



TENTH ANNUAL

MAY 17-19, 2019

**BIOGRAPHERS
INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

NEW YORK CITY

Bio
BIOGRAPHERS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

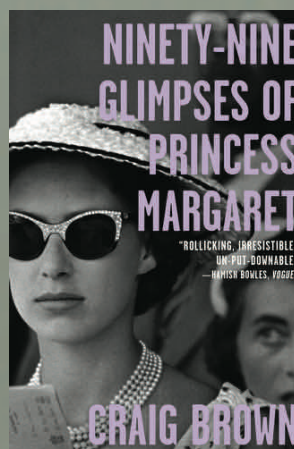
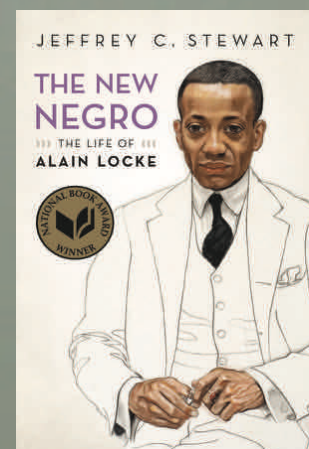
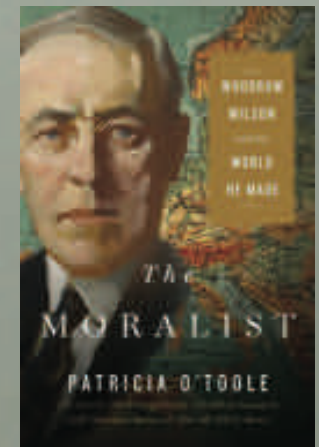
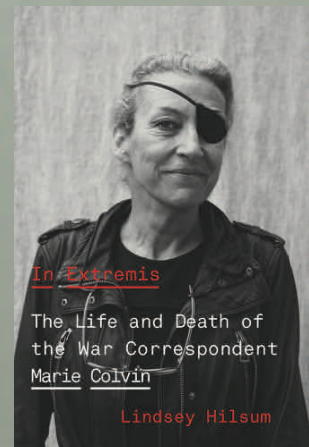
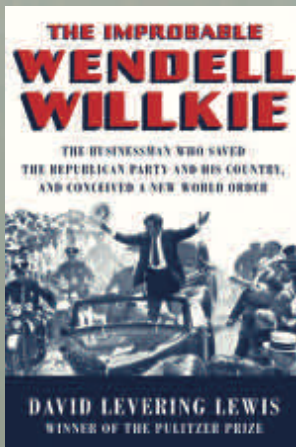
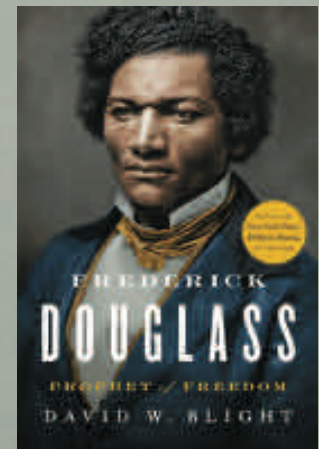
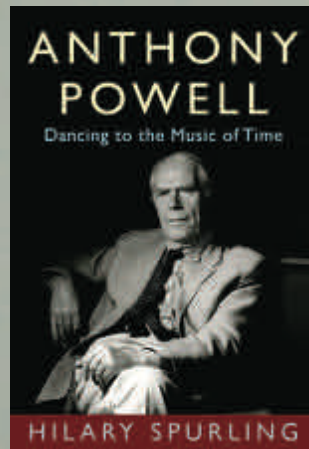
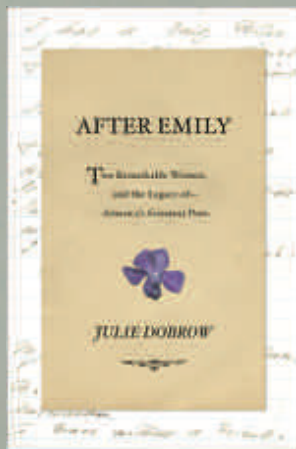
LEON LEVY CENTER FOR BIOGRAPHY
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THE 2019 PLUTARCH AWARD

Biographers International Organization is proud to present the Plutarch Award for the best biography of 2018, as chosen by our members.

Congratulations to the ten nominees:



The 2019 BIO Award Recipient: James McGrath Morris

James McGrath Morris first fell in love with biography as a child reading newspaper obituaries. In fact, his steady diet of them became an important part of his education in history. In 2005, after a career as a journalist, an editor, a book publisher, and a school-teacher, Morris began writing books full-time. Among his works are *Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate Behind Bars*; *The Rose Man of Sing Sing: A True Tale of Life, Murder, and Redemption in the Age of Yellow Journalism*; *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power*; *Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, The First Lady of the Black Press*, which was awarded the Benjamin Hooks National Book Prize for the best work in civil rights history in 2015; and *The Ambulance Drivers: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and a Friendship Made and Lost in War*. He is also the author of two Kindle Singles, *The Radio Operator* and *Murder by Revolution*.

In 2016, he taught literary journalism at Texas A&M, and he has conducted writing workshops at various colleges, universities, and conferences. He is the progenitor of the idea for BIO and was among the founders as well as a past president. Morris is currently working on a biography of Tony Hillerman, the late author of groundbreaking mysteries set in the Navajo Nation. He makes his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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Plenary Session

David Remnick, Stacy Schiff, and Judith Thurman in conversation

8:15–9:15AM LOCATION: PROSHANSKY AUDITORIUM



David Remnick has been the editor of *The New Yorker* since 1998. His books include the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*; *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero*; and *The Bridge*, a biography of Barack Obama.



Stacy Schiff won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for *Véra (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. She is the author as well of *Saint-Exupéry*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*, awarded the George Washington Book Prize and the Ambassador Book Award. Her *Cleopatra: A*

Life has been translated into 30 languages and won the PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography. David McCullough deemed Schiff's most recent book, *The Witches: Salem 1692*, "brilliant from start to finish." Like *Cleopatra*, it was a No. 1 best seller.

Praised for her meticulous scholarship and her witty style, Schiff has contributed frequently to the *New York Times* op-ed page and the *New York Times Book Review*, as well as to many national publications. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. The recipient of an Academy Award in Literature from the

American Academy of Arts and Letters, she was named a Library Lion of the New York Public Library. Schiff is at work on a biography of Samuel Adams, to be published by Little, Brown.



Judith Thurman has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 2000 and a contributor since 1987, specializing in cultural criticism. She has written about Paleolithic cave art; artisanal tofu in Japan; hyperpolyglots—people who speak more than eleven languages; and about literature, film, photography, translation, and performance

art. From the short sketch of a hijabi designer in Brooklyn, to the long profile of a kimono master in Kyoto, and a reportage on the career of Yves Saint Laurent (a piece chosen for the "Best American Essays of 2003"), Thurman has explored fashion as a cultural phenomenon. She is the author of *Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller*, which won the National Book Award for nonfiction in 1983 and was the basis for Sydney Pollack's Oscar-winning film *Out of Africa*; *Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette*, which won the *Los Angeles Times* and *Salon* Book Awards for Biography in 1999; and *Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire*, a collection of her *New Yorker* essays.

Thurman's honors include the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award for prose style from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; the Rungstedlund Prize from the Royal Danish Academy; and the 2019 Mary McCarthy Prize, from Bard College, for the life's work of a woman writer. She is a chevalier of the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

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Our 2019 Keynote Speakers:

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Nikole Hannah-Jones <i>The New York Times Magazine</i>	Taylor Branch <i>Pulitzer Prize Winner</i>	Hampton Sides <i>Bestselling author of "On Desperate Ground"</i>

Special Featured Speaker
Margot Lee Shetterly - Author, *"Hidden Figures"*

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Stacy Schiff photo by Elena Seibert, Judith Thurman photo by Curt Richter.

