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& WRITERS
FESTIVAL
lit **20**
YEARS

APRIL 17-21, 2024



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YOUR GUIDE TO GRITLIT 2024

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO GRITLIT

I can't believe I am welcoming you to our 20th gritLIT Festival! Looking back over two decades of award-winning novels, short fiction, non-fiction, poetry and graphic novels, of exciting writing workshops and interactive programs, and of amazing partner events with organizations like Theatre Aquarius, the HPO, Telling Tales, and LitLive, I am so grateful to be part of it all – and to live in a city that is so passionate about and supportive of the arts.

One of my great joys through the years has been watching an author who appeared at gritLIT with their first book go on to huge success in their writing career. Just last year, Hamilton's own Anuja Varghese launched her debut book, *Chrysalis*, at the festival before winning both the Governor General's Award for Fiction and the Writers' Trust of Canada Dayne Ogilvie Prize. I can't wait to see which of our 2024 debut authors goes on to become the next Canadian literary icon!

And speaking of literary icons, it is our great pleasure to welcome Margaret Atwood to gritLIT 2024. I know how disappointing it was for so many of our gritLIT family – organizers and audience members alike – when her first appearance had to be cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems fitting that we are finally able to bring her to the festival for such a special and celebratory year.

It was hard to learn that I would have to step away from the festival temporarily in the middle of planning, but Interim Artistic Director Jessica Rose has worked with me to ensure that gritLIT 20 is our biggest and most exciting festival yet. Have a fantastic festival weekend!

Jennifer Gillies, Artistic Director

DID YOU KNOW?

gritLIT is a registered Canadian charity. As such, the work we do would not be possible without the support and generosity of our wonderful sponsors and donors. If you would like to donate to help keep gritLIT going, please visit gritlit.ca. You can donate as a one-time-only event, or set up a monthly donation to help your local readers and writers festival continue to grow.

Welcome to our 20th anniversary festival! Whether you're a reader, a writer, or both, there's something for you at gritLIT 2024.

This year, we're kicking off gritLIT 2024 with two digital events on April 17. Join our program advisory team for "20 Years of gritLIT," looking back at some highlights of the past 20 years. Next, winners of the gritLIT Short Story contest will take to the virtual stage.

On Thursday, April 18, we're thrilled to host Canadian icon Peter Mansbridge at the historic Playhouse Theatre on Sherman Avenue. Then from April 19-21, join us in person at the Homewood Suites by Hilton for 12 mainstage events and seven workshops. Among the festival's many highlights is Tom Wilson in conversation with Theatre Aquarius Artistic Director Mary Francis Moore (April 19) to talk about writing their upcoming musical, *Beautiful Scars*, and "What Is Ainara Reading?" – a Q&A event in which Emily Sattler from the Telling Tales festival talks with 14-year-old superstar Ainara Alleyne about a few of her favourite titles that every young – and young at heart – adult should be reading.

We're excited to welcome longtime gritLIT friend Gary Barwin to the festival as this year's Spotlight Series selector. Our Spotlight Series allows someone established in Canada's literary community to shine a light on work they're excited about. On Sunday, April 21, Gary will sit down with his choices, Ayomide Bayowa, Conyer Clayton, and Geoffrey D. Morrison.

The work we do could not be possible without the funders, sponsors, and advertisers who keep the festival going and growing. Thank you so much for your support of gritLIT. Thank you also to gritLIT's formidable staff, board members, and volunteers for your tireless work not only during festival weekend, but throughout the entire year. Thank you especially to Jaime Krakowski and her team from Epic Books for their ongoing support of local literature.

And thank you to you, our audience, for your support and enthusiasm for gritLIT. Whether you're new to gritLIT, or you've been attending since the beginning, there would be no festival without you!

Jessica Rose, Interim Artistic Director

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF GRITLIT

gritLIT began in 2004 as the brainchild of Hamilton author Krista Foss. Foss believed Hamilton needed a platform both to host the best established and emerging writers from around the country and to highlight the wealth of homegrown literary talent the city has to offer. Fellow author Rachael Preston took over management in 2005, followed by publisher Noelle Allen (2007-2012) and Artistic Director Jennifer Gillies (2007-present).

Together, they grew gritLIT from a small, intimate weekend of programs at Hamilton's Staircase Theatre to a multi-day, hybrid online and in-person celebration of Canadian writers that attracts virtual audiences from as far away as Australia. This year recorded its biggest in-person event ever with a sold-out reading in Theatre Aquarius's 700-seat venue.

gritLIT thanks all our venue partners, from the Staircase, to the Art Gallery of Hamilton, to the festival's current home, Hamilton Homewood Suites by Hilton. Thank you to our bookstore partners – originally Bryan Prince, Bookseller, and currently Jaime Krakowski from Epic Books. Thank you to other Hamilton arts organizations, including Theatre Aquarius, the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, LitLive, and Hamilton YOU Poets, for collaborating on some of gritLIT's most dynamic and innovative programs. Thank you to all the sponsors, donors, and audience members who have so generously supported the festival for two decades.

gritLIT looks forward to celebrating another 20 years of great Canadian books and authors with you all!

ABOUT GRITLIT

OUR MANDATE

gritLIT brings the best contemporary Canadian writers to Hamilton and online to engage with local booklovers, to inspire and to be inspired by Hamilton authors, to promote a love of reading in young audiences and to celebrate the exchange of diverse ideas, experiences and viewpoints.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR: Melanie Cummings

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WRITING CONTEST MANAGER: Paige Maylott

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BOOKSELLER: Epic Books

PROGRAM ADVISORS:

Ann Y.K. Choi, Annette Hamm, Nairne Holtz, Jaime Krakowski, Jamie Tennant, Anuja Varghese

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS:

Thank you to committee volunteers who have contributed their time and talents to gritLIT this year: Melissa Barrientos, Rachel Marsh, Jane Mulkewich, Shawn Smith, Kaley Stewart, Caroline Topperman

TICKET INFORMATION

Individual Tickets: \$10

Peter Mansbridge at the Playhouse: \$15

Writing Workshops (75-90 minutes): \$25 (Limited Registration)

Full Festival Pass: \$75 (Includes all virtual and in-person mainstage events, including Peter Mansbridge at the Playhouse Cinema. Does not include writing workshops or the pre-festival event with Margaret Atwood)

Interactive and Other Special Events: Please see event descriptions

Tickets available online at gritlit.ca

SAFER SPACES POLICY FOR ATTENDEES

gritLIT is committed to ensuring that all our platforms, whether online or in-person, are inclusive, welcoming spaces for all attendees, authors, event hosts and gritLIT team members.

Any attendee whose comments or questions may be construed as bullying, as offensive or as disrespectful toward any other festival guest or organizer will have their online posts removed and will be informed why the comment or question was flagged and will be asked to refrain from posting similar comments or questions in future. Any attendee who makes comments or asks questions that may be construed as bullying at in-person gritLIT events may be asked to leave.

