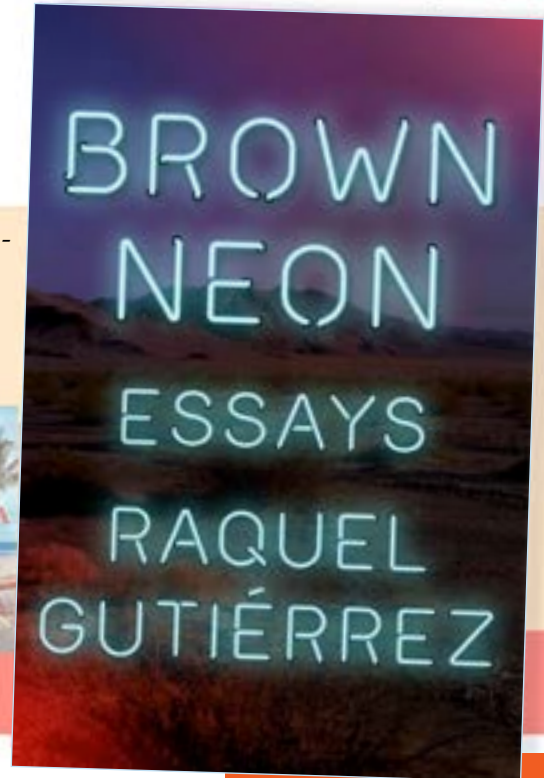




18 books by Latino authors you'll want to read in 2022

"Brown Neon is a work of Latinx mysticism. With beauty, and unmistakable care for person and place, Raquel Gutiérrez maps life's butchest, sweetest, and saddest mysteries."

—Myriam Gurba



'BEYOND ESSENTIAL'

Praise for Brown Neon - Fernando A. Flores

Faculty member, Raquel Gutiérrez's upcoming book, *Brown Neon*, was in the spotlight last week when [Today](#) recommended the book as part of a list of new books coming out this year. *Today* spoke to members of the literary community to "highlight their anticipated reads for 2022 by Latino authors. Their picks cover different age groups, identities and genres that are often underrepresented in literature." -Today.com

The publisher, Coffee House Press states: "*Brown Neon*, a collection of essays, is a meditation on southwestern terrains, intergeneration queer dynamics, and surveilled brown artists that crosses physical and conceptual borders. Part butch memoir, part ekphrastic travel diary, part queer family tree, *Brown Neon* gleans insight from the sediment of land and relationships. For Gutiérrez, terrain is essential to understanding that no story, no matter how personal, is separate from the space where it unfolds. Whether contemplating the value of adobe as both vernacular architecture and commodified art object, highlighting the feminist wounding and transphobic apparitions haunting the multi-generational lesbian social fabric, or recalling a failed romance, Gutiérrez traverses complex questions of gender, class, identity, and citizenship with curiosity and nuance.

As a student of Raquel Gutiérrez, having experienced their cleverness and originality, I am eager to read *Brown Neon*. Fortunately summer is just around the corner!

-Imke Wernicke

In this issue:

ALUMNI:
MIKE COOPER
PAGE 2

EVENTS: Thesis Readings, Essays
PAGE 3

FACULTY:
Jennifer Reimer
PAGE 4

BOOK REVIEW:
by Keisha Thierry
PAGE 5

FORWARD:
Open calls
PAGE 6

WRITERS:
Contribute work
PAGE 7

'Write as though nobody's watching, because nobody's watching.'

As you know we like to keep tabs on grads after they leave the program. Mike graduated a while back, so I was interested to hear how he is living the writing life.

Tell me something to introduce yourself.

I graduated with distinction from the first inception of the OSU Cascades MFA in Writing program. I teach writing at OSU Cascades and COCC. I run writing workshops with my wife through Blank Pages Workshops, and am starting a longer (10-month) program with my wife and Ellen Santasiero, a former long-time instructor in the OSU Cascades writing department. I am the president of the Central Oregon Writers Guild. I write mostly short and long fiction.

Why did you enter the writing life?

My parents were both avid readers. Books were everywhere in my house. I started writing in high school because I was moved by much of what I'd read. As one of my mentors said, "I want to make people feel the way other writers have made me feel." I took a long time off between my BFA and my MFA. I finally got to the point in my life where I wanted to do what I'd always wanted to do.