Panels—Concourse Level of the Graduate Center

BASICS

Adventures in the Archives

9:30–10:30AM

A nuts-and-bolts look at the joys and perils of archival research. Topics to be addressed include planning research trips for maximum efficiency, building productive relationships with archivists and librarians, do's and don'ts of hiring research assistants, and using technology in the archival setting and on your home computer.

Moderator

Journalist and historian **Marc Leepson** is the author of nine books. That includes *Saving Monticello*, *Flag: An American Biography*, and three biographies of humans: *Lafayette: Idealist General* (2011), *What So Proudly We Hailed: Francis Scott Key, A Life* (2014), and *Ballad of the Green Beret: The Life and Wars of Army Sgt. Barry Sadler* (2017). He has written for many magazines, newspapers, and reference books, including the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*. He was elected to BIO's board of directors in 2013 and serves as the organization's treasurer. His website is www.marcleepson.com.

Panelists

Ellen F. Brown is a lawyer and an award-winning freelance writer whose work has appeared in many print and online publications. She co-authored the book *Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind: A Bestseller's Odyssey from Atlanta to Hollywood* and is now working on a book about literary estates. Brown holds an M.F.A. in nonfiction writing and also has worked as a rare book and manuscript appraiser/dealer. She is a member of the National Book Critics Circle and has served on the foundation boards of the Library of Virginia and Swem Library at the College of William and Mary.

Nancy Kuhl is curator of poetry for the Yale Collection of American Literature at Beinecke Library. She is the author of exhibition catalogs including *Intimate Circles: American Women in the Arts*, *The Book Remembers Everything: The Work of Erica Van Horn*, and poetry collections including *Pine to Sound*, *Suspend*, and *The Wife of the Left Hand*. She is the curator of Audubon at Beinecke. Additional information and examples of Kuhl's work can be found at www.phylumphress.com/kuhl.

Mariam Toubia is a longtime reference librarian for printed collections at the New-York Historical Society, specializing in newspapers and in the Revolutionary period and the Early Republic. She has assisted biographers, historians, architects, and genealogists in viewing library treasures and finding little-known facts. She included some of those facts as a contributor to *When Did the Statue of Liberty Turn Green? And 101 Other Questions About New York City* (Columbia University Press, 2010). Her main biographical interest is Thomas Paine, the subject of her exhibits, articles,

conference papers, and walking tours, and about whom she is always eager to answer questions.

CRAFT

The Art, Craft, and Market for Young Readers' Biographies

9:30–10:30AM

A senior editor and three award-winning authors share their knowledge of writing and editing biographies for young readers—from picture books and juveniles, to young adults. It is an opportunity to understand the similarities and differences between writing for adults and younger readers (ages 4 to 18), regarding craft elements such as subject choice, a slice-of-life vs. cradle-to-grave life story, archival research, and creating a narrative that engages the reader.

Moderator

Ray Anthony Shepard's debut young adult biography, *Now or Never! 54th Massachusetts Infantry's War to End Slavery*, received star reviews from *School Library Connection* and *Kirkus*, was listed by the New York Public Library as one of the Best Books of the Year for Teens, and named the Carter G. Woodson Honor Book by the National Council of Social Studies. Junior Library Guild and Scholastic Book Fairs selected *Now or Never!* for their subscribers.

Panelists

Tonya Bolden, author, co-author, or editor of more than forty books, is a recipient of the Children's Book Guild of Washington, D.C.'s Nonfiction Award for her body of work. That work includes the Coretta Scott King Honor Book *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl* and *Facing Frederick: The Life of Frederick Douglass*, *A Monumental American Man*, hailed as a 2018 best book for young people by *Kirkus*, *School Library Journal*, the Chicago Public Library, and the *Washington Post*. Bolden, who lives in New York City, graduated from Princeton University magna cum laude and has a master's degree from Columbia University.

Deborah Heiligman is the author of 31 books. Her most recent, *Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers*, won the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for nonfiction, the YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award, the SCBWI Golden Kite Award, and an ALA Michael L. Printz Honor. *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*, was a YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award winner, a Printz Honor book, and a National Book Award finalist. *The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos* won the Cook Prize, the Annie Izard Storytelling Award, and was an Obis Pictus Honor Book. Heiligman lives in New York City with her husband, Jonathan Weiner.

Grace Elizabeth Kendall is senior editor, Farrar, Straus, Giroux Books for Young Readers/Macmillan. Kendall works on a wide range of material, from picture books to YA novels and biographies. She publishes projects from debut

authors, seasoned veterans, and award winners, including *Mama Africa!* by National Book Award winner Kathryn Erskine, illustrated by Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award winner Charly Palmer; *You Bring the Distant Near* by Mitali Perkins, which was a Walter Honor Book, a South Asia Book Award winner, and a National Book Award nominee; and *Betty Before X* by Ilyasah Shabazz and Renée Watson. Kendall also publishes ongoing series, such as the Jasmine Toguchi chapter books by Debbi Michiko Florence. @GraceKendallLit.

Catherine Reef is the author, most recently, of *Mary Shelley: The Strange True Tale of Frankenstein's Creator*. Her books include the highly acclaimed *Florence Nightingale: The Courageous Life of the Legendary Nurse*; *Victoria: Portrait of a Queen*; *The Brontë Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne*; and *Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life*. She has received the Sydney Taylor Award, the Joan G. Sugarman Award, and Jefferson Cup, Golden Kite, and National Jewish Book Award honors. In addition, her titles consistently appear on lists of “best” and “notable” books. Reef lives and works in College Park, Maryland.

INSPIRATION

Telling Life Stories in These Chaotic Times

9:30–10:30AM

This panel will explore what is selling in today's complicated marketplace—and what is not. An editor, two agents, and a biographer will also examine whether the current publishing climate is inspiring more creative responses to storytelling. They will come prepared with any metrics they may have regarding the market, as well as their own anecdotes and insights about navigating their authors through these challenging times.

Moderator

John A. Farrell is the author of *Richard Nixon: The Life*, which won the PEN America award for the best biography, and the New-York Historical Society book prize for the best volume of American history, of 2017. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. In 2001 Farrell published *Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century*, which won the D. B. Hardeman Prize for the best book on Congress. His book *Clarence Darrow: Attorney for the Damned* won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for best biography of 2012. He has also earned a George Polk Award, a Gerald R. Ford Prize, and White House Correspondents honors for his coverage of the presidency.

Panelists

Tim Duggan is the publisher of Tim Duggan Books, an imprint at Penguin Random House. The authors he has worked with include Timothy Snyder, Daniel Mendelsohn, Michiko Kakutani, Michael Kinsley, Annie Dillard, Adam Begley, and A. Scott Berg. His books include winners of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award and multiple finalists for the National Book Award. He is a fellow at the New York Institute for the Humanities at NYU, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and is on

the advisory council of BIO and the advisory board of the London Book Fair.

Katherine Flynn is a partner at the Kneerim & Williams Agency, which she joined in 2008. She previously taught literature and composition, edited history textbooks, worked in a rare bookshop, and pursued her B.A. from Johns Hopkins and Ph.D. in history from Brown. She serves on the Boston Book Festival board and as the publishing consultant for the Radcliffe Institute. Flynn represents best-selling and prize-winning books in the categories of history, biography, current affairs, science, business, psychology, sociology, and narrative nonfiction, as well as some literary and commercial fiction.

Sarah Burnes became an agent in 2001 after stints at Houghton Mifflin, Knopf, and Little, Brown. Joining the Gernert Company in 2005, she represents biographers, critics, journalists, novelists, and children's fiction writers. Her clients have either won or been shortlisted for the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and the *Los Angeles Times* First Book Prize, and have received grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, the Cullman Center, and the National Endowment for the Arts, among others. Burnes sits on the board of the New Press and lives with her husband and three children in Brooklyn, N.Y.