Any attendee whose comments or questions are overtly bullying, offensive or disrespectful OR who ignores a warning to refrain from comments or questions that may be construed as bullying, as offensive or as disrespectful OR who acts or speaks in a bullying, offensive or disrespectful manner toward any other festival guest or organizer will be removed and may be banned from attending gritLIT events in future.

ACCESSIBILITY

Online Events:

Closed captioning is enabled at all gritLIT events hosted on the Zoom platform.

In-Person Events:

Homewood Suites by Hilton is accessible to attendees with mobility devices. All gritLIT events at Homewood Suites by Hilton take place on the 2nd floor (elevator access). Accessible washrooms are available.

Parking:

There is a public parking lot on the west side of the Hilton Homewood Suites (Main St & Caroline St.) and an Impark lot on the south side. Please Note: If there is an event at FirstOntario Centre, event parking rates will be in effect in these lots. Both the City Hall Parking Lot and the Jackson Square Parking Lot are less than 350 metres from the hotel. The hotel offers underground parking as well.

EVENT SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

MARGARET ATWOOD AT THEATRE AQUARIUS

7:00 PM (DOORS OPEN AT 6:00 PM)

gritLIT celebrates the beginning of its 20th Anniversary Festival with an evening with Canada's most iconic author. Margaret Atwood shares stories from her long and celebrated career and discusses her latest work, *Old Babes in the Wood*. Doors open at 6:00 PM, and the show starts at 7:00 PM. Please plan to arrive early. Due to the nature of this event, we may not be able to seat latecomers. We invite you to stay after the show. The bar will be open, light refreshments available and the Epic Books table will be available for browsing. This is also a great time to learn more about the rest of the 2024 gritLIT Readers & Writers Festival, as well as the final show of the Theatre Aquarius season, *Beautiful Scars*, written by and based on the memoir of noted Hamiltonian – and gritLIT presenter – Tom Wilson.



CREDIT: LUIS MORS

*Please note that due to health considerations, Margaret Atwood will not be available for book signings at this event.

this event is hosted at Theatre Aquarius (190 King William Street, Hamilton)

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS

gritLIT relies on a team of dedicated volunteers to keep the festival growing. Thank you to our amazing board of directors, board committee members, operations team, and program advisory team for their tireless efforts throughout the year. Thank you to the community members who help during festival weekend and at gritLIT events year-round. You are all part of what makes gritLIT special.

If you are interested in volunteering with gritLIT, email volunteers@gritlit.ca

GRITLIT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

20 YEARS OF GRITLIT

7:00 PM

Over the past two decades, gritLIT has been privileged to welcome more than four hundred of Canada's best established and emerging authors to the festival. Join members of our program advisory team as they look back at some of the highlights of the past twenty years and offer insider tips about how to get the most out of this weekend's 20th Anniversary Festival. Hosted by Ann Y.K. Choi and Jamie Tennant.

this is an online event

WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

8:30 PM

gritLIT has helped nurture many exciting new Canadian authors, including 2022 BMO Winterset Award winner Shelly Kawaja, who was inspired to write her debut novel after winning the gritLIT Short Story Contest in 2020. Join author and contest judge Neil Smith and gritLIT's 2024 Short Story Contest winners as they discuss their winning entries and share tips for other aspiring – and potentially award-winning – Canadian writers.

this is an online event

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

ALL EVENTS FROM THURSDAY, APRIL 18 TO SUNDAY, APRIL 21 ARE IN PERSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

PETER MANSBRIDGE: HOW CANADA WORKS

7:00 PM

Drawing on his thirty years experience as anchor of *The National*, CBC's flagship nightly newscast, Peter Mansbridge shares his latest book, *How Canada Works: The People Who Make Our Nation Thrive*. Mansbridge will sit down with Elamin Abdelmahmoud about his collection of personal stories about the everyday jobs that keep our nation running – and some of the inspiring people who perform them.

this event is hosted at the Playhouse Cinema (177 Sherman Avenue N, Hamilton)

LOOKING FOR A BOOK OR TWO? VISIT OUR BOOKSELLER, EPIC BOOKS, ONLINE AT EPICBOOKS.CA.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19

LUNCH WITH THE READERS' ADVISORY DIVAS & DUDES

1:00 PM

The mission of the Readers' Advisory Divas & Dudes is to spread the word about all the hidden gems on publishing lists: the debut authors, the books publishers are very excited about, the quiet bestsellers. Join two of the Divas & Dudes for lunch and get an exclusive sneak peek at their picks for the best reads for summer 2024.

TOM WILSON: BEAUTIFUL SCARS

7:00 PM

Many Hamiltonians know Tom Wilson for his three Juno Awards, his bands Junkhouse, Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, and Lee Harvey Osmond, and his multiple gold records. In 2018, gritLIT was proud to welcome Tom Wilson the author when he joined us to share his recently published memoir, *Beautiful Scars*. Now that memoir has been adapted into a musical. Wilson sits down with Theatre Aquarius Artistic Director Mary Francis Moore to discuss his story, adapting a book for the stage, and what audiences can expect from the upcoming world premiere musical.

HAMILTON WRITES

8:30 PM

Celebrate the 20th anniversary of Hamilton's Readers & Writers Festival with an event showcasing five phenomenal Hamilton writers. Featuring Gary Barwin (*Imagining, Imagining*), Dannabang Kuwabong (*Sargasso Sea Scrolls*), David Neil Lee (*The Great Outer Dark*), and George Matuvi (*The War As I Saw It*). Hosted by Megan Divecha from the Hamilton Arts Council.

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

10:00 PM

gritLIT's Next Chapter Team invites you to join them for a special, late-night mixer suitable for all book lovers. Share some of your favourite bookish memories, participate in a collaborative storytelling activity, or swap a book at our gritLIT little free library! Enjoy a gritLIT cocktail from the bar with some complimentary snacks as you chat with other readers about your favourite books from the festival.

this is a free event organized by the Next Chapter Committee

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

SPEAKING FICTION TO POWER

11:00 AM

It is said that fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth. Join authors Alicia Elliott (*And Then She Fell*) and Jessica Westhead (*Avalanche*) as they share their powerful stories and discuss how fiction can be a weapon in the fight against social inequity.

THE ART OF THE SCENE (WRITING WORKSHOP)

11:00 AM

Scenes are the building blocks of fiction. But what is a scene? How do they work? When should we use them? In this workshop, author Amy Jones will discuss the importance of the scene in fiction and learn how to use scenes to help readers connect to our characters and bring them into the emotional heart of the story. Come prepared to write!