Do you consider yourself a writer, or are you 'someone' who writes? Is it valuable to identify as a writer or author? Explain.

I am a writer. I think it's very important to say those words out loud. Would you want to eat food from someone who defines themselves as a cook, or "someone who cooks"? It's about the mindframe. You have to consider that you're in the room—that what you have to say is worthwhile. You can always develop your craft and learn and learn and learn.

What have you been up to since you finished your Master's?

Mostly teaching. I've written a bunch of short stories and two novels. I belong to several writing/reading groups. I read about writing, teach writing, go to workshops, lead workshops, and write.

What advice do you have for current grad students?

My advice for any writer is to write. Reading is pretty good too.

Do you have a writing practice?

I do. Sometimes it involves not writing. In my opinion, the important thing about your writing practice is that it's your writing practice. People are happy to give all kinds of advice in this area, but it only works if it works for you.

What do you wish you had known when you started your MFA? How would it have made a difference?

I was older when I started my MFA program, so I was pretty comfortable with what I wanted out of it. As it progressed, I was sure to continue to seek out what I was after. Working with others is extremely important, much more important than I thought it would be going in. It really helps if you learn to play well with others—and learn and learn and learn.

What is your favorite word and your least favorite word? Share the reasons for your choices.

Least favorite: moist (do I really have to explain that one?) Most favorite: words that start with s-q-u (squirt, squish, squalor, etc.). I like the way they make my mouth move.

Which writers influence your writing and/or influenced your decision to pursue writing?

My all-time favorite writer is still JD Salinger, but I'm kind of old. I



grew up with Hemingway, Bradbury, Vonnegut, Carver, Updike, and that bunch. They definitely influenced not only my writing, but what I want to write. I have also grown fond of George Saunders recently. I am constantly influenced by other people's writing. Every day.

Do you have a favorite children's book? What is it, and why?

Guess How Much I Love You? Because I read it to my kids over and over and I love them very much (to the moon and back). Winnie the Pooh is also a personal favorite.

Favorite quote?

I pick up quotes all the time. One of my current favorites (from Dan Brown) is taped to my computer monitor: "Write as though nobody's watching, because nobody's watching."

What do you consider the most overrated virtue and why?

Perfectionism. It's an enormous hindrance in getting anything done.

Anything else you want me to know?

We're going to be starting up a Writing Club at OSU Cascades in the winter term.



Author! Author! Literary Series.

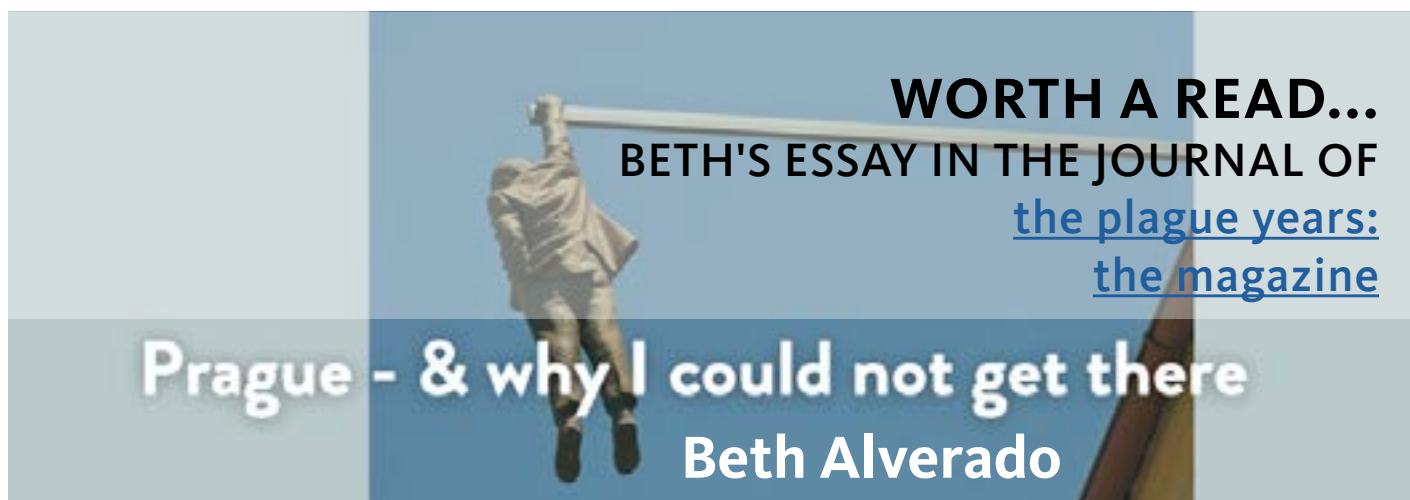
The Author! Author! series began in 2012 as a way to expand the literary landscape in Central Oregon while raising funds for the Deschutes Public Library Foundation. With best-selling writers visiting for each annual series, Central Oregon has played host to numerous authors who have won Pulitzer Prizes, National Book Awards, and Edgar Awards, among other literary prizes.