INSPIRATION

Hidden Figures

9:30–10:30AM

This panel explores the challenges biographers face in chronicling the lives of people who have been marginalized or overlooked. Biographies on forgotten individuals are gaining more attention thanks to the success of books like *Hidden Figures* that reclaim stories from the margins—or waste bins—of history. This panel will explore works that illuminate the lives of people who either lived in the shadows of the famous, like Belle da Costa Greene, who was the librarian for J. P. Morgan; were brief media sensations, like Alice Mitchell and Freda Ward, whose secret shocked the nation during an 1892 murder trial; or were invisible, like six African Americans who escaped slavery and became millionaires. The authors on this panel will offer guidance on resurrecting the lives of the forgotten through research and writing.

Moderator

Pamela Newkirk, Ph.D., is professor of journalism at New York University and the author most recently of *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga*, (Amistad, 2015). The book was listed among the Best Books of 2015 by NPR, the *Boston Globe* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* and won the NAACP Image Award for Best Nonfiction Literature. Her forthcoming book, *Diversity, Inc.*, will be published by Bold Type in fall 2019.

Panelists

Alexis Coe is a historian and the author of *Alice & Freda Forever: A Murder in Memphis*, (Pulp, 2014). Her next book, *You Never Forget Your First: A Mostly Feminist Biography of George Washington*, will be published by Viking (Penguin/Random House) in 2019. Coe's articles and commentary have been widely published, including in *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, and *New York Times Magazine*.

Shomari Wills is a journalist and the author of *Black Fortunes: The Story of the First Six African Americans Who Escaped Slavery and Became Millionaires* (HarperCollins, 2018). He has worked for CNN and on ABC TV's *Good Morning America*, where he was part of an Emmy Award-winning production team.

Heidi Ardizzone, Ph.D, is associate professor and chair of American Studies at Saint Louis University. She is the author of *An Illuminated Life: Belle da Costa Greene's Journey from Prejudice to Privilege* (W. W. Norton, 2007) and the co-author of *Love on Trial: An American Scandal in Black and White*, (W. W. Norton, 2002).

BASICS

Fire Up Your Narrative

10:45–11:45AM

Learn from a panel of prize-winning biographers their best strategies for telling extraordinary stories. Topics will range from choosing a subject, to characterization, to placing the subject in a historical context—with emphasis on the revision process. Members of this panel have received BIO's Plutarch Award, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the PEN Award, and other prestigious prizes.

Moderator

Linda Leavell is the author of *Holding On Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore*, which won the 2014 Plutarch Award, the Modernist Studies Association book award, and the PEN Award. It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pegasus Award for Poetry Criticism. She is also the author of *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color*, a book of literary criticism, and for twenty-five years was a professor of American literature. Her current project, under contract with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, is a group biography of the Stieglitz circle.

Panelists

John A. Farrell is the author of *Richard Nixon: The Life*, which won the PEN America award for the best biography, and the New-York Historical Society book prize for the best volume of American history, of 2017. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. In 2001 Farrell published *Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century*, which won the D. B. Hardeman Prize for the best book on Congress. His book *Clarence Darrow: Attorney for the Damned* won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for best biography of 2012. He has also earned a George Polk Award, a Gerald R. Ford Prize, and White House Correspondents honors for his coverage of the presidency.

Ruth Franklin is the author of *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (2016), which won numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography and BIO's Plutarch Award, and was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2016. Her essays and reviews appear in many publications, including *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *Harper's*. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in biography, a Cullman Fellowship at the New York Public Library, a Leon Levy Fellowship in biography, and the Roger Shattuck Prize for Criticism.

Caroline Fraser is the author of three works of nonfiction, including *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. One of the *New York Times* Ten Best Books of the Year in 2017, *Prairie Fires* won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography, a National Book Critics Circle Award, BIO's Plutarch Award, and the *Chicago Tribune's* Heartland Prize for nonfiction. Fraser's writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The Atlantic*, among other publications. She holds a Ph.D. in literature from Harvard University and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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Tom Reiss's biographies have focused on historical outsiders who navigated moments of global upheaval and risked everything to avoid betraying their ideals. His most recent book, *The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo*, won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize and the 2013 PEN Award. His previous book, *The Orientalist*, about a Jew who transformed himself into a Muslim prince and a best-selling author in Nazi Germany, was a finalist for the 2006 Samuel Johnson Prize. He has written for *The New Yorker*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. His books have been translated into more than 25 languages.

CRAFT

Funding Primary and Archival Research 10:45–11:45AM

One of the greatest challenges to both the aspiring and the experienced biographer is locating and gaining access to crucial source material—particularly if that material is held by an archive far away, or if it remains in private hands. Since publishers will only pay an advance for a biography after receiving a detailed proposal for the book, this challenge is both financial and logistical. Our panel will look at various ways in which biographers outside of academia have managed to initiate and pursue primary and archival research, either by financing these early stages themselves, or by applying to various institutions that can help get

them started on their work despite lacking an academic affiliation.

Moderator

Justin Spring has written three biographies: *Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art* (Yale University Press, 1999); *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), and *The Gourmands' Way: Six Americans in Paris and the Birth of a New Gastronomy* (FSG, 2017). Spring's other writings on 20th century American art and culture include monographs, museum publications, and exhibition catalogs, as well as articles in *Artforum*, the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, among other publications. His biographies have been supported by a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Leon Levy Fellowship, and by various library fellowships at colleges, universities, and public institutions throughout the United States, including Harvard, Yale, Brown, Amherst, and University of Texas, Austin.

Panelists

Stephen Heyman is at work on the first major biography of the American author, conservationist, and pioneering organic farmer Louis Bromfield (1896–1956), to be published by W. W. Norton. He is currently a residential fellow at the Leon Levy Center for Biography at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is also the recipient of a 2018 Public Scholar grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Before beginning his book project, Heyman was on staff

INTRODUCING BIO'S NEW PODCAST

BIO's free weekly podcast series features insightful interviews with some of today's leading biographers. You can download the podcast from the BIO website (biographersinternational.org/podcasts/) or from the Apple iTunes store. Fresh episodes (about 20 minutes each) are added each week.

Your hosts are accomplished biographers themselves: Lisa Napoli, author of *Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made the McDonald's Fortune and the Woman Who Gave It All Away*, and Sonja D. Williams, author of *Word Warrior: Richard Durham, Radio, and Freedom*. Their recent and upcoming guests include:

- James Atlas, *The Shadow in the Garden: A Biographer's Tale*
- Alan Pell Crawford, *How Not to Get Rich: The Financial Misadventures of Mark Twain*
- Cathy Curtis, *A Generous Vision: The Creative Life of Elaine de Kooning*
- Anthony DeCurtis, *Lou Reed: A Life*
- John A. Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life*
- Caroline Fraser, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*
- Beverly Gray, *Seduced by Mrs. Robinson: How The Graduate Became the Touchstone of a Generation*
- Bruce Kennett, *W. A. Duggins: A Life in Design*
- Vanda Krefft, *The Man Who Made the Movies: The Meteoric Rise and Tragic Fall of William Fox*
- Marc Leepson, *Ballad of the Green Beret: The Life and Wars of Army Sgt. Barry Sadler*
- Catherine Reef, *Mary Shelley: The Strange True Tale of Frankenstein's Creator*
- Karin Roffman, *The Songs We Know Best: John Ashbery's Early Life*
- Laurie Gwen Shapiro, *The Stowaway: A Young Man's Extraordinary Adventure to Antarctica*
- Ray Anthony Shepard, *Now or Never! 54th Massachusetts Infantry's War to End Slavery*
- William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times*

at the *New York Times*, where he was most recently features editor of *T Magazine*. His articles have also appeared in *Slate*, *Esquire*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Departures*, *Vogue*, and *W*.