AND SO, IT STARTS

12:30 PM

In the first scenes of *Reuniting with Strangers*, five-year-old Monolith destroys his mother's home. *The Raw Light of Morning* begins when fourteen-year-old Laurel commits an act of violence that alters the course of her life. Jennilee Austria-Bonifacio and Shelly Kawaja share two stunning debut novels about the long-reaching and sometimes surprising consequences of childhood traumas, both on the victims and on everyone around them. Hosted by Ann Y.K. Choi.

RELIVING THE MOMENT (WRITING WORKSHOP)

12:30 PM

Touching on Mary Karr's techniques in *The Art of Memoir*, author Paige Maylott shows how to capture moments to create vivid and authentic scenes in works of creative non-fiction. Participants will learn how to stage a scene and then start the process of transferring their own vibrant memories onto the page. Please come to the workshop with one or two moments in mind that you would like to explore.

THE POETICS OF RESISTANCE

2:00 PM

Using Louis XVI's *Code Noir* and the stories of indentured labourers in Trinidad, poets and novelists Canisia Lubrin and Shani Mootoo have created thought-provoking new works that examine issues of origin, resistance, and community. Join them and moderator Kai Cheng Thom for a compelling conversation about breaking free from the past and finding the courage to resist when faced with unthinkable injustices.

FINANCING A WRITING CAREER (WRITING WORKSHOP)

2:00 PM

If writing is your passion, but it doesn't pay the bills – how the heck do you financially sustain a creative writing practice? In this 90-minute workshop, working writers, parents, and arts professionals Anuja Varghese and Lishai Peel will discuss practical ways to support yourself as a writer. With over a decade of experience in the arts and culture sector, Anuja and Lishai will share their professional experiences and offer insights, tips, and strategies for fellow freelancers and writers. From applying for grants and prizes, to pitching workshops and other skill-sharing activities, to balancing work in other fields, all while actually finishing your manuscript – tune in for an honest discussion on how to finance your passion and find the funds to keep pushing your pen forward!

this is an online and in-person event

FALLING SHORT

3:30 PM

What happens when we fail to live up to expectations ... or even to understand what those expectations may be? Vincent Anioke (*Perfect Little Angels*) and Jessica Westhead (*Avalanche*) help their characters examine this question and many more in their compelling short story collections. Hosted by Carleigh Baker, author of *Last Woman*, "a blistering collection of short fiction."

REIMAGINING HAMILTON (WRITING WORKSHOP)

3:30 PM

Isn't writing fiction an act of reimagining reality – so the world as we know it becomes an imaginative world, a world of things the way they might be? In writing his Hamilton-set *Midnight Games* trilogy, David Neil Lee blended the everyday with the fantastic to reimagine his hometown in an infinite number of ways. This workshop challenges participants to think about fiction writing as the transformation of the known into something unknown, new, and exciting.

GRITLIT 2024 FLASH FICTION WRITING CONTEST

5:30 PM

gritLIT challenges Hamilton's new or emerging authors to put their speed-writing skills to the test! You will be given a prompt and one or two required elements. Can you incorporate them into a 500-word-or-less story in one hour? The winner, decided by Kerry Clare, will receive a \$50 gift certificate from Epic Books and have their story published on the gritLIT website.

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY?

7:00 PM

New books by Casey Plett (*On Community*) and Matthew R. Morris (*Black Boys Like Me: Confrontations with Race, Identity, and Belonging*) offer insights about finding your place inside a system that was designed to keep some people out. Join the authors for an honest conversation with host Renata Hall about culture, identity, inclusion, and how we can learn to define – or redefine – what makes a community.

WORLDS COLLIDE

8:30 PM

Alice feels like an imposter in her wealthy Toronto neighbourhood even before terrifying events begin to happen. In her own shiny new Toronto condo, Dawn is haunted by uncanny occurrences and messages from her dead mother. Adriana Chartrand (*An Ordinary Violence*) and Alicia Elliott (*And Then She Fell*) share new novels filled with danger and suspense as their characters try to navigate the intersection of their real lives and the mythical, spiritual realm. Hosted by January Rogers.



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Good Shepherd services include emergency food and clothing; daily hot meals; emergency shelters for all individuals and families; transitional housing and education for homeless and street-involved youth; hospice palliative care; community mental health programs; and supportive housing programs.

SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WHAT IS AINARA READING?

10:00 AM

14-year-old Ainara Alleyne's passion for books led her to hosting her own TV show, *Ainara's Bookshelf*, on TVO. In this Q&A event, Emily Sattler from the Telling Tales Festival talks with Alleyne about a few books that every young – and young at heart – adult should be reading.

GRITLIT BOOK CLUB

10:00 AM

In 2020, Shelly Kawaja won the gritLIT Short Story Contest, which she says gave her the confidence to fully commit to her writing career. In 2022, Kawaja's *The Raw Light of Morning*, won the \$12,500 BMO Winterset Award. Book club leader Wendy O'Brien will lead the author in an in-depth discussion about her award-winning debut novel. You are encouraged to read the book in advance and join in the conversation, but sitting back with a coffee and pastry to listen is okay too!

SPOTLIGHT SERIES AUTHORS

11:00 AM

Each year, gritLIT asks an award-winning established Canadian author to help us shine a light on a few new or emerging writers whose work deserves national recognition. Join 2024 Spotlight Series Curator Gary Barwin as he presents novelist Geoffrey D. Morrison (*Falling Hour*) and poets Conyer Clayton (*But the sun, and the ships, and the fish, and the waves*) and Ayomide Bayowa (*Gills*) to our Hamilton audience.

TO SCREAM OR NOT TO SCREAM: HANDLING BIG EMOTIONS IN STORYTELLING (WRITING WORKSHOP)

11:00 AM

Heartache, disease, new love, death. Our characters often have to navigate life-altering moments right there on the page. As writers, how do we carefully convey the weight of their emotional responses? How do we sidestep clichés, choose revealing prose, and ground the overwhelming feelings of the moment in the truth of our characters? Through prose excerpts, instruction, group discussions, and writing exercises, this highly interactive workshop led by Vincent Anioke will explore various techniques for handling woes, thrills, and joys in ways that feel truthful and engaging.

ALL THE SACRED PARTS

12:30 PM


Paige Maylott's *My Body Is Distant* uses the intersection of virtual and IRL identities to explore true identity. In *Falling Back in Love with Being Human*, Kai Cheng Thom writes a series of love letters to explore the concept of acceptance and being accepted, flaws and all. Casey Plett sits down with the authors to discuss what it means to love ourselves and others truly and fully, with all our flawed and sacred parts.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR WRITERS (WRITING WORKSHOP)

12:30 PM

Writing is a competitive field, and now more than ever, writers need to know how to build a presence online. Author Jennilee Austria-Bonifacio looks at social media as a tool for writers and discusses creating an authentic voice online, how to use design programs, tips and tricks for different platforms, and strategies for using social media in an intentional way to learn about a subject and connect with new readers. Participants will have the opportunity to create their own sample posts.





this is an online and in-person event



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HTI HAS ALWAYS STRIVED TO PROVIDE HAMILTON'S TALENTED PERFORMERS WITH AN OUTLET TO PRESENT THE "BEST OF BROADWAY" TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. EVEN THOUGH FOR MANY MEMBERS, MUSICAL THEATRE IS JUST A HOBBY ROOTED FROM THEIR PASSION AND CREATIVITY, SOME OF THEM HAVE GONE ON TO STARRING IN MOVIES, TELEVISION AS WELL AS BROADWAY. THIS TIES INTO TWO HIGHLY IMPORTANT MANDATES: ONE IS TO PROVIDE OUR MEMBERS WITH THE NECESSARY TRAINING IF THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD OF THEATRE, EITHER AS PERFORMERS OR TECHNICIANS, AND THE OTHER, IS TO ENTERTAIN THE HAMILTON COMMUNITY.