Sure, Sure, we're a little late on this one, but with one more date before Season 10 is done, we thought we'd let you know about this great event. Neil Gaiman on March 6th, via the Deschutes Public Library Foundation! Of course it's a virtual event this year. [GET TICKETS!](#)

THESIS STUDENT READINGS

Tuesday, February, 22nd
at 5:30 PM for a reading
from our thesis students.
Check your email for the
zoom link closer to the date.

Please join:
Richard Choate
and
Jennifer Obbard!



This month, I reached out to the Program Coordinator of our Low Residency MFA Program, the lovely Dr. Jennifer Reimer. I sent her some questions to consider and she appeased me. She was candidly entertaining...

Who are you in one word?

Jennifer

What author/literary figure, dead or alive, would you want to have dinner with and why?

Gabriel García Márquez. Since 1998, all of my computers (their hard drives, external drives, even home networks) have been named after characters from 100 Years of Solitude. A book which also taught me the Spanish word for "block of ice," which came in useful one summer in Barcelona. And because maybe he'd introduce me to his hot grandson, Mateo. Who is a writer.

Also Oscar Wilde. For obvious reasons.

Please describe the moment when you decided it was a good idea to pursue writing?

I couldn't think of anything better to do at the time. And I thought I'd get rich and famous.

What do you love, and what do you dislike about life as a writer?

I am truly, madly, deeply in love with words. I love spending my life with them. I dislike the pious solemnity of some readings, the crippling self-doubt, the competition, being underestimated, writers who confuse being interesting with bad manners, and the bad clothes.

Please describe your writing practice. Are you a daily writer? Where is your favorite place to write?

I know most people say they write while sitting on the john, but I like a notebook by the sea.

Share the most important thing for a student to do or remember when completing this MFA in writing.

Find your people. Nurture those connections. Make them last.

Is there a book that you like to gift to people?

"The Possessive Investment in Whiteness" by George Lipsitz. No other book that I know of so clearly explains structural racism, without moralizing, blaming, or shaming. It is well-written, down-to-earth, and urgent.

Is this your favorite book? Do you have one? And if not, why?

Books are like shoes or handbags. I have my favorite for every season and occasion.

Your favorite Children's book? Do you remember why

it was your favorite? Was there a lesson it taught you?
I was lucky to have a childhood surrounded by books and parents who read to me. Each book was a wonder. Highlights: James & the Giant Peach, A Wrinkle in Time, Have Spacesuit Will Travel, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.

Do you handwrite letters? If yes, why do you? Explain why or why not writing with a pen may have value.

I handwrite letters. And thank-you notes. Because they remind me not to take kindness for granted.

In photography, technical mastery, like focus, depth of field, or lighting, is often sacrificed in the pursuit of capturing a moment or emotion. In your experience, is this true for writing?

If that were true, there'd be no poetry.

Years ago, I saw a film by Kore-eda Hirokazu entitled 'After Life' (1988). The basic premise of the film asked: If you had to choose only one memory from your life, that you would remain in after you died, which one would that be?

I could tell you. But then I'd have to kill you.

