way,” she says. “And it took me a long time to realize that was not the way it was meant to exist. The story wasn’t taking, I’d read it back and think it was dreadful. I couldn’t stand it. There was too much plot in it, no levity. It needed a playfulness. So that became a structural concern. And it activated my brain.”

Machado's activated mind steered in an entirely different direction. Instead of an A-to-Z narrative about her relationship with a woman who transformed from lover to antagonist, Machado broke the story of their broken relationship with a woman who transgressed into a series of micro-tropes but also those that are more modern, such as narratives sold by TV sitcoms or the Disney machine.

Machado describes haunted-house stories as “my wheelhouse.” So they became her point of entry. The house she inhabits in the memoir, she says, isn’t particularly notable visually. Nobody would photograph it as a cover for a gothic novel. But it does become a complicated place in the narrative.

“In the Dream House” is a memoir. “It’s not about taking vivid notes,” she says. “It’s about the process of reconstruction. And that’s a challenge for a memoirist. Memories that seem clear one moment can seem stressful and unclear later.

“It deals with the idea that the brain inherently is weird. It remembers things vividly and jettisons things. It tries to protect you from certain things. So I had to do some research.”

But she also specifies that the book isn’t a work of journalism, and her adversary doesn’t have a voice other than what Machado attributes to her. Machado’s story uses numerous fictional constructs to tell her truth.

“If you don’t want to read that sort of personal account, there’s great journalism out there,” she says. “I never considered talking to her for this. I’m not a journalist. It’s a memoir.”

But having exorcised this person and this house, Machado is eager to move on to the next thing.

“I’m very excited,” she says, “to go back to fiction.”

‘In the Dream House’
By Carmen Maria Machado
Graywolf Press
264 pages, $26

AUTHOR APPEARANCE
Who: Carmen Maria Machado and Carolyn Forché
Where: Alley Theater, 615 Louisiana
When: 7:30 p.m. Monday
Details: $5; inprinthouston.org

Work is about a relationship and a house — and both go bad
We chat with the National Book Award finalist about the challenges in her writing her 2019 memoir *Dream House*. 

By [Ryan Pait](mailto:ryan.pait@inprintreads.com) 1/27/2020 at 3:08pm
CARMEN MARIA MACHADO TOOK THE LITERARY WORLD BY STORM IN 2017 with her debut book, *Her Body and Other Parties*, a gathering of haunted, wicked, and wild short stories. The book became a sensation, garnering widespread [critical acclaim](https://example.com) and going on to become a National Book Award finalist as well as a Shirley Jackson Award winner.

Two years later in 2019, Machado made another splash with the publication of her memoir, *In the Dream House*, in which she considers her relationship with a complicated and mercurial woman that began to sour into something malignant. As she reckons with her experience, Machado shifts through genres and conventions, using the “Dream House” as a way to explore variations on different themes, such as abuse, survival, release, growth, and becoming.

On Monday, Jan 27, Machado will read from *In the Dream House* as she headlines the fourth night of Inprint’s 2019-2020 Margaret Root Brown Reading Series with Carolyn Forché. We caught up with Machado to talk about her newest book.

As I read *In the Dream House*, I kept thinking about a line from “The Husband Stitch,” which opens your collection of short stories: “There are true things in this world observed by only a single set of eyes.” Did writing something so personal—like a memoir— evoke that same sort of sensation?

“The hardest thing about writing nonfiction is that you’re trying to explain your thoughts and experiences to people and explain it in a way that they will understand, which is basically the hardest thing to do as a person, I think. To do that and make it beautiful and interesting is a really tall order. It’s really hard to do that well. You’re trying to explain to people, ‘Here’s an experience I had. Here’s a feeling I had.’ It’s harder than fiction in that way, I feel, because at least in fiction you can kind of move things around in a way that suits you. But with nonfiction, you don’t have that luxury. So, you’re trying to explain what you think, and it’s really hard to know what you think about stuff. At least I think so. I find it
very difficult to explain what’s going on in my head, and I feel like we’re in this world
where everyone respects a fast take or opinion. But to say that you have a lot of
complicated feelings and you’ve been thinking about something for three years—it was a
challenge on multiple levels in that way.”