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DOWN BY THE SEA

2:00 PM

Just ahead of summer, gritLIT presents two fantastic beach reads! With heartfelt humour, swanky resorts, shipwrecks, seaside weddings, and sneaking suspicions, let authors Robin Lefler (*Not How I Pictured It*) and Leanne Toshiko Simpson (*Never Been Better*) immerse you in their tropical tales. Hosted by Amy Jones.

POETRY: BEYOND TRUTH (WRITING WORKSHOP)

2:00 PM

What poetic opportunities do we miss out on when we get stuck in writing the “truth” of an experience? In this interactive workshop, poet Conyer Clayton looks at overlaps between figurative language and purposeful un-truths, between the speculative and real, and helps participants learn how to go beyond facts to uncover the true core of the story they want to share.

DRAFTS & DRAFTS

3:30 PM

gritLIT closes out the 20th Anniversary Festival with a special all-Hamilton edition of Drafts & Drafts. Brent van Staalduijn sits down with Hamilton authors Amy Jones (*Pebble and Dove*), Anuja Varghese (*Chrysalis*), and Nathan Whitlock (*Lump*) for a beer, a chat about their most recent books, and an exclusive sneak peek at their works-in-progress.

THERE'S ALWAYS MORE TO EXPLORE.



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ARTWORK: KAHNAWAKE (THE LONG ROAD HOME) BY TOM WILSON- TEHOHA'HAKE



TICKETS

Tom Wilson's bestselling memoir comes to life on stage at Theatre Aquarius beginning on April 24.

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“

I look forward to **gritLIT** all year. It's a chance to meet my favourite **Canadian writers**, discover fabulous new talent and nerd out with others who love to share **stories**.

— ANNETTE HAMM
HOST OF CHCH MORNING LIVE
AND FORMER BOARD CHAIR

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SPOTLIGHT SERIES

GRITLIT IS HONOURED TO WELCOME AYOMIDE BAYOWA, CONYER CLAYTON, AND GEOFFREY D. MORRISON, THE 2024 SPOTLIGHT SERIES AUTHORS, CHOSEN BY GARY BARWIN.

Now in its sixth year, gritLIT's Spotlight Series allows someone established in Canada's literary community to shine a light on work they're excited about by nominating authors to appear at the festival.

This year's Spotlight Series selector, Gary Barwin, is a longtime friend to gritLIT! Gary is a writer, composer and multidisciplinary artist and the author of twenty-six books who lives right here in Hamilton. gritLIT is excited to welcome Gary's Spotlight Series Authors, Ayomide Bayowa, Conyer Clayton, and Geoffrey D. Morrison.



AYOMIDE
BAYOWA
(P. 28)



CONYER
CLAYTON
(P. 29)



GEOFFREY D.
MORRISON
(P. 33)

See Gary Barwin in conversation with Spotlight Series authors Ayomide Bayowa, Conyer Clayton, and Geoffrey D. Morrison, on Sunday, April 21 at 11:00 AM.

Gary will also appear alongside other Hamilton authors as part of our popular Hamilton Writes event on Friday, April 19 at 8:30 PM.

for the love of **HAMILTON**



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GRITLIT AT A GLANCE

A DAY-BY-DAY OVERVIEW OF OUR 2024 FESTIVAL

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

7:00pm

20 YEARS OF GRITLIT

Online Event | p. 9

8:30pm

WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

Online Event | p. 9

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

7:00pm

PETER MANSBRIDGE: HOW CANADA WORKS

Mainstage Event | p. 9

FRIDAY, APRIL 19

1:00pm

LUNCH WITH THE READERS' ADVISORY DIVAS & DUDES

Interactive Event | p. 10

7:00pm

TOM WILSON: BEAUTIFUL SCARS

Mainstage Event | p. 10

8:30pm

HAMILTON WRITES

Mainstage Event | p. 10

10:00pm

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Interactive Event | p. 10

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

11:00am

SPEAKING FICTION TO POWER

Mainstage Event | p. 11

12:30pm

AND SO, IT STARTS

Mainstage Event | p. 11

2:00pm

THE POETICS OF RESISTANCE

Mainstage Event | p. 12

3:30pm

FALLING SHORT

Mainstage Event | p. 12

5:30pm

GRITLIT 2024 FLASH FICTION WRITING CONTEST

Interactive Event | p. 13

7:00pm

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY?

Mainstage Event | p. 13

8:30pm

WORLDS COLLIDE

Mainstage Event | p. 13

SUNDAY, APRIL 21

10:00am

WHAT IS AINARA READING?

Mainstage Event | p. 14

GRITLIT BOOK CLUB

Interactive Event
| p. 14

THE ART OF THE SCENE

Writing Workshop (In-Person) | p. 11

11:00am

SPOTLIGHT SERIES AUTHORS

Mainstage Event | p. 14

TO SCREAM OR NOT TO SCREAM: HANDLING BIG EMOTIONS IN STORYTELLING

Writing Workshop
(In-Person) | p. 14

RELIVING THE MOMENT

Writing Workshop (In-Person) | p. 11

FINANCING A WRITING CAREER

Writing Workshop
(In-Person & Online) | p. 12

12:30pm

ALL THE SACRED PARTS

Mainstage Event | p. 15

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR WRITERS

Writing Workshop
(In-Person & Online)
| p. 15

REIMAGINING HAMILTON

Writing Workshop (In-Person) | p. 12

2:00pm

DOWN BY THE SEA

Mainstage Event | p. 16

POETRY: BEYOND TRUTH

Writing Workshop
(In-Person) | p. 16

3:30pm

DRAFTS & DRAFTS

Mainstage Event | p. 16

JUST A FRIENDLY REMINDER:

gritLIT 2024 includes both in-person and virtual events. Please read the full event description carefully before you register.