Norm Hirschy is a senior editor in the Academic and Trade Division at Oxford University Press, where he acquires in music, dance, film, and cultural biography. He has published biographies by Cathy Curtis, Peter Filkins, Vincent Giroud, Nadine Meisner, Howard Pollack, Kathleen Riley, Sjeng Scheijen, and Edmund Gordon, whose *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography* was named a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist and a *New York Times* Notable Book.

Geoff Burrows is a senior program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities, where he works with Fellowship Programs at Independent Research Institutions. He is a historian of Latin America and the Caribbean whose research has focused on Puerto Rico, the New Deal, and U.S. relations with Latin America. He holds a Ph.D. from the CUNY Graduate Center, an M.A. from Hunter College, and a B.A. from UC Berkeley. Prior to coming to NEH, he taught at a variety of New York City-area colleges and universities. He lives with his wife and daughters in Washington, D.C.

INSPIRATION

Biography in Search of Its Subject

10:45–11:45AM

From A. J. A Symons's *The Quest for Corvo* to Ruth Scurr's *John Aubrey: My Own Life* and Jill Lepore's *Joe Gould's Teeth*, distinguished biographers have been pursuing their essentially elusive or ephemeral subjects openly, passionately, with all the scant evidence of the subjects' inner and outer lives brought forth and arranged for readers to see and follow. When is the search the story? And what sometimes makes the unstitched garment so compelling?

Moderator

Anne C. Heller's *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (Nan Talese/Doubleday, 2009) was a *New York Times* Notable Book and was chosen a best book of the year by *Time* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune*, and others. Her most recent book is *Hannah Arendt: A Life in Dark Times*, published by Harcourt Houghton Mifflin in 2015. She has been an award-winning editor at magazines including *Esquire*, *Lear's*, and Condé Nast Publications, and is managing director of the New York University Biography Seminar. She is at work on a third book about the life and times of a fierce twentieth-century woman of ideas.

Panelists

John Kaag is professor and chair of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and the 2019 Miller Scholar at the Santa Fe Institute. He is author of the critically acclaimed *Hiking with Nietzsche: On Becoming Who You Are*, which was a 2018 NPR Best Book of the Year. *The New Yorker* writes that, "In this engagingly unacademic meditation, [Kaag] interweaves Friedrich Nietzsche's biography with accounts of his own visits to Sils-Maria, in the Swiss Alps. [He] writes of reconciling a hunger for meaningful,

extreme experience with mundane reality." Kaag's *American Philosophy: A Love Story* was a *New York Times* Editors' Choice for 2016.

Beverly Lowry was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and grew up in Greenville, Mississippi. In addition to *Her Dream of Dreams*, *The Rise and Triumph of Madam C. J. Walker*, she is the author of six novels and three other books of non-fiction: *Harriet Tubman, Imagining a Life*; *Crossed Over: A Murder, a Memoir*; and *Who Killed These Girls? Cold Case: the Yogurt Shop Murders*. The recipient of an NEA Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, she has published works of fiction and nonfiction in many periodicals, including *The New Yorker*. She lives in Austin, Texas.

Imani Perry is the Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, where she is also affiliated with the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Program in Law and Public Affairs. A scholar of legal history, cultural and literary studies, Perry is the author of five books, including the 2018 biography of Lorraine Hansberry: *Looking for Lorraine*. Perry lives in the Philadelphia area with her two sons.

INSPIRATION

International Identities

10:45–11:45AM

Biography plays an important role in the way a country deals with its national past. The narrative of biography tends to be modeled after that of "national heroes." In recent politics, national figures such as President Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina, King Leopold in Belgium, President Paul Kruger in South Africa, and Stadtholder William of Orange in Holland have been reintroduced to start a debate about the identity and mythology of a society. This debate is reflected in biography. A society needs myths to give meaning to the identity of an individual. In this panel, it is our aim to unravel a mythology behind nationalist tendencies in biography.

Moderator

Hans Renders directs the Biography Institute, Groningen University, where he is professor of history and theory of biography, which he teaches. He is editor-in-chief of the series Biography Studies, board chair of *Het Biografisch Portaal van Nederland*, a board member of De Nederlandse Biografie Prijs, and a former BIO board member. He publishes widely on theory and biography, including *Theoretical Approaches to Biography* (2014) and *The Biographical Turn, Lives in History* (2017). He also broadcasts regularly on radio. He has written lives of Jan Hanlo and Jan Campert, is co-author of *The ABC of Modern Biography*, and is now tackling the artist Theo van Doesburg.

Panelists

Lindie Koorts is a South African biographer. She is a senior lecturer at the International Studies Group, University of the Free State, and holds a Newton Advanced Fellowship

from the British Academy for her ongoing biographical research on Paul Kruger, the president of the Transvaal at the time of the South African War. Her biography of D. F. Malan, the man who instituted the policy of apartheid, was the first comprehensive biography of an apartheid leader to have been published after the country's turn to democracy in 1994. The book was shortlisted for South Africa's foremost nonfiction awards, including the *Sunday Times* Alan Paton shortlist, and the KykNET-Rapport shortlist for nonfiction.

Eric Palmen is chief editor of Biografieportaal, a review site for Dutch biographies. He has published two micro histories about the Dutch Republic. In *Dwaze Liefde* he deals with the concepts of love and marriage during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, from the perspective of a family history of four generations. *Kaat Mossel* is the portrait of a woman in Rotterdam during the revolution of 1781–1787. She was a fierce opponent of the so-called “patriots” who were inspired by the American Revolution. At the moment, he is working on a biography of Janus van Domburg (1895–1983), a film critic who was a passionate advocate of the art film in the Netherlands.

Mónica Szurmuk is professor of literature and cultural studies at the University of Buenos Aires. She has written

extensively on gender, memory, women's literature, and Jewish culture in Latin America. She has published several academic books, including *Women in Argentina*, *Early Travel Narratives*; the *Dictionary of Latin American Cultural Studies*, *Sitios de la memoria: México después del '68*, and the *Cambridge History of Latin American Women's Literature*. Her essays and reviews have appeared in newspapers and magazines in Argentina and Mexico. *La vocación desmesurada: Una biografía de Alberto Gerchunoff*, her biography of Jewish-Argentinean writer, journalist, and diplomat Alberto Gerchunoff, was published in 2018 by Penguin Random House.

David Veltman is a Ph.D. student at the Biography Institute, Groningen University, working on a biography of the Flemish artist Felix de Boeck (1898–1995). Together with Hans Renders and Madelon Franssen, he organized the widely acclaimed 2018 conference *Different Lives: Global Perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies*. Veltman has a master's degree in Dutch modern literature and is a specialist on Belgian twentieth century biography. After graduating in 2005, he worked for eight years in the Dutch auction house Bubb Kuyper. He is also a freelance reporter for the Dutch artists' magazines *Atelier* and *kM* (*Artist's Material*).

Round-Table Discussions

12:00–1:30PM

Please serve yourself lunch from the buffet and then find your assigned table in the Concourse. The round-table topics are arranged by number. Unnumbered tables are reserved for those not wishing to participate in a round table. Space is limited at all tables, so you may not choose a topic other than the one for which you registered. Hosts' names are in parentheses.

1. American politics (John A. Farrell)
2. American history I (Kai Bird)
3. American history II (Louise Knight)
4. Military history (Marc Leepson)
5. Women's history (Patricia Brady)
6. Feminist biography (Elaine Showalter)
7. Women's literary biography (Megan Marshall)
8. American literary biography (James Atlas)
9. Literary biography (Karin Roffman)
10. First-time biographers (Ruth Franklin)
11. Young adult biography (Catherine Reef)
12. Popular culture (Brian Jay Jones and Kitty Kelley)
13. Visual and performing arts (Patricia Albers)
14. Organizing research (James McGrath Morris)
15. Families, estates, and permissions (Ellen F. Brown)
16. The genre of biography (Nigel Hamilton and Hans Renders)
17. Group biography (Joseph Esposito)
18. Global figures (Kavita Das)
19. Lesser-known figures (Barbara Lehman Smith)
20. Race in biography (Sonja D. Williams)
21. Hollywood (Vanda Krefft)
22. Biography for magazines and websites (Greg Daugherty)
23. Promotional strategies (Jennifer Richards)

BASICS

Promoting Your Biography: A Talk With the Experts

3:15–4:15PM

After you've completed the hard work of writing your book, how can you ensure that it finds an audience? What does it mean to have an "author platform," and how do you develop one? This panel of experts—a publicity director, two marketing specialists, and a successful self-published author—will discuss concrete strategies and best practices for what works and what doesn't, including marketing via social media and email, placing op-eds and features in newspapers and magazines, arranging author readings, and other methods (new and time-tested) for getting books into readers' hands.

