

**EVENT TITLE: The Revolution Will Be Serialized: Literary Journals and Political Movements**

**Number: F116**

**Date/Time: 9:00am - 10:15am on Friday March 25, 2022**

**Location: 115C, Pennsylvania Convention Center, 100 Level**

**EVENT DESCRIPTION:** “The literary history of the thirties,” George Orwell warned in 1940, “seems to justify the opinion that a writer does well to keep out of politics.” Yet 80 years later, most literary journals, like most presses and institutions, have felt the need to confront political realities, including assaults on democracy, police brutality, sexual abuse, and more. Are there risks in embracing these aims? What is the effect on the art they produce? Can journals remain relevant without becoming dogmatic?

**EVENT CATEGORY: Publishing, Editing, and Technology**

**Event Organizer & Moderator**

**J. A. Bernstein:** J. A. Bernstein is the author of *Rachel's Tomb* (AWP Award Series Novel Prize), *Desert Castles*, and *Northern Cowboy*. He's won a Fulbright, Hackney Prize, and contests at *Crab Orchard* and *Southern Indiana Review*. He's an assistant professor at the Univ. of So. Mississippi and fiction editor of *Tikkun*.

**Event Participants**

**Katie Edkins Milligan:** Katie Edkins Milligan's stories appear in *Fiction*, *Taboma Literary Review* and *North Dakota Quarterly*. She is Fiction Editor at *Gulf Coast*, the 2021 recipient of the Inprint Donald Barthelme Prize in Fiction, and an Inprint Brown Foundation Fellow MFA candidate at the University of Houston.

**Dustin Pearson:** Dustin Pearson is the author of *A Season in Hell with Rimbaud*, *Millennial Roost*, and *A Family Is a House*. He holds an MFA from Arizona State University and has served as an editor to *The South Carolina Review*, Clemson University Digital Press, *The Southeast Review*, and *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

**Gilad Elbom:** Gilad Elbom is the fiction editor of the *North Dakota Quarterly* and author of the novel *Scream Queens of the Dead Sea*. He teaches in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film at Oregon State University.

**Clayton Bradshaw:** Clayton Bradshaw writes fiction and nonfiction. He holds an MFA in from Texas State and is currently working towards a PhD at Southern Mississippi. He was a 2021 PFTA Emerging Artist and 2021 Kinder-Crump Short Fiction Finalist. He currently serves as an Assistant Editor for *Mississippi Review*.

- I. Moderator remarks, introduction, accessibility reminders (five minutes)
- II. Panelist remarks (20 minutes)
- III. Probable questions (25 minutes):
  1. What kinds of political questions, if any, do you think literary journals have an obligation to confront now?
  2. Do you think there are risks for journals in addressing these questions?
  3. Is avoiding these questions itself a political act? In other words, can a journal be neutral or uninvolved on these matters?
  4. When Orwell wrote that writers would “do well” to keep out of politics, what do you think he meant? Was he confronting a different time or set of realities? Is there merit in his claim?
  5. How do journals respond to politics? Is there a certain kind of aesthetic or literary direction that you think speaks to the kind of politics you’d like to see addressed (or avoided)?
  6. Many literary journals, such as *Alaska Quarterly Review*, have faced declining university support. Others, such as *Sycamore Review* and *The Believer*, have lost institutional backing. Under these circumstances, do you think literary journals will face even more pressure to conform to university politics or to adhere to mainstream sentiment? If so, what are the alternatives?
  7. Are there any issues, political or otherwise, that you think are taboo for literary journals?
  8. Is it possible, in your mind, for “political” art to remain relevant in the long run? Can one distinguish between political and non-political art? And if one has to draw a line somewhere, where do you see that line?
  9. Do you think certain kinds of submission processes—blind submission, non-blind submission, contests, solicited writing, and so forth—invite a certain kind of politics into a journal, or reaffirm a certain worldview?
  10. What other literary practices or conventions of journals might engender a kind of politics or worldview?

11. As a literary editor, what keeps you up at night?
12. What advice would you give to writers interested in submitting to your pages, especially those who might seek to address political topics?

- IV. Audience Q&A (remaining time minus two minutes)
- V. Closing remarks (Two minutes)