MEET THE AUTHORS

AINARA ALLEYNE

AINARA ALLEYNE is a 14-year-old host, co-creator, co-writer, and executive producer on *Ainara's Bookshelf*. Ainara's mission is to highlight books for young people whose authors and main characters are Black, Indigenous, people of colour, differently abled, and other underrepresented minorities. Ainara shares reviews, recommendations, and author interviews to bring diverse stories to a broader audience. She believes that by experiencing other cultures and perspectives through books, we can not only acknowledge our differences but be able to understand and embrace them. Since launching her Instagram feed, Ainara has reviewed books for the *New York Times*, acted as a reporter for CBC Kids News, is Hamilton Public Library's First Junior Librarian-in-eResidence, has spoken to schools and at educator symposiums, and is the MS Read-a-Thon Junior Ambassador for 2022 and 2023. She also has several acting credits to her name including *Odd Squad Mobile Unit* (Netflix), *Six Degrees of Santa* (Lifetime), *Nine Films About Technology* (Disney+), and several theater credits.



VINCENT ANIOKE

VINCENT ANIOKE is a Nigerian Canadian software engineer and author. His short stories have appeared in *The Ex-Puritan*, *The Rumpus*, *The Masters Review*, *Carve Magazine*, and *Passages North*, among others. He won the 2021 Austin Clarke Fiction Prize and has been shortlisted for multiple contests, including the 2023 RBC Bronwen Wallace Fiction Award and the 2021 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. He reads literary submissions for *SmokeLong Quarterly* and *Split Lip Magazine*. *Perfect Little Angels* is his first book. Find him on X (formerly Twitter) at @AniokeVincent.



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MARGARET ATWOOD

MARGARET ATWOOD is the author of more than fifty books of fiction, poetry, and critical essays. Her novels include *Cat's Eye*, *The Robber Bride*, *Alias Grace*, *The Blind Assassin*, and the *Maddaddam* trilogy. Her 1985 classic, *The Handmaid's Tale*, was followed in 2019 by a sequel, *The Testaments*, which was a global number one bestseller and won the Booker Prize. In 2020 she published *Dearly*, her first collection of poetry in a decade, followed in 2022 with *Burning Questions*, a selection of essays from 2004–2021. Her next collection of short stories, *Old Babes in the Wood*, was published in March 2023. Atwood has won numerous awards, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award for Imagination in Service to Society, the Franz Kafka Prize, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, the PEN USA Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. In 2019 she was made a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour for services to literature. She has also worked as a cartoonist, illustrator, librettist, playwright, and puppeteer. She lives in Toronto, Canada.



CREDIT: LUIS MORS

JENNILEE AUSTRIA-BONIFACIO

JENNILEE AUSTRIA-BONIFACIO has worked as a settlement worker, public speaker and researcher, founding Filipino Talks, a program that builds bridges between educators and Filipino families. She has a Masters in Immigration and Settlement Studies and a post-graduate certificate from the Humber School for Writers. Her writing appears in anthologies, *Geist*, *Magdaragat: An Anthology of Filipino-Canadian Writing*, and *The Philippine Reporter*. She is a founding member of a collective of Filipino-Canadian writers www.plumawrites.ca. As a community worker, youth mentor, Little Manila tour guide and author she spends time thinking about the Filipino community. *Reuniting With Strangers (D&M)* is her first novel.



CREDIT: JOSE BONIFACIO

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GARY BARWIN

GARY BARWIN is a writer, composer and multidisciplinary artist and the author of twenty-six books including *Nothing the Same, Everything Haunted: The Ballad of Motl the Cowboy*, which won the Canadian Jewish Literary Award. His national bestselling novel *Yiddish for Pirates* won the Leacock Medal for Humour and the Canadian Jewish Literary Award, was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Fiction and the Scotiabank Giller Prize, and was long-listed for Canada Reads. Barwin has been writer-in-residence at University of Toronto (Scarborough), Laurier, Western University, McMaster University and the Hamilton Public Library, Hillfield Strathallan College, Sheridan College and Young Voices E-Writer-in-Residence at the Toronto Public Library. He has taught creative writing at a number of colleges and universities, to at-risk youth in Hamilton through the ArtForms program and currently mentors through the Vancouver Manuscript Intensive. His writing has been published in hundreds of magazines and journals internationally and his writing, music, media works and visuals have been presented and broadcast internationally. Though born in Northern Ireland to South African parents of Ashkenazi descent, Barwin lives in Hamilton, Ontario, and at garybarwin.com.



CREDIT: GEORGE QUA ENOO

AYOMIDE BAYOWA

AYOMIDE BAYOWA is an award-winning Nigerian Canadian poet, actor, and filmmaker. He holds a BA in Theatre and Creative Writing from the University of Toronto and is the (2021–24) poet laureate of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. He is a top-ten gold entrant of the 9th Open Eurasian Literary Festival and Book Forum, UK, and was longlisted for both the UnSerious Collective Fellowship and 2021 Adroit Journal Poetry Prize. He won first place in the 2020 July Open Drawer Poetry Contest, the June/July 2021 edition of the bimonthly Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest and second place in the 2021 K. Valerie Connor Poetry Contest's Student Category. He has appeared in a long list of literary magazines, including *Windsor Review*, *Agbowó*, *Ampersand Review*, and more. He is the editor-in-chief of *Echelon Poetry* and currently reads poetry for *Adroit Journal*.

CREDIT:
AYOMIDE ISAAC JULIUS

ADRIANA CHARTRAND

ADRIANA CHARTRAND is a mixed-race Native woman, born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her father is Red River Métis (Michif), born and raised in the Métis community of St. Laurent, and her mother is a white settler from Manitoba. Adriana has two degrees in film studies and has previously worked in the social work field. She lives in Toronto and works in the film industry.



CREDIT: KIKKI GUERARD

CONYER CLAYTON



CREDIT: CURTIS PERRY

CONYER CLAYTON is an award-winning writer and editor from Kentucky now living in Ottawa, whose multi-genre work often explores grief, disability, addiction, and gender-based violence through a surrealist lens. Their latest book is *But the sun, and the ships, and the fish, and the waves*. (Winner of the Archibald Lampman Award, Anvil Press, 2022). They are a Senior Editor at Augur and Nonfiction Editor for *untethered magazine*. You can find their nonfiction and poetry in *Best Canadian Poetry 2023*, *This Magazine*, *Room Magazine*, *filling station*, *Canthus*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *CV2*, *The Capilano Review*, and others.

ALICIA ELLIOTT

ALICIA ELLIOTT is a Mohawk writer and editor living in Brantford, Ontario. She has written for *The Globe and Mail*, *CBC*, *Hazlitt*, and many others. She's had numerous essays nominated for National Magazine Awards, winning gold in 2017 and an honorable mention in 2020. Her short fiction was selected for *The Best American Short Stories 2018*, *Best Canadian Stories 2018*, and *The Journey Prize Stories 30*. Alicia was chosen by Tanya Talaga as the 2018 recipient of the RBC Taylor Emerging Writer Award. Her first book, *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, was a national bestseller. It was also nominated for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction and won the Forest of Reading Evergreen Award. Her debut novel, *AND THEN SHE FELL* was a national bestseller, a *Globe and Mail* and *CBC* Best Book of the Year. It was a Most Anticipated Book Pick by *Toronto Star*, *CBC*, *The Walrus*, *Good Morning America*, *Bustle*, *CrimeReads*, *Electric Literature*, *Debutiful*, *Ms. Magazine*, *The Nerd Daily*, and *Paste*.