Moderator

Ruth Franklin is the author of *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (2016), which won numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography and BIO's Plutarch Award, and was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2016. Her essays and reviews appear in many publications, including *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *Harper's*. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in biography, a Cullman Fellowship at the New York Public Library, a Leon Levy Fellowship in biography, and the Roger Shattuck Prize for Criticism.

Panelists

Dan Blank is the founder of WeGrowMedia, where he helps writers create meaningful connections with their audience. He is the author of *Be the Gateway: A Practical Guide to Sharing Your Creative Work and Engaging an Audience*. He has worked with hundreds of writers as well as organizations that support creative people, such as Penguin Random House, Sesame Workshop, Hachette Book Group, Workman Publishing, J. Walter Thompson, Abrams Books, Writers House, the *Kenyon Review*, *Writer's Digest*, *Library Journal*, and many others. You can find Blank at <http://WeGrowMedia.com> or on Twitter and Instagram at @DanBlank.

Patricia R. Eisemann is a vice president and executive director of publicity at Henry Holt, where she oversees the media roll-out for approximately 60 hardcover books yearly by many prominent and best-selling authors, including Hilary Mantel, Bill O'Reilly, Michael Wolff, Rick Atkinson, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Roger Daltrey, and Andy Cohen. Before Holt, she was with the *New York Times* for six years in the corporate communications department, working with journalists on breaking news and daily stories. She also spent twenty-five years at Simon & Schuster, including ten at Scribner, where she launched the media for *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, Barbara Bush's memoir, and *The Shipping News* by Annie Proulx, among other best sellers.

Kenneth Gillett is the principal and founder of Target Marketing Digital, a full-service digital marketing agency based in New York City that works with brands, mission-driven thought leaders, and experts to advance ideas that matter. Gillett has been building some of the most recognizable brands since 2003 and works with authors to increase their visibility and achieve tangible results for their brand. While Gillett has worked with hundreds of best-selling authors, his team at Target Marketing Digital has most recently designed and led the digital campaigns for notable authors such as Hillary Clinton, Ray Dalio, Bob Woodward, Glenn Beck, Howard Marks, Tucker Carlson, Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes, Tony Robbins, and business greats, such as Tom Peters, Marshall Goldsmith, Marcus Buckingham, Tim Ferriss, and Jim Collins. To learn more, connect with Gillett on Twitter @TargetMktng or visit targetmktng.com.

Melinda M. Ponder is the author of *Katharine Lee Bates: From Sea to Shining Sea*, a life-and-times biography of the Wellesley College political activist, globetrotter, protégé of Longfellow, mentor of Robert Frost, and poet of "America the Beautiful." She has published two books and numerous essays and articles on Nathaniel Hawthorne and other American and British authors in *Genre*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, and has given more than fifty talks and media interviews on her new biography. An active member of the Boston Biographers Group, she understands the value of learning from and supporting other biographers. Her website is www.melindaponder.com.

VISIT OUR CONFERENCE BOOKSELLER

The independent Merritt Bookstore of Millbrook, New York, in partnership with BIO 2019, will be selling recent biographies by our speakers, panelists, and other conference participants at the book table on Saturday, May 18. The table will be open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

CRAFT

Balancing an Artist's Life and Work

3:15–4:15PM

How do biographers balance the story of a life with a description of the work, especially when those stories, paintings, sonatas, or poems are the very reason for the biography? How do we craft narratives that demonstrate not only what an artist has created but how, illuminating the mysteries of a process that often occurs alone and unrecorded? What if the drama of the life eclipses the work? And how do we resolve these classic narrative challenges while also highlighting the sometimes invisible thread connecting life and work?

Moderator

Karin Roffman is the author of *The Songs We Know Best: John Ashbery's Early Life* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), which was one of the *New York Times* 100 Notable Books in 2017. She has also published *From the Modernist Annex: Women Writers in Libraries and Museums* (2010), the winner of the University of Alabama Manuscript Prize. She has published on art, poetry, and biography in *Raritan*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Artforum*, *Rain Taxi*, and others. She currently writes "The Unanswered Question" column for the *Biographer's Craft* newsletter and is senior lecturer and associate director of Public Humanities at Yale University.

Panelists

Patricia Albers is the author of *Joan Mitchell, Lady Painter: A Life*, which was judged by a *New York Times* reviewer to be "a book about Mitchell that I cannot imagine will ever be improved upon." Albers's previous biography was *Shadows, Fire, Snow: The Life of Tina Modotti*. She is now completing the first biography of the Hungarian-born photographer André Kertész, to be published by Other Press. Albers often writes for museum catalogs and reviews art books and exhibitions. She lives in the Bay Area, where she teaches at San Francisco State University.

Mark Dery is a cultural critic best known for his essays on Afrofuturism (a term he coined) and culture jamming (a phenomenon he popularized). His byline has appeared in a broad range of publications, including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Bookforum*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Wired*. Dery has been a professor of journalism at NYU, taught aesthetics in the Yale School of Art, was a Chancellor's Distinguished Fellow at UC Irvine and a visiting scholar at the American Academy in Rome. His most recent book is a biography, *Born to Be Posthumous: The Eccentric Life and Mysterious Genius of Edward Gorey* (Little, Brown, 2018). NPR, *Mental Floss*, and the *Guardian* named it one of the Best Books of 2018, and it was a *New York Times* Editors' Choice.

Carol Sklenicka's *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* was named one of the Best 10 Books of 2009 by the *New York Times Book Review* and a notable book of that year by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Washington Post*. Sklenicka earned a Ph.D. at Washington University in St. Louis and taught literature and writing at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

and Marquette University. She's currently completing a biography of short-story writer and novelist Alice Adams that Scribner will publish in November 2019. She lives in Sonoma County, California.

INSPIRATION

The Study of Biography Today

3:15–4:15PM

No writer can fail to be curious about biography today: what exactly it is, what is its history, its role in society, how and why it has developed, where it is going... In this panel, three experienced teachers and practitioners of biography will guide us through biography's expanding universe—one that goes back to Plutarch and forward to Wikipedia, biodocs, art installations, and nonfiction graphic novels. From ethics to facts, journalism to psychology, identity to theory, their purpose is to help us understand how a deeper understanding of biography in all its facets will make us become better biographers.



Each month, members of BIO receive an informative newsletter devoted to the art and craft of biography.

The Biographer's Craft features news about the business, interviews and articles with biographers about techniques, notification of books sold to publishers, new biographies coming into stores, research tips, and more.

It's just one more benefit of your BIO membership.

Moderator

Nigel Hamilton is the award-winning, best-selling author of *JFK: Reckless Youth*, *Monty*, *American Caesars*, and *War and Peace: FDR's Final Odyssey: D-Day to Yalta, 1943–1945*, the final volume of his “FDR at War” trilogy. He is senior fellow in the McCormack Graduate School, University of Massachusetts, where BIO held its inaugural annual conference and he became the organization's first elected president. He has taught biography at Royal Holloway, University of London, and De Montfort University in Britain, as well as at UMass Boston. He has written widely on the history and practice of biography. With Hans Renders he is co-author of the recent *ABC of Modern Biography*.

