Show (Me), Don’t Tell: Missouri Writers Grappling with the State of Their State

Info
Saturday, February, 10, 2024
12:10-1:25 PM
Room 3501CD, Kansas City Convention Center, Level 3

Description
Missouri has recently made a dramatic turn toward repressive social policy, raising difficult questions for the state’s writers: how do I love a place that doesn’t love me back? How can I acknowledge Missouri’s rich literary history and use writing to address the current crisis? How can writing become part of the solution to the state’s problems? In this panel, five Missouri writers discuss their struggles to love and critique their home as they hope for its future renewal.

Participants
Caleb Tankersley, Moderator
Ron A. Austin
Hadara Bar-Nadav
Sam Edmonds
Phong Nguyen

Participant Bios
Caleb Tankersley (the moderator) is the author of Sin Eaters--winner of the Permafrost Book Prize--and the chapbook Jesus Works the Night Shift. A 2023 Fiction Fellow at Bread Loaf, Caleb is the Managing Director for Split/Lip Press and is currently working on his first novel.

Ron A. Austin's first collection of linked stories, Avery Colt Is a Snake, a Thief, a Liar has received several honors including: The 2017 Nilsen Prize, a 2019 Foreward INDIES GOLD Award, a 2020 PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize nomination, and a 2020 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award nomination.

Hadara Bar-Nadav is an NEA fellow and author of several poetry collections, most recently The New Nudity, Lullaby (with Exit Sign), The Frame Called Ruin, and Fountain and
Bar-Nadav is a Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Samantha Edmonds is the author of the chapbooks *Pretty to Think So* (Selcouth Station Press 2019) and *The Space Poet* (Split/Lip Press 2020). Her work appears in *The New York Times, Gay Magazine, Ninth Letter*, and *The Rumpus*, among others. She lives in Columbia, MO, where she's a PhD candidate at MU.

Phong Nguyen is the author of *Bronze Drum, Roundabout, The Adventures of Joe Harper, Pages from the Textbook of Alternate History, & Memory Sickness*. He edited two books: one on author Nancy Hale and *The Best Peace Fiction* anthology. He teaches creative writing at the University of Missouri.

**Opening Remarks**

Welcome to “Show (Me), Don’t Tell,” where a bunch of us Missouri writers (if we claim the title to begin with) talk about the state of our state and whether/how that intersects with our writing.

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, (me), 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.

**Participant Initial Remarks**

Here all our participants can talk about their own experiences living/writing in Missouri and answer the initial questions from the description:
• How do I love a place that doesn’t love me back?
• How can I acknowledge Missouri’s rich literary history and use writing to address the current crisis?
• How can writing become part of the solution to the state’s problems?

Ron. A. Austin:

Hadara Bar-Nadav:

Samantha Edmonds:

Phong Nguyen:

Caleb Tankersley:

Moderator Questions

We’ll try to keep this part organic and hopefully just have a conversation, but here are a few questions to try to facilitate:

• How connected do you feel to Missouri? Is it an identity you claim? In what ways does the state show up in your writing?

• What (if any?) responsibility do you feel for the place you live in your writing? Is that too much to ask of a writer?

• What do you hope for Missouri? How does writing play into those hopes?

• Is a state like Missouri even too great an abstraction to have a relationship with in writing? Do you think about your world on the macro-level in that sense, or—as Taiye Selasi says—is all experience local?

• The power of writing can feel like it’s melting in the face of political realities. Do the politics of a place like Missouri cause you to question/evaluate what effect your writing has on the world?