CREDIT: ALEX JACOBS-BLUM

AMY JONES

AMY JONES is the author of the novels *We're All in This Together*, a national bestseller, winner of the Northern Lit Award, a finalist for the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour, and named a Best Book of the Year by the *Globe and Mail* and *Quill & Quire*, and *Every Little Piece of Me*, named a Best Book of Summer by the *Globe and Mail*, *Chatelaine*, and *NOW Magazine*. Her debut collection of stories, *What Boys Like*, won the Metcalf-Rooke Award and was a finalist for the ReLit Award. Her fiction has won the *CBC* Literary Prize for Short Fiction, appeared in *Best Canadian Stories* and *The Journey Prize Stories*, and been selected as Longform's Pick of the Week. Originally from Halifax, she now lives in Hamilton.



CREDIT: PAMELA CRICHTON

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SHELLY KAWAJA

SHELLY KAWAJA is the author of *The Raw Light of Morning*, which won the 2022 BMO Winterset Prize. Her work has appeared in several magazines such as *Horseshoe Literary Magazine*, *The Humber Literary Review*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *PACE*. She was long listed for the Bridge Prize, the Writer's Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador's Fresh Fish Award, and won the GritLIT short fiction contest. She is a graduate of the University of British Columbia's optional residency MFA program, as well as The Humber School for Writers, and Memorial University of Newfoundland. She lives in Corner Brook with her family.



DANNABANG KUWABONG

DANNABANG KUWABONG is a Ghanaian Canadian born in Nanville in the Upper West Region of Ghana. He was educated in Ghana, Scotland, and Canada, and teaches Caribbean literature at the University of Puerto Rico, San Juan. His publications include *Konga and other Dagaaba Folktales*; *Visions of Venom*; *Caribbean Blues & Love's Genealogy*; *Echoes from Dusty Rivers*; and *Voices from Kibuli Country*. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario.



DAVID NEIL LEE

DAVID NEIL LEE is a writer and double bassist. Originally from BC, he spent years in the Toronto art scene and on BC's Sunshine Coast, and currently lives in Hamilton, Ontario. He has just finished a PhD in English at the University of Guelph. In 2012, Toronto's Tighrope Books issued David's first novel, *Commander Zero*. In 2014, a new and revised edition of David's critically acclaimed jazz book *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field* was launched at the New School for Public Engagement in New York City. In 2016, the City of Hamilton awarded the Kerry Schooley award for the book that "best conveys the spirit of Hamilton" to David's Lovecraftian young adult novel, *The Midnight Games*.



CREDIT: MAUREEN COCHRANE

ROBIN LEFLER

ROBIN LEFLER grew up near Toronto and (briefly) pursued an ill-fated career in equine massage therapy before stumbling into the world of robotics and tech sales. *Not How I Pictured It* is her second novel. Her first, *Reasonable Adults*, was published in 2022. Robin Lefler still lives in her hometown with her family and two very needy canines.



CREDIT: ALEX DEKKER

CANISIA LUBRIN

CANISIA LUBRIN's books include *Voodoo Hypothesis* and *The Dyzgraphxst*. Lubrin's work has been recognized with the Griffin Poetry Prize, OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, the OCM Bocas Prize for Poetry, the Derek Walcott Prize, the Writer's Trust of Canada Rising Stars prize, and others. Also a finalist for the Trillium Award for Poetry and Governor General's Literary Award, Lubrin has held fellowships at the Banff Centre, Civitella Ranieri in Italy, Simon Fraser University, Literature Colloquium Berlin, Queen's University, and Victoria College at University of Toronto. She studied at York University and the University of Guelph, where she now coordinates the Creative Writing MFA in the School of English & Theatre Studies. In 2021, Lubrin received a Windham-Campbell prize for poetry, and the *Globe & Mail* named her Poet of the Year. *Code Noir: Metamorphoses* is her debut fiction, and includes stories listed for the Journey Prize (2019, 2020), Toronto Book Award (2018) and the Shirley Jackson Award (2021). Born in St. Lucia, Lubrin now lives in Whitby, Ontario, and is poetry editor at McClelland & Stewart.



CREDIT: ANNA KEENAN

PETER MANSBRIDGE

PETER MANSBRIDGE is one of Canada's most respected journalists. He is the former chief correspondent for CBC News; anchor of *The National*, CBC's flagship nightly newscast where he worked for thirty years reporting on national and international news stories; and host of *Mansbridge One on One*. He has received over a dozen national awards for broadcast excellence, including a lifetime achievement award from the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. He is a distinguished fellow of the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto and the former two-term chancellor of Mount Allison University. In 2008 he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada—the country's highest civilian honour—and in 2012 he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He is the author of the instant #1 national bestsellers *Off the Record* and *Extraordinary Canadians*, as well as the national bestseller *Peter Mansbridge One on One: Favourite Conversations and the Stories Behind Them*. He lives in Stratford, Ontario. Follow him on Twitter @PeterMansbridge, visit him at ThePeterMansbridge.com, or listen to his daily podcast, *The Bridge*, with Sirius XM Canada.



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GRITLIT

GEORGE MAKONESE MATUVI

GEORGE MAKONESE MATUVI grew up in Chamini, a rural area in the district of Zvishavane, in Zimbabwe, where he was surrounded by mountains and developed a love of both soccer and books. He is currently an electrical engineer and runs a small consulting company. *The War as I Saw It: In Rhodesia, Now Zimbabwe, Through the Eyes of a Black Boy* is his first book. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario, with his family.



PAIGE MAYLOTT

PAIGE MAYLOTT is a Canadian novelist and gamer who delves into alternate realities and identities. Her memoir, *My Body is Distant* (Sept 2023, ECW Press) explores her intersections of transition, critical illness, and vivid, dream-like digital spaces. Beyond writing, Paige excels as an academic accessibility professional and renowned speaker on accessible spaces and media. Her hobbies include hoarding rabbit paraphernalia and collecting retro video games from the 80s and 90s. She also paints a lot of geeky miniatures, usually sporting a deceptively pensive expression.



SHANI MOOTOO

SHANI MOOTOO was born in Ireland and raised in Trinidad. Mootoo's highly acclaimed writing includes the novels *Cereus Blooms at Night* and *Polar Vortex*, a finalist for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, as well as the poetry collections *Cane | Fire* and *Oh Witness Dey!*. Her poetry has appeared in *Wasafiri*, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Room Magazine*. She has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters honoris causa from Western University, is a recipient of Lambda Literary's James Duggins Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist Prize, and the Writers' Trust Engel Findley Award. She lives in Southern Ontario, Canada.