Panelists

Carol DeBoer-Langworthy teaches biography in the Nonfiction Writing Program of Brown University's Department of English as well as creative nonfiction, historical narrative, diaries, letters, personal journalism, and autobiography. She has taught English in Egypt, been a Fulbright lecturer in Turkey, and is currently at work on a literary biography of the American writer Neith Boyce (1872–1951). Also a documentary editor, DeBoer-Langworthy is past president of the Association for Documentary Editing and now the editor of *Lifewriting Annual: Biographical and Autobiographical Studies*.

Billy Tooma is the award-nominated documentary filmmaker behind *Clarence Chamberlin: Fly First & Fight Afterward* and *The Black Eagle of Harlem*. He teaches English at Essex County College in Newark, New Jersey, where he incorporates biography studies into his undergraduate courses (such as pairing the biographies of authors with their literary works, with an entire semester focused on biography and history). Professor Tooma earned his doctorate at Drew University, where he is now on the Arts & Letters graduate faculty; his Biographical Documentaries course ran in fall 2018. He believes strongly in the study of biography in grade school as well as in higher education.

Hans Renders directs the Biography Institute, Groningen University, where he is professor of history and theory of biography, which he teaches. He is editor-in-chief of the series Biography Studies, board chair of *Het Biografisch Portaal van Nederland*, a board member of De Nederlandse Biografie

Prijs, and a former BIO board member. He publishes widely on theory and biography, including *Theoretical Approaches to Biography* (2014) and *The Biographical Turn, Lives in History* (2017). He also broadcasts regularly on radio. He has written lives of Jan Hanlo and Jan Campert, is co-author of *The ABC of Modern Biography*, and is now tackling the artist Theo van Doesburg.

INSPIRATION

Reckless Youth

3:15–4:15PM

Three biographers discuss their youthful (biographical) passions. This panel takes its title from Nigel Hamilton's classic biography of JFK and asks three biographers who dared to start in young what drew them to the genre, how they acquired the skills and persistence to see their work through to publication, and what advantages and obstacles their youthfulness presented. Young writers have taken over the memoir field; we hope more will follow the examples of Lance Richardson, Abigail Santamaria, and Holly Van Leuven and keep biography vibrant. Learn from their stories and support younger BIO members in their work.

Moderator

Megan Marshall is the author of three biographies: *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (2005), winner of the Francis Parkman Prize, the Mark Lynton History Prize, and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life* (2013), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2014; and *Elizabeth Bishop: A Miracle for Breakfast* (2017), a finalist for the Phi Beta Kappa Society's Christian Gauss Prize for literary scholarship. She is the Charles Wesley Emerson College Professor at Emerson College, where she teaches in the M.F.A. Creative Writing Program.

Panelists

Lance Richardson is the author of *House of Nutter: The Rebel Tailor of Savile Row*, about two brothers—one a designer, the other a photographer—who had an indelible impact in the worlds of twentieth century fashion and rock music.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR BIOGRAPHY?

Whether you are just starting to think of a subject, immersed in research, or working on a manuscript, BIO's mentoring program can help. You choose the number of hours you need for mentoring by phone or email. The first hour is \$60. Subsequent hours are charged at a higher rate. To take advantage of this program, contact Cathy Curtis: cathy@biographersinternational.org.

As a journalist, his work has appeared in the *Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, Al Jazeera, newyorker.com, and the national newspaper of Australia, where he is originally from. He is currently at work on his second book, *True Nature: The Odyssey of Peter Matthiessen*, which will be released sometime before the next century.

Abigail Santamaria is currently at work on *I Am Meg: The Life of Madeleine L'Engle* (forthcoming from Farrar, Straus and Giroux), the first adult biography of the author who brought us *A Wrinkle in Time*. She is also the author of *Joy: Poet, Seeker, & the Woman Who Captivated C. S. Lewis* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), about the communist poet Joy Davidman. In 2016, Santamaria co-founded Biography by Design, LLC, with Kate Buford, to help individuals and corporations write their stories. She earned an M.F.A. in nonfiction from Columbia University, has contributed to numerous publications, and lives in New York City with her family.

Holly Van Leuven is the author of *Ray Bolger: More than a Scarecrow* (Oxford University Press, 2019). She began the project at age 20—while pursuing her B.F.A. at Emerson College—when she coincidentally met one of Bolger's former dance partners through YouTube. Pursuing the trail of Bolger, Van Leuven became the first researcher to access his private papers stored at UCLA. Van Leuven's early work earned her Emerson College's Senior Writing Award for High Distinction in Nonfiction, the highest award granted to undergraduates by the college. In 2014, she became the inaugural winner of BIO's Hazel Rowley Prize.

BASICS

First-Time Biographers

4:30–5:30PM

An idea for a biographical subject is just the start of an often long and complex journey. How does one begin the process of research for a biography? How does one bring a book to market? Come learn from four biographers who were once, but are no longer, new to the form, as they describe the obstacles they faced and overcame.

Moderator

Brooklyn-born and currently L.A.-based, **Lisa Napoli** is a career journalist who has worked in all media. Her first biography, *Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made the McDonald's Fortune and the Women Who Gave It All Away*, was her second book. It was published in November 2016 by Dutton. She's currently working with BIO board member Sonja Williams on a podcast featuring biographers, as well as on a history of the creation of CNN.

Panelists

Jonathan Blunk is the biographer of the revered and influential American poet James Wright (1927–1980). His authorized biography, *James Wright: A Life in Poetry*, was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2017. Blunk is also a poet, an essayist, and a radio producer. His work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Georgia Review*, *FIELD*, and elsewhere. He assisted with editing *A Wild Perfection*, the selected letters of James Wright (FSG, 2005). Blunk is a graduate

of Cornell University and the Warren Wilson College M.F.A. Program for Writers.

Kavita Das writes about culture, race, feminism, and their intersections. Nominated for a 2016 Pushcart Prize, Das's work is published or forthcoming in *Tin House*, *Longreads*, *The Atlantic*, *Off Assignment*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, the *Washington Post*, *Kenyon Review*, *NBC News Asian America*, *Guernica*, *Quartz*, *McSweeney's*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Her first book, *Poignant Song: The Life and Music of Lakshmi Shankar* (Harper Collins India, June 2019), is a biography of the Grammy-nominated Hindustani singer, who played a pivotal role in bringing Indian music to the West. Das is also at work on a collection of personal essays.

Joseph A. Esposito is a writer, a historian, and an educator. He served in three presidential administrations, including being appointed a deputy undersecretary for international affairs at the U.S. Department of Education. He also worked at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He is currently an adjunct faculty member at Northern Virginia Community College. Esposito holds academic degrees from Pennsylvania State University, George Mason University, Georgetown University, the University of Pennsylvania, and University of Virginia. His meeting John F. Kennedy when he was ten years old sparked a lifetime interest in politics and history, and, ultimately, the writing of his book *Dinner in Camelot: The Night America's Greatest Scientists, Writers, and Scholars Partied at the Kennedy White House*.

CRAFT

Fact and Speculation

4:30–5:30PM

Facts are often perceived as the bedrock of writing a biography, and speculation is viewed as a risky endeavor. But how does the biographer deal with lapses in the documentation, with inconsistencies and uncertainties, and with the downright unknowable? Three biographers who have confronted an incomplete record in their research share their experiences and discuss strategies for connecting the dots. As one biographer noted, "A biographer will inevitably be caught between the Scylla of speculation and the Charybdis of the limited archive." The discussion should help the biographer navigate this treacherous literary channel.

Moderator

James McGrath Morris's books include the *New York Times* best-selling *Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, The First Lady of the Black Press*, which was awarded the Benjamin Hooks National Book Prize for the best work in civil rights history; *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power*; and *The Ambulance Drivers: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and a Friendship Made and Lost in War*. He is currently working on a biography of Tony Hillerman, author of a groundbreaking series of Navajo detective novels.