I felt an echo of that line in the chapter “Dream House as Folklore Taxonomy,” where
you write that “the story always looks a little different, depending on who is telling
it.” What was the one thing you felt like you needed to get across or have people
understand when putting your version of this story into the world?

“For me, one of the trickiest parts of writing the book was not just talking about queerness
but talking about psychological and verbal abuse and the way in which those things are
complicated. We want abuse to look like something specific, and yet, other people’s
experiences have borne out other realities. I wanted to be able to explain that in a way that
made sense and explain why it’s so hard to see that for what it is. That’s a hard thing to
wrap your mind around, even if you have studied this topic for years. To explain it to a
reader and to explain it as a writer is very, very complicated. It took a lot.”

In your overture, you undercut the idea of the prologue as “tedious” and then follow
it up with a prologue, a rhetorical move that I loved. How did you go about writing
your prologue and epilogue, and where did that fall in the timeline of writing the
book?

“So, they actually came fairly late. The material that I read about archival silence came to
me completely by accident—I had sort of written around the idea, but without any sort of
accompanying academic scaffolding because I didn’t know of any. And then I just had a
chance encounter with a friend of a friend—my spouse was describing my project to this
person, and they said, ‘Has she done any research on archival silence?’ And Val said no, and
the friend sent me all of this material on the topic. And it was weird, because I felt the hole
of that existing in the book, and then the hole was filled by this stranger.

“There’s this entire body of work about this, and I was reading Saidiya Hartman, and was
like, This is f****** perfect; this is so perfect for everything. So that worked out well. It was
funny though, because I wrote that intro and felt really good about it and liked it, and it
pleased me. And then my editor sort of commented that he loved it and it was great, but it
was a little weird that I was opening up a memoir with someone else’s words. And so, I was thinking, What could come before this? So, I was thinking about prologues and introductions and epilogues and paratexts and how I really hate prologues and find them tedious and boring. And then I went and wrote my own fucking prologue and was like, I’m just going to call out my s**t right away. Just so everyone knows that I know.”

Is it weird to write an epilogue to a part of your life that you’ve lived through and moved past?

“It’s weird. But it was a thing that came to me because the whole time I was writing the book, I was like, How the f**k am I going to end this thing? I didn’t know what the ending was. And I wrote into it for a while—where’s the ending, I don’t know, let me tell you how I don’t know where the ending is. It’s really hard to say. And I’d written these various sections in the book that were about writing the book in some form or another. I thought I could end the book on one of those notes, looking into the future, et cetera, et cetera. That ended up being what I did. It’s circling the future, but I also wanted it to be fairly light on commentary because I’d already done a lot of that. I wanted it to be this meditative moment where there’s a future and forwardness to it because it’s set so far after the events of the book.”

It wraps it up in a good way: “Here is where my life went” versus “Here’s a bunch of new ideas and commentary.”

“Exactly. You’ve now read all this s**t about me, and here’s this one peaceful moment from my own future—but actually my past—but that’s going to give you some kind of idea. And then boom, out. You know? Ultimately, I actually really liked it, and it worked out better than I had anticipated.”

Jan 27. Tickets $5. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. More info and tickets at inprintheartons.org

Filed under

Books, Interview, Book Reading, Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series
The wintry winds of late 2019 brought a lot of speculation about the next and penultimate novel in George R.R. Martin’s “A Song of Ice and Fire” series but nothing resembling a release date. Rather than sit around waiting on Martin, with the help of Houston booksellers I’ve instead assembled a book preview for 2020 that, hopefully, deals with titles that are more reliably confirmed for release.

This year starts off with a kick. Jeanine Cummins’ “American Dirt” arrives with blurbs from Stephen King and several booksellers testifying to its gripping pacing. And I found it to be as billed: an on-the-pulse novel about a mother and her son on the run from a Mexican cartel. The book opens with devastating violent outburst, and Cummins doesn’t let her foot off the gas until the story is told.

“I did not breathe for the whole first chapter,” says Valerie Koehler of Blue Willow Bookshop in Houston. “The run for the border is hellish, and the timeliness of the border situation makes it a must-read.”

