Event Title: Margins and Memory: The Craft of Trauma and Truth(s)
Time and Location: 10:35-11:50, Room 2215A

Event Description: This panel will explore the frictional spaces between craft, memory, and trauma. Poets and prose writers will discuss writing about personal and cultural trauma, and how that writing can center people and experiences often marginalized. How do limits of memory, including institutional memory, necessitate alternative approaches to hegemonic literary craft? This panel approaches craft in opposition to silence embedded within such constructs as linearity, truth, and singularity of voice and vision.

Event Category: Multiple Literary Genres Craft

Event Organizer: Jenny Molberg
Event Moderator: Jameelah Lang
Event Participants: George Abraham, David Stuart MacLean, Caridad Moro-Gronlier

Biographical Information on Our Panelists:

Jenny Molberg: Jenny Molberg is the author of three collections of poetry: Marvels of the Invisible (winner of the Berkshire Prize, Tupelo Press, 2017), Refusal (LSU Press, 2020), and The Court of No Record (LSU Press, 2023). Her poems and essays have recently appeared or are forthcoming in Ploughshares, The Cincinnati Review, VIDA, The Missouri Review, The Rumpus, The Adroit Journal, Oprah Quarterly, and other publications. She has received fellowships and scholarships from the National Endowment for the Arts, VCCA, the Sewanee Writers Conference, Vermont Studio Center, and elsewhere. She is Associate Professor and Chair of Creative Writing at the University of Central Missouri, where she edits Pleiades: Literature in Context. Find her online at jennymolberg.com.

Jameelah Lang: Jameelah Lang is an Assistant Professor of English at Rockhurst University. Her work appears in the Michigan Quarterly Review, the Cincinnati Review, the Kenyon Review, and elsewhere, and has received support from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Sewanee Writers' Conference, Hub City Writers Project, and VCCA. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Houston, where she served as Senior Nonfiction Editor for Gulf Coast and co-organizer for the Poison Pen Reading Series. She currently serves on the board of the Radius of Arab American Writers and as Director of the Midwest Poets Series.

George Abraham: George Abraham (they/he) is a Palestinian American poet. Their debut poetry collection Birthright (Button Poetry, 2020) won the Arab American Book Award and was a Lambda Literary Award finalist. They are currently executive editor for Mizna, and are a recipient of fellowships from Kundiman, The Arab American National Museum, Sewanee Writers' Conference, National Performance Network, and more. They are currently co-editing a Palestinian global
anglophone poetry anthology with Noor Hindi (Haymarket Books, 2024) and are a Litowitz MFA+MA candidate at Northwestern University.

David Stuart MacLean: David Stuart MacLean is a PEN America award winning essayist. His books include a memoir, The Answer to the Riddle is Me, and a novel, How I Learned to Hate in Ohio. His work has appeared in Ploughshares, Guernica, The Guardian, The New York Times, and on the radio program This American Life. He co-founded the Poison Pen Reading Series and was a Fulbright Scholar in India. The New York Times called David “an exceedingly entertaining psychotic.” He lives and teaches in Chicago.

Caridad Moro:
Caridad Moro-Gronlier is the author of Tortillera (TRP 2021), winner of The TRP Southern Poetry Breakthrough Series: Florida, a 2022 Eric Hoffer Book Award Honorable Mention, and 2022 International Latino Book Award Honorable Mention, as well as chapbook Visionware (Finishing Line Press 2009). In 2023 she was awarded the Flash Fiction Award from South 85 Journal. She Contributing Editor for Grabbed: Poets and Writers Respond to Sexual Assault (Beacon Press, 2020) and Associate Editor for SWWIM Every Day an online daily poetry journal for women-identifying poets. Find her @Caridadmoro and caridadmoro.com.

Event Outline:

Welcome Remarks:

10:35-10:40. Jenny Molberg: Welcome to Margins and Memory: The Craft of Trauma and Truth(s). A few reminders before we begin:
• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, (identify moderator), know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
• Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers. • Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
• Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
• Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

Readings & Craft Talks:

Jenny Molberg introduces Jameelah Lang.

10:40-10:50. Jameelah Lang reading:
Jameelah Lang will read an excerpt from her creative-nonfiction piece, “Father Panic.” She will then discuss the culturally dictated, implicit contract between teller and reader in contemporary
nonfiction, and how that relationship might be complicated through a formal approach that embraces hybridity and orality. How can nonfiction invoke a relationship with its audience that forefronts multiplicity – of truth, of perspective? How does such an approach reflect the lived experience of trauma and marginalization? What effect does this have on Western expectations of authorial intimacy embedded within a genre built around the refrain “Dear Reader”?

Jameelah Lang introduces Jenny Molberg.

10:50-11:00. Jenny Molberg reading: Jenny Molberg will give a short reading from *The Court of No Record* (LSU Press 2023). She will then discuss the relationship between Documentary poetry and Confessional poetry, reflecting on a poetic craft that utilizes personal documentary material, such as court transcripts or legal records. How accurate are “truth” and “memory” within a justice system that fails to protect victims of gender-based violence and intimate partner abuse, especially when a victim’s reality is obfuscated, marginalized, and/or silenced? This discussion will examine the relationship between memory and textual documentation.

Jenny Molberg introduces George Abraham.

11:00-11:10. George Abraham reading: George Abraham will give a short reading from an in-progress creative non-fiction project, thinking about the difficulties of writing from the seemingly permanent inside of Palestinian catastrophe, and the ways in which diasporic trauma dissolves the boundaries between inside/outside of Palestinian grief. Where can poetry intervene in the spaces narrative fails us, and conversely, how can we even begin imagining better narrative forms against and despite colonial erasure?

George Abraham introduces Caridad Moro.

11:10-11:20. Caridad Moro reading: Caridad Moro-Gronlier will give a short reading from *Tortillera* (TRP Press 2023). She will discuss how she reclaims, reframes and embraces the homophobic slur of her book’s title in order to dismantle the shame and inherent trauma of functuniting within a lexicon designed to reinforce patriarchy and gender-based violence and/or marginalization.

Caridad Moro introduces David MacLean.

11:20-11:30. David MacLean reading: David will read from an essay and discuss the trouble of naming things in regard to trauma. Trauma is wily and resists attempts at defanging it; a writer might think themselves ‘in control’ of a piece only to find that trauma has other plans. How to navigate the two is tricky and involves not catharsis but a sophisticated inventory system for the skeletons in our closets.
Q&A: 11:20-11:50

Jameelah Lang: Moderator Questions

1. We live in a culture that often insists on singular notions of truth. How can literature respond to or complicate a “truth” that is dictated by those in positions of power?

2. To elaborate on the notion of a singular truth: How do you think literature can make room for others? What do we gain from a story, essay, or poem that employs a dialectical or communal voice? How can a piece of literature accomplish a communal voice, and how might it affect the memory and margins of the self?

3. In prose, form is sometimes seen as neutral or benign, in contrast with plot, voice, or character development. For those of you writing in prose, how does your work utilize form to reflect the emotional and/or intellectual experience of trauma memory?

4. In poetry, form and content are often seen as a partnership—one that can create tension or a symbiotic relationship, illuminating some kind of imperative truth. How do you see poetic form, in its use of lyricism, negative space, metaphor (or any other elements of craft) engaging in a relationship with memory and truth?