Panelists

Stacy Schiff is the author of *Véra* (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov), winner of the Pulitzer Prize; *Saint-Exupéry*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist; and *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*, winner of the George Washington Book Prize. A No. 1 best seller, her *Cleopatra: A Life*, was published to great acclaim in 2010. David McCullough hailed her most recent book, *The Witches: Salem, 1692*, also a No. 1 best seller, as “brilliant from start to finish.” Schiff has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities and was a Director’s Fellow at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers.

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina’s four biographies are *Carrington: A Life*, *Frances Hodgson Burnett: The Unexpected Life of the Author of The Secret Garden*, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation*, and *Mr. and Mrs. Prince: How an Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Family Moved out of Slavery and into Legend*. She has edited five other books and published numerous articles and chapters. She has been a tenured professor at Vassar, Barnard, Dartmouth, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and a named professor at the latter two. She is the dean of Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and was elected in 2017 to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is currently completing a biracial family memoir.

Michael Hainey is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling memoir *After Visiting Friends: A Son’s Story*. The book is currently being adapted for the screen. He is an editor and writer at *Esquire* magazine and has also worked for *GQ* and *Spyn* magazines.

INSPIRATION

The Past, Present, and Future of Feminist Biography

4:30–5:30PM

This panel will explore the impact of feminism in its many forms on the field of biography, from the second wave of the 1970s to today’s #MeToo movement. How have feminist critics and scholars challenged the scope and purpose of the white male-dominated field of biography? How does a focus on women’s lives alter our understanding of what biography can and should accomplish? What kinds of women’s lives warrant and deserve biographical treatment? Are biographies of women inevitably feminist? And how will the field of biography be affected by the gender politics of our current moment?

Moderator

Carla Kaplan, Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Northeastern University, has published seven books on women’s writing, including *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*, an epistolary biography of Zora Neale Hurston, and *Miss Anne in Harlem*, a group biography of the white women of the Harlem Renaissance, both *New York Times* Notable Books. She has received numerous fellowships and awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Cullman Center Fellowship at the New York Public Library, an NEH

Public Scholar Program fellowship, and a W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute fellowship at Harvard. Her biography of Jessica Mitford is forthcoming from HarperCollins.

Panelists

Imani Perry is the Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, where she is also affiliated with the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Program in Law and Public Affairs. A scholar of legal history, cultural and literary studies, Perry is the author of five books, including the 2018 biography of Lorraine Hansberry: *Looking for Lorraine*. Perry lives in the Philadelphia area with her two sons.

Joanna Scutts is a literary critic and cultural historian based in New York. She is the author of *The Extra Woman: How Marjorie Hillis Led a Generation of Women to Live Alone and Like It* (Liveright, 2017), and her writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *newyorker.com*, *Slate*, and the *Guardian*, among many other venues. As a researcher and curator at the New-York Historical Society, she helped plan and launch the new Center for Women’s History, which opened to the public in 2017. Her new book project explores friendship and feminism in New York in the 1910s.

Elaine Showalter is professor emerita of English and Avalon Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University. She has written ten books, including *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx* (Knopf, 2009), which was awarded the Truman Capote Prize for Literary Criticism. Her most recent book, *The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe: A Biography*, was published in 2016. She reviews books for many newspapers and periodicals in the U.S. and U.K. including many biographies. Showalter is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature

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INSPIRATION

Biography and Science

4:30–5:30PM

Science is deeply embedded in modern civilization—but the average citizen does not understand the scientific life or how scientific discoveries are made. Neither is it generally understood that scientific discovery is never a neat story. Writing about a life in science is thus by definition particularly onerous. The biographer in this case has to understand not only the life, but also the science. What are the peculiar obstacles facing the biography of a scientist?

Moderator

Kai Bird is the executive director of the Leon Levy Center for Biography at CUNY Graduate Center. He co-authored with Martin J. Sherwin the 2006 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *American Prometheus: The Triumph & Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*. His most recent book was *The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames* (2014). He is currently writing a biography of President Jimmy Carter.

Panelists

Charlotte Jacobs is a professor of medicine (emerita) at Stanford University. Her first biography, *Henry Kaplan and the Story of Hodgkin's Disease* (2010), was selected as one of the Best Five Books on doctors' lives by the *Wall Street Journal*. Her second biography, *Jonas Salk: A Life* (2015), was

chosen as a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year and was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. She is currently writing a biography of Setsuko Nakamura Thurlow, who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima at age thirteen and has spent the rest of her life trying to prevent it from happening again.

David N. Schwartz holds a B.A. from Stanford University and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has worked at the U.S. Department of State, the Brookings Institution, and Goldman Sachs in London and New York. He has published widely on U.S. strategic nuclear weapons policy, NATO, and foreign policy, and is the author of the recently published biography *The Last Man Who Knew Everything: The Life and Times of Enrico Fermi, Father of the Nuclear Age* (Basic Books). He lives in New York with his wife, Susan.

Lawrence Weschler, director emeritus at the New York Institute for the Humanities at NYU, is the author of coming on twenty books, including *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder*; parallel biographies of science-besotted artists Robert Irwin and David Hockney; *Waves Passing in the Night: Walter Murch in the Land of the Astrophysicists*; and, coming this summer, *And How Are You, Dr. Sacks?*, a biographical memoir of his longtime friendship with the late, great neurologist.



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Sunday

9:00AM–11:00AM

For conference attendees who have registered in advance for them, these optional, in-depth workshops will be held Sunday morning on the Concourse Level of the Graduate Center.

Writing a Biography Proposal

JIM RUTMAN

Determining the dimensions and setting the priorities for your subject are key ingredients in an appealing and successful proposal. We will discuss and pinpoint options and strategies for putting forward and illuminating the strategies for framing the life you intend to chronicle by discussing what elements to emphasize and how much to reveal (or strategically conceal) in the course of introducing and articulating your intentions. Whatever your subject's level of fame or infamy, or the anticipated scale of your audience, we will examine options for making your case most persuasively in a fraught marketplace.

Jim Rutman represents a variety of journalists, historians, and critics whose work examines an array of cultural and historical subjects and figures that probe and challenge standing assumptions about the world's inner workings. He has worked with biographers who have chronicled the lives of Upton Sinclair, Martin Luther, Clarice Lispector, Jimi Hendrix, and Fernando Pessoa, along with biographies of concepts such as privacy, color, and doubt. He also represents formally adventurous and stylistically diverse fiction writers like Sheila Heti, Alissa Nutting, Jesse Ball, and Affinity Konar. He has been with Sterling Lord Literistic since 1998.

Revising Your Manuscript

DAVID GROFF

Once you've gotten the basics of your biography on the page, how can you reshape, rewrite, and refine your work so as to give it its best possible form, narrative arc, sense of character, thematic coherence, beauty, and impact? This workshop explores the different strategies involved in taking an early draft of a biography and assessing its language, structure, story, theme, balance, and focus so as to create an effective, well-paced, professional, and moving manuscript. Working from the premise that revision is a creative act, we'll discuss the steps required in readying your book for agents, publishers, and readers.

David Groff is an independent editor and publishing consultant, focusing on narrative nonfiction, memoir, biography, and literary and popular fiction, working directly with authors, literary agents, and publishers. Authors he has edited have been published by Basic Books, Farrar Straus, Hachette, HarperCollins, Morrow, Oxford, Penguin

Press, St. Martin's, Simon & Schuster, and Wiley, among other houses. He is the author of two collections of poems, *Theory of Devolution* and *Clay*. A graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop, he teaches poetry, nonfiction, and publishing in the M.F.A. creative writing program of the City College of New York.

Working with Photographs in Biography

LERONN P. BROOKS, PH.D.

How can photographs or illustrations change the reception of your biography? In this workshop we will discuss that important question and explore the following: How do you weave photos and illustrations into your work in ways that support your subject? And how can this material complement your writing and keep readers invested in your biography as it evolves from page to page? What can visual images reveal? Also, how does one find and secure copyright permissions for photographs? You may bring examples of your writing—copies will be returned if possible—and, of course, your questions.