The book, out Jan. 21, is taut and timely and will likely pepper best-of-2020 lists 11 months from now.

Koehler is also keen on “Valentine” by Elizabeth Wetmore, due March 31.

“I loved every page,” she says. “Set in West Texas during the oil booms and busts of the ’70s, it’s the women who bear the brunt of the brutality of the culture. These characters and their intertwined stories will work a way into your heart. It’s the mythic Texas that we think we know.”

Another January release of note is “Long Bright River,” which will be in bookstores this week. Liz Moore’s fourth novel touches on the opioid epidemic in her tale of two sisters whose paths diverge greatly from childhood. It’s also a gripping piece of fiction that drew a lot of buzz weeks before release.

The list below is hardly exhaustive. But it represents a few urgent, weird and promising titles for the first half of 2020. Publication dates are subject to change.

By Andrew Dansby | STAFF WRITER

andrew.dansby@chron.com

Books continues on G3
January

*“Hitting a Straight Line With a Crooked Stick” by Zora Neale Hurston: Nothing in this new story collection is technically “previously unpublished,” but it draws on eight stories that had been published decades ago in a small magazine and then largely forgotten. The 20 stories collected here span a broad thematic content mined by Hurston in Harlem in the mid-1920s.

*“A Long Purl of the Sea,” Isabel Allende: This piece of historical fiction paints the fall of the Spanish government in the 1930s, when the journey of a wedding and her spouse’s brother-in-law start to new life in Chile.

*“Tightrope: America Reaching for Hope,” Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn: The Pulitzer Prize-winning husband-wife team dives into struggling small towns in America, weaving stories and programs that failed. But true to the title, there are some optimistic glimmers and turning points.

*“How Much of These Hills Is Home,” April 27 to the Alley Theatre for a reading.

*“The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Church, Family, and Defiance During the Blacklist Era,” Erik Larson: The subject hardly matters. Larson’s storytelling gifts — his sense of pacing, his ability to convey historical detail and character — are without peer.

*“The Big Goodbye,” Sam McBride: This novel is McBride’s first and it won the National Book Award seven years ago. It is set in a Brooklyn, N.Y., housing project like the one where he was raised, as it tells the story from multiple perspectives of the 1950s Los Angeles Gangster who shot a drug dealer.


*“The Conference of Birds,”返回搜狐 with Emanu El.

“Afterlife,” Julie and Jeremy: The storied poet and his work.

*“Deacon King Kong,” James McBride: This novel is McBride’s first and it won the National Book Award seven years ago. It is set in a Brooklyn, N.Y., housing project like the one where he was raised, as it tells the story from multiple perspectives of the 1950s Los Angeles Gangster who shot a drug dealer.


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ON THE TOWN

Day more or less established the wrestler-memoir genre—brings the same goofy wit to his new one-man stage show, "Tales from Wrestling Past." From $25. Improv Houston, 7620 Katy Freeway. Info: 435. 860-406-3399, improvtx.com

Mar 26 @ 9:45 Asia Society Texas: Juice Touching on climate change, Bitcoin mining, and more, this 2019 documentary explores the relationship between electrical and political power through more than 50 interviews conducted in Lebanon, India, Iceland, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Producer Robert Bryce and director Tyson Culver will host a post-screening Q&A. $25 (non-members). 1370 Southmore Blvd. 713-406-9901. asiasociety.org/texas

Mar 15 at 7 and 9:45 Fathom Events: King Kong The Big Bang for a truly monstrous franchise, RKO's 1933 screamer still casts a long shadow over its many successors, including this fall's Kong vs. Godzilla. But for all its ingenious special effects (for the time), Kong's core resides in the uncanny chemistry between "scream queen" Fay Wray and one shockingly soulful giant ape. From $11.37. Multiple Houston-area theaters. fathomevents.com

LITERARY

Mar 23 at 7:30 Inprint: Reginald Dwayne Betts & Natalie Diaz Crushing his time behind bars into his latest volume of poetry, Fellon, Yale Law grad Betts previously won an NAACP Image Award for 2010 memoir A Question of Freedom. A member of the Gila River Indian Community, Diaz has just published Postcolonial Love Poem, which Graywolf Press calls "an anthem of desire against erasure." $5. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. 713-521-2026. inprinthouston.org