CREDIT: DARREN RAMPERSAD

MATTHEW R. MORRIS

MATTHEW R. MORRIS is an educator, anti-racism advocate, and writer based out of Toronto. He earned a BA (Hons) and an MA in Social Justice Education from the University of Toronto. In addition to teaching, his work and public speaking on the deconstruction of Black masculinity, hip-hop culture, and schooling has taken him across North America to consult on and learn about the challenges facing students and educators in the current education system. He has written articles for *TVO*, *Huffington Post*, *ETFO Voice*, and *Education Canada* magazine. Morris is a TEDx speaker and has been featured in *Toronto Star* and *Toronto Sun*, and on CBC Radio and CityNews Toronto.



CREDIT: ANTHONY GEBREHIWOT

GEOFFREY D. MORRISON

GEOFFREY D. MORRISON's debut novel, *Falling Hour*, was published in 2023 with Coach House Books. It has since been longlisted for the 2024 Dublin Literary Award. He lives on unceded Squamish, Musqueam, and Tseil-Waututh territory.



CREDIT: ERICA SCHAUB

LISHAI PEEL

LISHAI PEEL is a Hamilton-based writer, spoken word artist and community engaged consultant with over a decade of experience working in the arts and culture sector. Her writing has won awards with *The Malahat Review*, The Vancouver Writers Fest and The Writers' Trust of Canada. Her essays and poems have been published by Book*hug Press, Room Magazine, *Lilith Magazine*, *Hey Alma*, *Middleground Magazine*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *The Malahat Review*, *Illanot Review* and others. Lishai has an MFA in creative writing from Guelph University and works as the Executive Director, Finance of gritLIT, Hamilton's festival of readers and writers.



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CASEY PLETT

CASEY PLETT is the author of *A Dream of a Woman*, *Little Fish*, and *A Safe Girl to Love*, the co-editor of *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Science Fiction and Fantasy From Transgender Writers*, and the publisher at LittlePuss Press. She has written for the *New York Times*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *the Guardian*, *Globe and Mail*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and other publications. A winner of the Amazon First Novel Award and the Firecracker Award for Fiction, and a two-time winner of the Lambda Literary Award, her work has also been nominated for the Scotiabank Giller Prize.



CREDIT: HOBBS GINSBERG

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LEANNE TOSHIKO SIMPSON

LEANNE TOSHIKO SIMPSON is a mixed-race Yonsei writer who lives with bipolar disorder. She was named Scarborough's Emerging Writer in 2016 and was nominated for the Journey Prize in 2019. She co-founded a reflective writing program at Canada's largest mental health hospital and teaches at the University of Toronto. Since her hospitalization, Simpson has connected with students, cultural centres, companies and media outlets about the power of storytelling in shaping recovery. *Never Been Better* is her debut novel.



CREDIT: SOKO NEGASH

KAI CHENG THOM

KAI CHENG THOM is a writer, performance artist, and community healer. She is the author of the novel *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*, which was chosen by Emma Watson for her online feminist book club and shortlisted for the Lambda Literary Award. Her poetry collection a place called *No Homeland* was an American Library Association Stonewall Honor Book, and her essay collection, *I Hope We Choose Love*, received a Publishing Triangle Award. She writes the advice column "Ask Kai: Advice for the Apocalypse" for Xtra.



CREDIT: SOKO NEGASH

“

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— ANN Y.K. CHOI
AUTHOR AND PROGRAM
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

ANUJA VARGHESE

ANUJA VARGHESE is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in *Hobart*, the *Malahat Review*, the *Fiddlehead*, *Plenitude Magazine*, and others. Her stories have been recognized in the PRISM International Short Fiction Contest and the Alice Munro Festival Short Story Competition and nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She lives in Hamilton, Ontario. *Chrysalis* is her first book.



CREDIT:
JESSE VALVASORI

JESSICA WESTHEAD

JESSICA WESTHEAD is the author of the novels *Pulpy & Midge* (Coach House Books) and *Worry* (HarperCollins Canada), and the critically acclaimed short story collections *And Also Sharks* and *Things Not to Do* (Cormorant Books). *And Also Sharks* was a Globe & Mail Top 100 Book, one of Kobo's Best Ebooks of 2011, and a finalist for the Danuta Gleed Short Fiction Prize, and *Worry* was included on CBC Books' Best Canadian Fiction of 2019 and the CBC Canada Reads Longlist. In a starred review, *Quill & Quire* calls *Avalanche*, Jessica's short story collection with Invisible Publishing, "so artfully rendered as to be quietly devastating." Jessica lives in Toronto with her family.



CREDIT: DEREK WUENSCHIRS


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NATHAN WHITLOCK

NATHAN WHITLOCK is the author of the novels *A Week of This* and *Congratulations On Everything*. His work has appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, the *Walrus*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Best Canadian Essays*, and elsewhere. He lives with his family in Hamilton, Ontario.



CREDIT:
KENDRA MARJERRISON



CREDIT: JEN SQUIRES

TOM WILSON TEHOHÁHAKE

TOM WILSON TEHOHÁHAKE is a Mohawk performer, writer, storyteller, and visual artist from Hamilton, Ontario. A multiple Juno Award winner, his memoir *Beautiful Scars* was a national bestseller and a CBC Best Book of 2017.

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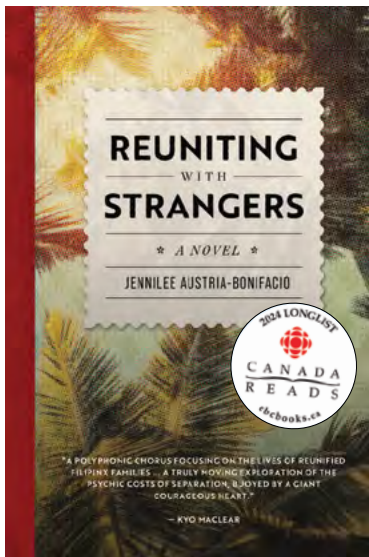


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MODERATORS & SPECIAL GUESTS

ELAMIN ABDELMAHMOUD

ELAMIN ABDELMAHMOUD is a culture writer for *BuzzFeed News* and was the host of CBC's pop culture show *Pop Chat*, and is the host of new CBC Radio show *Commotion*. He was a founding co-host of the CBC Politics podcast *Party Lines*, and he is a contributor to The National's At Issue panel. His work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, the *Globe and Mail*, and others. When he gets a chance, he writes bad tweets.