... and scary? :)

Interviewed by Imke Wernicke



BLACK LEOPARD, RED WOLF

BY MARLON JAMES

This month's book selection, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* by Marlon James, is a spicy fit, as we celebrate Black History Month. James' novel, a finalist for the National Book Award, the first in a trilogy, has been called the "African Game of Thrones."

The story follows Tracker, a hunter with a reputation for "having a nose," who prefers to work alone. Tracker, or as referred to by some as 'Wolf,' is among a group of hunters assembled to track a missing boy. Uneasy working with what he perceives to be an untrustworthy group, each with their own agenda, Tracker begins to question the importance of this boy and why someone would go through the trouble of hiding him.

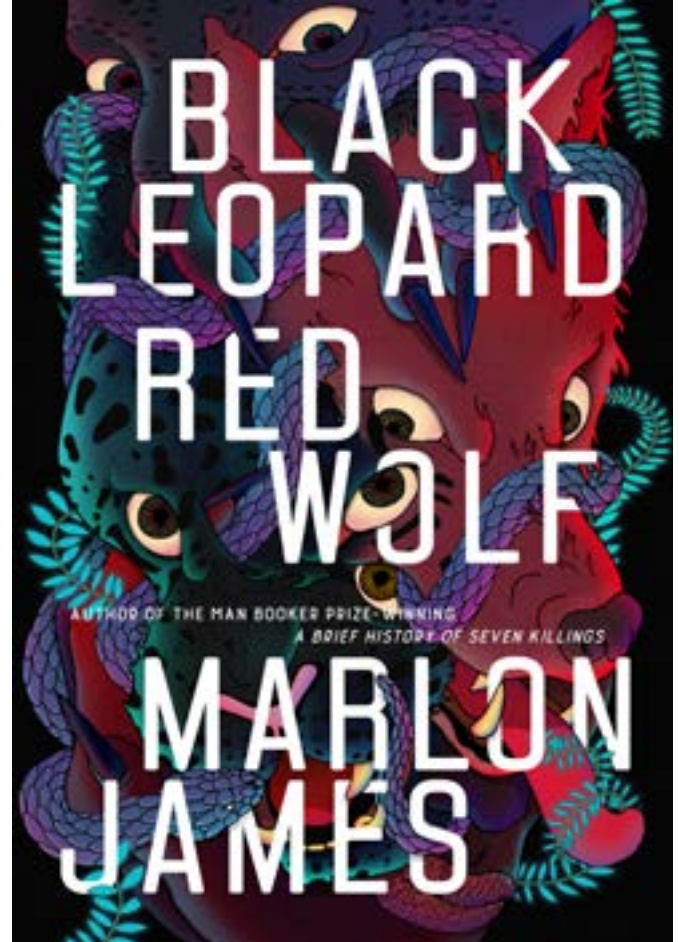
During his journey through the Enchanted Forest, Darklands, and doors that open to different destinies, we become companions in the many dangerous obstacles encountering monsters, in his search for truth.

"We ran all night. Beyond the stream and the branches bent over it, we ran through trees with grand roots, roots that rose above the ground and snaked the lands in tangles and curls. Right before dawn I mistook one for a sleeping python. Trees taller than fifty men standing on shoulders, and as soon as the sky changes, the leaves turned into birds that flew away."

The story is filled with James' imagination of moon witches, bush fairies, Ogos, talking fish, a Giraffe boy, a smoke girl, flesh eating monsters, dirt mermaids, and other mysterious creatures that come alive in a tale drawn from African history and mythology.

James has composed maps of the regions discussed in sections of his book. He offers a key, illustrating the areas that Tracker travels, and descriptions and names of characters within the story. This is helpful in following Tracker as he journeys to the many destinations in search of his hunt.

James creates a story within a story adding flashbacks that engage the reader, causing suspense while keeping pace with the story line. James is skilled at combining fantasy into his storytelling that merges the realism and dynamics of relationships.



This book is NOT for the faint of heart as James has brilliantly created vivid descriptions that are sometimes violent, gruesome, vulgar, and sexual in nature.

If you have a love for mysteries that indulge in African mythology and folklore with a heavy taste of fantasy, this book is a must read. James' second book in the trilogy, "Moon Witch Spider King" will be released next week, on the 15th.