Mar 17-18 at 4:30 Barrio Dogs: A Decade of Dedication The East End–based animal services organization—which, among other things, promotes responsible pet care, sponsors adoptions, and works against animal neglect and abuse—celebrates its tenth anniversary with this afternoon fundraiser featuring an appreciative chorus of bow wow wows and live music from actual human beings as well. Free. Boheme's, 708 Telephone Rd. 713-923-4277. boheme.com

FAMILY

Mar 13-17 Main Street Theater The Cat in the Hat "The sun did not shine, it was too wet to play..." Thus begins Dr. Seuss's timeless tale of feline-induced rainy-day mayhem, adapted for the stage by Katie Mitchell in 2009—the same year the esteemed theater director was named to the Order of the British Empire. From $12. MATCH, 3400 Main St. 713-524-6706. mainstreettheater.com

Listings Edited By
CHRIS GRAY
Please call to confirm dates and times of events as information is subject to change. Prices listed reflect the full range of adult and student ticket prices at the door and in advance. Check with box offices for subscription, member, or other discounts. To have your event considered for listing, please send written information by e-mail to listings@houstoniamag.com at least two months prior to the event's occurrence. Listings must include times and dates for the event, prices, location, and a contact phone number for readers. Items are run on a space-available basis and bear no relationship to advertising.
LIFE MEETS ART

Louise Erdrich Talks Being Inspired by Family History Ahead of Inprint Reading


By Ryan Pait 3/6/2020 at 4:58pm

IMAGE: COURTESY HARPER COLLINS
ACCLAIMED AUTHOR LOUISE ERDRICH is following in her grandfather’s footsteps. Literally. Erdrich’s newest novel, *The Night Watchman*, takes her grandfather Patrick Gourneau’s life as its inspiration.

Gourneau fought fiercely against an emancipation bill brought to Congress in 1953 that would terminate the rights of numerous Native American tribes. What began as a letter-writing campaign soon took Gourneau from North Dakota to Washington, DC to oppose the bill. Those letters served as the basis for *The Night Watchman*, in which Erdrich turns Gourneau into Thomas Wazhashk and sets him loose among a cast of characters whose way of life hangs in the balance. Reading Gourneau’s letters as an adult—and as someone older than he was at the time he wrote them—gave Erdrich a new vision of her grandfather, she says, adding, “Maybe I needed to get to this place in order to understand him.”

We caught up with Erdrich, a National Book Award recipient and Pulitzer Prize finalist, by phone after one of her stops on her book tour: a reading in DC. The novelist, who is included among the most significant authors of Native American literature, says it was strange being there at the exact same time of the month that her grandfather was in the capital doing his life-changing work many years ago. “And here I am,” she says. “And here is this book.”

On Monday, Erdrich will read from *The Night Watchman* as she headlines the fifth evening of Inprint’s 2019-2020 Margarett Root Brown Reading Series. We talked to Erdrich about her newest book before she heads to Houston.

*When you’re thinking about *The Night Watchman* alongside your other work, where does it fit? Or does it feel like a departure from what you’ve done before?*

It does feel like a big departure. I didn’t connect it to any of the other books. But in a way, it may be where I needed to go. The fact that it is inspired by my grandfather—that it hews very closely to his letters, his truth, what he did, and the political aspects of it—it makes it feel very organic to the times we’re in now.

*In your award-winning book *Love Medicine*, you wrote, “Here is what I do not understand: how instantly the course of your life can be changed.” Did you witness any of those moments as you read your grandfather’s letters?*
Yes. I recognized that this fight for existence—it was an existential, true fight for the existence of his people that he was suddenly engulfed in. It was very sudden; it was only a matter of months. The timeline is so short between when he found out and understood, and when he had to go to Washington, with all the information and all of the arguments he could find and put together, and the people he could cobble together. It was a short, life-changing event. And for him, I think he lost his health. That was the most painful part of writing this book: to know what it was like for him during those times. He truly did have a stroke on one of his returns from Washington, and it was the beginning of several. Just to know how hard he worked, and how little he slept, and the tremendous amount of tension there was, it’s devastating. We all in our family know how much it cost.