CREDIT: KYLA ZANARDI

CARLEIGH BAKER

CARLEIGH BAKER is an nēhiyaw āpihtawikosisān /Icelandic writer who lives as a guest on the unceded territories of the x̣ẉməθḳẉəỵəm, Skwxwu7mesh, and səliwəta peoples. Her work has appeared in Best Canadian Essays, The Short Story Advent Calendar, and The Journey Prize Stories. She also writes reviews for the *Globe and Mail* and the *Literary Review of Canada*. Her debut story collection, *Bad Endings* (Anvil, 2017) won the City of Vancouver Book Award, and was also a finalist for the Rogers Writers' Trust Award, the Emerging Indigenous Voices Award for fiction, and the BC Book Prize Bill Duthie Booksellers' Choice Award.



CREDIT: MCCLELLAND & STEWART 2024

ANN Y.K. CHOI

ANN Y.K. CHOI is a Toronto-based author and educator. Her novel, *Kay's Lucky Coin Variety*, was shortlisted for the Toronto Book Award. In 2020, her debut children's picture book, *Once Upon An Hour*, was released. She sits on the program advisory committee for gritLIT, Hamilton's literary festival, and teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies.



KERRY CLARE

KERRY CLARE is the author three novels *Asking for a Friend* (out now from Doubleday Canada), *Waiting for a Star to Fall* and *Mitzi Bytes*, and editor of *The M Word: Conversations About Motherhood*. A National Magazine Award-nominated essayist, and editor of Canadian books website 49thShelf.com, she writes about books and reading at her longtime blog, *Pickle Me This*. She lives in Toronto with her family.



MEGAN DIVECHA

MEGAN DIVECHA (she/her) holds a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Political Science from Queen's University and serves as the Programs & Community Engagement Coordinator with Hamilton Arts Council (HAC). Among her duties, she is the Host and Community Producer for HAC's Series on Cable 14, "The Arty Crowd Out Loud!", inspired by the 55-week social media series, "Mondays with Megan". As a drummer, lover of theatre and enthusiastic public speaker, Megan has converged her passion for the arts with her love of Hamilton.



RENATA HALL

RENATA HALL is a PhD candidate, published Black feminist scholar, Woman of Distinction 2022 Awardee, co-creator of the Learning in Colour digital platform, and Inclusion and Anti-Racism Education Manager at McMaster University. Renata lives all things social justice through her counseling, teaching, and research pursuits. She loves building community connections, challenging the status quo, and amplifying the voices of the margins across Hamilton and the GTA.



MARY FRANCIS MOORE

An award-winning director, actor, playwright, and dramaturg, **MARY FRANCIS MOORE** was appointed Artist Director of Theatre Aquarius in July 2021. She has brought her distinctive artistic vision to theatres across Canada and the international stage, most recently as Associate Artistic Director at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown for five years and as the Artistic Curator of Junior International Children's Festival at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto for four years. As Artistic Director, she has brought her distinctive artistic vision to Aquarius with the recently announced National Centre for The Development of New Musicals with Advisory Co-Chairs Michael Rubinoff and Lily Ling.



WENDY O'BRIEN

WENDY O'BRIEN is a philosopher with an avid interest in the ways philosophy, literature and the visual arts overlap. After over 30 years in academe teaching and lecturing at Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Waterloo, Harvard and Oxford, she recently retired to be able to explore these points of intersection in non-academic settings. Her work explores subjects including power, violence, the relation to the Other, home, silence and creativity. She is presently working on a long-term project on the concept of wonder. An active member of the Ontario literary scene, she has been an interviewer for organizations including By the Lake Book Club, the Toronto International Festival of Authors and gritLIT, as well as hosting Bourbon and Books book club in both Toronto and Hamilton.



JANUARY ROGERS

JANUARY ROGERS is a Mohawk/Tuscarora poet, media producer, performance and sound artist. She lives on her home territory of Six Nations of the Grand River where she operates Ojstoh Publishing and Productions. She has seven published poetry titles and wrote and produced a comedy web series, *NDNs on the Airwaves* (2022) and a published play *Blood Sport* (Turtle's Back Publishing 2023). January combines her literary talents with her passion for media making to produce audio and video poetry. Her video poem "Ego of a Nation" won Best Music Video at the American Indian Film Festival in 2020 and her sound piece "The Battle Within" won the Best Experimental Sound prize at the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Festival in 2021. She was Western University's Writer in Residence (2022/23) and is one of Audible Indigenous Writers Circle mentors for 2022, 2023 and 2024. January is also lead mentor with the Indigenous Story Sharing Residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts 2024.



EMILY SATTLER

EMILY SATTLER (she/her) is an avid life-long reader and book lover. Her reading tastes range widely, from the classics to genre fiction. She has a Masters in English Literature where she focused on gender representations in Children's Literature. Emily has worked as a bookseller and takes great joy in connecting people with great stories. Currently, Emily is the Festival Programming Coordinator for Telling Tales. When she isn't excitedly reading and programming children's literature for work, you can find her around the bookish internet under "Emily Cait". (Currently she is on a sabbatical from her channel while she works on a big video essay project behind the scenes, but you can still find her popping back in for livestreamed book clubs from time to time.)



NEIL SMITH

NEIL SMITH is a Canadian writer and translator. His novel *Boo* won the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction, and was nominated for a Sunburst Award and the Canadian Library Association Young Adult Book Award, and was longlisted for the Prix des libraires du Québec. Smith published his debut book, the short story collection *Bang Crunch*, in 2007. It was chosen as a best book of the year by the *Washington Post* and the *Globe and Mail*, won the McAuslan First Book Prize from the Quebec Writers' Federation, and was a finalist for the Hugh MacLennan Prize for Fiction. Three stories in the book were also nominated for the Journey Prize. Smith also works as a translator, from French to English. *The Goddess of Fireflies*, his translation of Geneviève Pettersen's novel *La déesse des mouches à feu*, was nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award for Translation. His latest novel is *Jones*, which was also nominated for the Hugh MacLennan Prize.



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ROBBINS

JAMIE TENNANT

JAMIE TENNANT is a writer, author and broadcaster based in Hamilton, ON. He has covered music and pop culture both locally and nationally. His debut novel *The Captain of Kinnoull Hill* was released in 2016. Jamie also hosts the weekly books and literature program/podcast *Get Lit*. *River, Diverted* is his second novel.

BRENT VAN STAALDUINEN

BRENT VAN STAALDUINEN lives, writes, teaches, and podcasts in Hamilton. He's the award-winning author of the novels *Unthinkable*, *Nothing But Life*, *Boy*, and *Saints*, *Unexpected*, and the story collection *Cut Road*. His stories have appeared in journals on both sides of the Atlantic, and have won the Bristol Short Story Prize, the *Fiddlehead* Best Fiction Award, the Lush Triumphant Literary Award, and numerous other accolades. He's also the founder and co-host of *Rejected Central*, a podcast that explores the history, pain, and humour of rejection.



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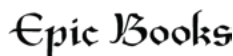
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