Send me your book review, and I'll include it in the next newsletter. Not only do we appreciate your participation but it looks great on your CV.

Email Imke at: wernicki@oregonstate.edu

FORWARD - SHARE, OFFER, PRESENT

GRAYWOLF PRESS NONFICTION PRIZE OPENS FOR SUBMISSIONS FEBRUARY 1, 2022

A \$20,000 advance and publication by [Graywolf Press](#) will be awarded to the most promising and innovative literary nonfiction project by a writer not yet established in the genre. The winning author will also receive a \$2,000 stipend intended to support the completion of their project.

The 2022 prize will be awarded to a manuscript in progress. We request that authors send a long sample from their manuscript, as well as a description of the work, as detailed below. We expect that we will work with the winner of the prize and provide editorial guidance toward the completion of the manuscript.

The Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize emphasizes innovation in form and content, and we want to see projects that test the boundaries of literary nonfiction. We are less interested in straightforward memoirs, and we turn down a large number of them every year. The Graywolf editors are particularly interested in books that explore new approaches to cultural and literary criticism, as well as writing on craft. Before submitting your manuscript for the prize, please look at the books previously published as winners of the prize for examples of the type of work that we are seeking.



**GRAYWOLF
PRESS**

SUBMIT POETRY, ORIGINAL OR IN TRANSLATION, FEBRUARY 1 – MARCH 31.

Thank you for your interest in [Poetry Northwest](#), the region's oldest literary magazine. After more than 60 years, we remain committed to publishing the best in contemporary poetry, especially work willing to take risks and push readers to the emotional and intellectual edge of what poetry makes possible. Our new editor, Keetje Kuipers, recently spoke with Poets & Writers about her editorial vision for the magazine:

I'm interested in accepting poems that I struggle with, that I don't understand, that I might even fundamentally disagree with in terms of either their craft or simply the argument that they're making about the state of the world. I'm excited to take those chances and to make myself uncomfortable and make readers a little uncomfortable.

We are also staunch advocates for our writers, and poems published in our magazine often appear later in the pages of the Pushcart Prize and Best American anthologies.

We strive to go beyond encouraging submissions from diverse voices. Our mission to employ equitable editorial practices runs parallel to our mission to publish the most exciting poetry we can find. Take a look at a recent issue and you'll see that we stand behind both these commitments.

Poetry Northwest is published semi-annually in June and December. We also publish new work (poetry, reviews, interviews and poetry-related essays) on our website, to supplement and extend our print edition. All work submitted to us during our reading period will be considered for the print edition, the website, or both.



WORDSMITHERY - LOVECOLORS

Thank you to all who contributed this month. The following sonnet on love was created by grad students of the MFA Low Residency Program. They were asked to send in a sentence or group of words describing love. Thank you to Adam, Amelia, Ari, Bobby, Chris, Elizabeth, Jamie, Jennifer, Kim, Laec, Richard, Sam, Shelby, Susan, and Tava who contributed the words used in the sonnet. Imke edited the poem with help from Elizabeth and Keisha. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Lovecolors

Feel the sharp edges, the unseen forces of love,
contested and sheer, amorphous glare of light.
Allow yourself to be moved beyond knowing, amidst
a morning stirring become as one, freely sharing.
Joyfully allow access to every quiet corner, no matter
where you've been, love will come to you. Red,
a longing that can't be described, sometimes blue,
a wordless gesture, most true when it's a mix of the two,
songs realize their lyrics, no promises required here!
You get the idea, love is eager, though a trial to find,
unspoken knowledge of being on the same page,
the reason phosphorescence flickers in blue, invited in
memorable good byes, what was left will never be forgotten.
Is it the beating that makes the heart?

calling all writers

This newsletter is for you, the grad student, alumni, faculty of the writing program. We're changing things up! No more themes, just open call! Please send something to be published in the newsletter. You'll be glad you did.

GUIDELINES: Student, faculty, and alumni original works are welcome.
Please share your thoughts, work, unfinished or not.
Prose: 500 words max (excerpts from larger works welcome)
Poetry: No more than two poems.

PLEASE Share your offering by **March 3rd, 2022**, by emailing it to: wernicki@oregonstate.edu