You mention in your afterword that much of the book was written in a “heavy state of emotion” as you remembered the toll that this took on your family. How did you find a way to write through and capture those emotions?
I wrote the thing that he did, and that was a way of saying, “You did something so important.” People forgot quite quickly what had happened. I talked to many people who just don’t really think about termination, and people forgot his role in it, and people forgot a lot about it because it didn’t happen. People remember when the devastation happens much more clearly than when one is able to forestall devastation and it never happens. That’s kind of the unsung hero. And that’s what he was. And people didn’t remember because termination did not happen to them. Where termination did happen, in those tribes, those people were never to be the same. It would’ve been devastating for us. I would certainly not be here as a member of the Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa if he hadn’t stood up to Congress on this.

One of the things I admire about your writing is that you treat every character as worthy of interest and consideration, even when a character might not seem worthy of it at first glance. Where do you feel that impulse comes from?

I suppose it’s really from my parents. They treat everyone as if they’re worthy of interest, and they’re kind to people. They’re just good people. But as a writer, I feel as though I’m to tell people’s stories without judgment. And once you’re in that position of not having to judge, you can feel the characters kind of come toward you, with their stories and their flaws. I don’t know exactly where it comes from, but it is what I feel to be true. I’m here not to judge, but to write the story.


Filed under

*Alley Theatre, Inprint Margarett Root Brown Reading Series, Interview*
Historical ‘Night Watchman’ feels especially relevant today

Louise Erdrich says she wanted to normalize the idea of American Indians working in a 9-to-5 environment rather than “feathers and tomahawks.”

Author’s grandfather serves as inspiration for novel of hope

Louis Erdrich

When: 7:30 p.m. March 9
Where: Alley Theatre, 615 Texas
Details: $5; inpersonhouston.org
POETRY by Robin Gara

'Sweets'

Since cutting back candy luscious with layers of caramel, nuts, nougat wrapped in chocolate confections are too much—my mouth aches. Now one fairly traded seventy percent cacao is more than enough. Relationships, the same—where flowery courtship used to tickle my fancy, these days I'm satisfied more by a hug that nearly chokes the life out of me—but comes from somewhere real.

Robin Gara, a retired art teacher, is a member of the Bihl Haus Go! Arts writer's group in San Antonio. Send poems (40-line limit) to poetry editor Jim LaVilla-Havelin, San Antonio Express-News, P.O. Box 271, San Antonio, TX 78297

EVENTS

SUNDAY

MONDAY
Alma Katsu: Will sign and discuss "The Deep," 6:30 p.m., Murder By The Book, 2342 Bissonnet; 713-524-8597, murderbooks.com. Louise Erdrich: Reading followed by an on-stage interview, conducted by American Book Award winner and UH Creative Writing Program faculty member Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Part of Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series. Tickets $5; 7:30 p.m., Alley Theatre, 615 Texas, inprinthouston.org.

TUESDAY
Ally Carter: Will sign and discuss "Winterborne Home for Vengeance and Valor," 5 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop, 14532 Memorial; 281-497-8675, bluewillowbookshop.com.

WEDNESDAY
Gibby Haynes: Will sign and discuss "Me & Mr. Cigar," 6:30 p.m., Brazos Bookstore. Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen: Will sign and discuss "You Are Not Alone," 6:30 p.m., Murder By The Book. Najmeh Batmanglij: In celebration of Persian New Year, author will share regional Iranian dishes and will sign and discuss "Cooking in Iran." Tickets $25-$35; 6:30 p.m., Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore Blvd; asiatociety.org/texas. Martha Hall Kelly: Will sign and discuss "Lost Roses," 7 p.m., Blue Willow Bookshop.

THURSDAY
Peter Swanson: Will sign and discuss "Eight Perfect Murders," 6:30 p.m., Murder By The Book. Jason Reynolds: Will sign and discuss "Stamped." Tickets $21.50, include a copy of the book. 7 p.m., Lanier Middle School, 2600 Woodhead; Blue Willow Bookshop.

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Ani Khan