

AWP Event Outline (working draft)

EVENT TITLE: Space Is the Place: Literary Spatialities and New Approaches to Placemaking

Event Description: Just as there has been a “spatial turn” in the humanities more broadly, writers have been creating meaningful and evocative settings using sensitive, sophisticated approaches to space, place, and cartography. Panelists will discuss how we create and consider real and unreal urban landscapes, wilderness, borderlands, and ecologies of built spaces, with particular attention to how space and place dovetail into identity, the crisis of territoriality, and the trauma of displacement.

EVENT CATEGORY: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Event Organizer & Moderator:

Benjamin Reed: Ben Reed's fiction has appeared in *West Branch*, *Pank*, *Seattle Review*, and *Tin House*. His essays have appeared in *Southern Humanities Review*, *The Millions*, and *The Texas Review*. He teaches writing and literature at Texas State University. His first novel and first collection are forthcoming.

Event Participants:

Kelli Jo Ford: Kelli Jo Ford's debut novel-in-stories, *Crooked Hallelujah*, will be published by Grove Atlantic next year. She's the recipient of *The Paris Review's* 2019 Plimpton Prize and *The Missouri Review's* 2018 Peden Prize in Fiction. She's a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

Syed Ali Haider: Syed Ali Haider is the Executive Director for Austin Bat Cave, a nonprofit that connects writers with students. ABC's writing programs empower students to find their voices and tell their stories. His work has been published in the *Cimarron Review* and *Glimmer Train*. He is working on a novel.

Angela Palm: Angela Palm is the author of *Riverine: A Memoir from Anywhere but Here*, an Indie Next selection and winner of the 2014 Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize. Palm was awarded a Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Fellowship in nonfiction. She is a freelance editor and lives in Vermont.

Refugio “Ito” Romo: Romo's work, dubbed “Chicano Gothic” and “Chicano Noir,” shows the dark and gritty life along Interstate 35 through South Texas. He is the author of *The Border is Burning* (2013) and *El Puente / The Bridge* (2001). This year, Romo was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters.

Panel Itinerary

- Welcoming remarks and housekeeping announcements, including administrative and accessibility issues.
- Introduction of panelists and moderator.
- Opening remarks by moderator, including a brief background on “the spatial turn” in the humanities.
- Panelist Self-Introductions w/r/t Space and Place in their work (3min each, max)
- Sample Questions for panelists:
 - How is your conception of space and place distinct from what we might term “setting” or “situation”? Is there some natural intersection with identity, or story, or something else?
 - James Baldwin’s short story “Sonny’s Blues” is perhaps the standard example of a subtle but effective management of spatiality-as-arc, as the space between the two brothers shrinks in tandem with the narrator’s approach to music, in various forms. What are some prominent or important spatial considerations in your work? (e.g., distance, boundaries, relative position, movement, etc.)
 - How do we understand the old chestnut that “setting should be treated like a character”?
 - Do you use cartographies—literal or figurative—in your work? What are they and why are they helpful?
 - What interesting or difficult issues have you encountered while trying to create a unique sense of space and place in your own work?
 - How is space and place informed by the particular requirements of writing about Indigenous / Latinx / Islamic / Desi diaspora?
 - What are some ways in which expressions of space can express particular cultural traits? How do space and place present new opportunities for increasing the diversity of published work?
 - Many of us are or have been teachers. How do we encourage students to write in a way that is conscious of space?
- Audience Q & A (min. 15 minutes)