LeRonn P. Brooks, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Africana Studies at Lehman College of CUNY. He is a specialist in modern and contemporary American painting and sculpture. His interviews, essays, and poetry have appeared in *Bomb Magazine*, the *International Review of African American Art*, and publications for the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Museum of Modern Art, Socrates Sculpture Park, the Spelman Museum of Art, as well as the Aperture Foundation, among others. Brooks is currently working on a themed biography of the Harlem Renaissance-era painter and educator Hale Aspacio Woodruff.

Author Websites 101

MEREDITH HINDLEY & ANNE BOYD RIOUX

This workshop, conducted by two authors who have built their own websites, will provide instruction and options for those also interested in building or upgrading their websites. Some of the topics covered will be: what an author site should include, how to build a site, accessible platforms (such as Squarespace, Wordpress.com, and Wordpress.org), some design basics (including tools like Canva), how to find a host for your site, useful plug-ins, and more. Participants will leave with tools they can use to build their own sites.

Meredith Hindley is the author of *Destination Casablanca: Exile, Espionage, and the Battle for North Africa in World War II* (PublicAffairs, 2017). She has spent more than two decades doing public affairs and digital strategy for a federal cultural agency. Her writing credits include *Humanities*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Barnes and Noble Review*. Hindley received her Ph.D. from American University. Her website is <http://meredithhindley.com>.

Anne Boyd Rioux is the author of *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters* (W. W. Norton, 2018) and *Constance Fenimore Woolson: Portrait of a Lady Novelist* (Norton), chosen as one of the ten best books of 2016 by the *Chicago Tribune*. She is the recipient of two NEH fellowships, one for public humanities, and is a professor at the University of New Orleans. Her website is <http://anneboydrioux.com>.

ANNUAL MEETING

BIO's Annual Meeting will take place during the Board meeting, at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, May 19, at CUNY. Active members are invited to attend the public portion of this meeting.

The 2019 Coaching Program

BIO would like to thank the following biographers for their participation in our fifth annual coaching program. These accomplished biographers are providing half-hour, one-on-one coaching sessions to those who have paid and arranged for such sessions in advance. In addition, BIO now provides a year-round mentoring service via email or phone. For more information, see the advertisement elsewhere in this program or email Cathy Curtis at Cathy@biographersinternational.org.

The Coaches

Cathy Curtis is the author of three biographies of artists: *Restless Ambition: Grace Hartigan, Painter* (Oxford University Press, 2015); *A Generous Vision: The Creative Life of Elaine de Kooning* (OUP, 2017); and *Alive Still: The Singular Journey of Nell Blaine* (OUP, July 2019), about a leading New York painter who became a paraplegic after contracting a severe form of polio at age thirty-seven but battled the odds to become one of America's great watercolorists. Curtis is turning to the literary world for her next book, the first biography of novelist and critic Elizabeth Hardwick, who was married to the poet Robert Lowell.

Carla Kaplan, Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Northeastern University and chair of the *Signs* editorial board, has published seven books on African-American and women's literature and culture. Her trade books include the award-winning *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* and *Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance* (both *New York Times* Notable Books),

and, forthcoming, *"Queen of the Muckrakers": The Life and Times of Jessica Mitford*. Kaplan has received fellowships from the NEH Public Scholar Program, Cullman Center, DuBois Institute, Ransom and Beinecke libraries, and the Guggenheim Foundation. She is currently editing a special *Signs* issue, "Rage."

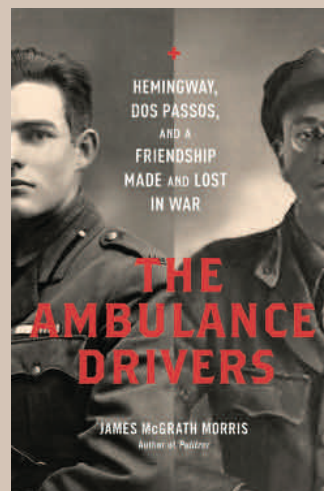
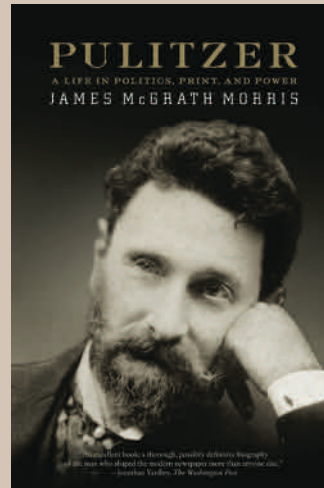
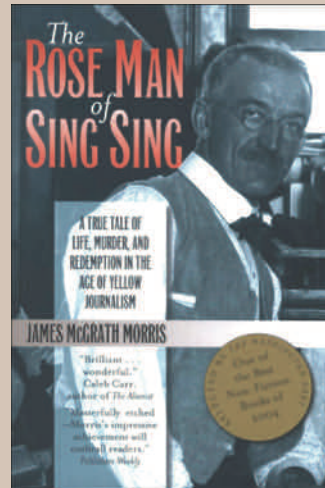
Carl Rollyson's biographies include *American Isis: The Life and Art of Sylvia Plath*; *A Real American Character: The Life of Walter Brennan*; *Hollywood Enigma: Dana Andrews*; *Marilyn Monroe: A Life of the Actress*; and *Amy Lowell Anew: A Biography*. His books about biography include *Biography: A User's Guide* and *Confessions of a Serial Biographer*. His reviews of biographies have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *The New Criterion*, and other publications. Rollyson's two-volume biography, *The Life of William Faulkner*, will be published in the spring and fall of 2020.

Carol Sklenicka's *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* was named one of the Best 10 Books of 2009 by the *New York Times Book Review* and a notable book of that year by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, *Oregonian*, and *Washington Post*. The book was a finalist for the PEN USA award and the Northern California Book Award. Before becoming a biographer, Sklenicka earned a Ph.D. at Washington University in St. Louis and taught writing at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design and Marquette University. Her current project, a biography of short-story writer and novelist Alice Adams, will be published by Scribner.

A SPECIAL THANK-YOU

The Biographers International Organization would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to the Leon Levy Center for Biography for hosting our conference again this year. We especially wish to thank Kai Bird, executive director of the center, and Thad Ziolkowski, associate director, for their helpful advice at all stages of our joint planning.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JAMES McGRATH MORRIS, RECIPIENT OF THE 2019 BIO AWARD



Schedule—Saturday, May 18, 2019

All panels will take place on the Concourse level of the Graduate Center.

7:00–8:00AM	Registration and Breakfast CONCOURSE			
8:15–9:15AM	Welcome From Cathy Curtis and Kai Bird Plenary Session: David Remnick, Stacy Schiff, and Judith Thurman in conversation PROSHANSKY AUDITORIUM			
9:30–10:30AM	Adventures in the Archives B	The Art, Craft, and Market for Young Readers' Biographies C	Telling Life Stories in These Chaotic Times I	Hidden Figures I
10:45–11:45AM	Fire Up Your Narrative B	Funding Primary and Archival Research C	Biography in Search of Its Subject I	International Identities I
12:00–1:30PM	Lunch, Round-Table Discussions, and Coaching CONCOURSE <i>Coaching will take place in the break-out rooms adjacent to the Concourse.</i>			
1:45–3:00PM	Presentation of the Hazel Rowley and Plutarch Awards Keynote Address by James McGrath Morris, winner of the 2019 BIO Award PROSHANSKY AUDITORIUM			
3:15–4:15PM	Promoting Your Biography B	Balancing an Artist's Life and Work C	The Study of Biography Today I	Reckless Youth I
4:30–5:30PM	First-Time Biographers B	Fact and Speculation C	The Past, Present, and Future of Feminist Biography I	Biography and Science I
5:30–7:00PM	Closing Reception CONCOURSE			

B Basics **C** Craft **I** Inspiration