

Children's Book Guild News



CHILDREN'S
BOOK GUILD
of WASHINGTON, DC

Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <https://childrensbookguild.org/>

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Tuesday, April 27, 2021

May 2021

THE MAY 22 VIRTUAL AWARD CELEBRATION HONORING CATHERINE REEF



Remember to register for this year's Nonfiction Award event, which will be held online at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 22. The event will feature a talk by the award winner, Catherine Reef. A longtime member of the Children's Book Guild, Catherine has written numerous nonfiction books for young readers, including biographies of outstanding figures from history and the arts--from Queen Victoria to Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera,

and from Sarah Bernhardt to Florence Nightingale.

The festivities will also include a dramatic monologue performed by Brooklyn-based classical actor Esther Williamson--who will be appearing as Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* and the subject of one of Catherine's biographies.

The event is free, but registration is required. At the time of registration, donations may be made to support the 2021-2022 Children's Book Guild DC-Metro Youth Literacy Grants. Signed copies of Catherine's books are also available to order.

Please invite your colleagues and share the link for this event on your social media channels:

<https://www.childrensbookguild.org/2021-winner>.

[Make your reservation now!](#)

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LETTER FROM GUILD PRESIDENT KAREN DEANS



Happy May, everyone!

If you are like me at this time of year, you too are rejoicing in the natural beauty around the city. For me, it brings to mind a verse* by one of my favorite poets, Rainer Maria Rilke:

Spring came again today. The thawing earth

Is like a child who knows her rhymes by heart.

*So many verses. After all the toil
Of drawn-out study she collects*

her prize.

A prize, indeed, for all of us to share! And this month's bounty promises more than beautiful spring flowers. May 22 (1 p.m. EST) is the date of the annual Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award event. This year, as you know, we will be celebrating the prolific body of work of our friend and fellow Guild member Catherine Reef. This Zoom event is free and open to all, and registration is required. Event Chair Mary Amato has worked creatively to make this a memorable occasion for Cathy and all who participate. Please join us!

Last month, the Guild welcomed young adult author Darcie Little Badger and her editor at Levine Querido, Nick Thomas. Their conversation, moderated by Guild member Monica Valentine, was filled with fun and fascinating stories about their work and lives. Little Badger combines her empathic writing for children with curiosity for all things mysterious, magical and downright eerie! Her writing also features lore from her Lipan Apache heritage. Thomas shared his experience working with Little Badger on her debut novel, *Elatsoe*, and their upcoming author-editor collaboration, *A Snake Falls to Earth*.

Last month the Guild's chosen organization supporting racial justice in children's literature and education was MIGIZI. MIGIZI, located in Minneapolis, has a mission to "provide a strong circle of support that nurtures the educational, social, economic and cultural development of American Indian youth." We collected \$325 in small donations, which will be given to MIGIZI as a gift from Members and Friends of the Children's Book Guild. Thank you to all who donated.

Until next time, I'm wishing all of you plenty of time out in the sunshine, communing with flowers, whether found in gardens, parks or a crack in the sidewalk. As Rilke noted, "so many verses." Enjoy!

Karen

***from *Sonnets to Orpheus* (I, 21), Rainer Maria Rilke, translation by David Hills**

GUILD MEMBER MONICA VALENTINE IN CONVERSATION WITH DARCIE LITTLE BADGER AND NICK THOMAS

by Valerie O. Patterson

The April 15, 2021, Children's Book Guild Speaker Series meeting featured award-winning author Darcie Little Badger, Levine Querido senior editor Nick Thomas and Guild member Monica Valentine in conversation. Little Badger is a Lipan Apache writer and earth scientist (with a bachelor's degree in geosciences from Princeton and a Ph.D. in oceanography from Texas A&M) whose critically acclaimed debut young adult novel *Elatsoe* has won numerous awards and was named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 best fantasy novels. The novel also is a finalist for the Norton Nebula Awards for YA and middle-grade science fiction and fantasy. Little Badger's short fiction, nonfiction and comics have appeared in such publications as *Marvel's Voices: Indigenous Voices #1*.

Introducing her debut novel, Little Badger explained that protagonist Ellie, a Lipan Apache, seeks to solve the murder of her cousin and obtain justice for her family even as things seem stacked against her. Little Badger said the book is a mystery-fantasy fusion in which monsters, ghosts and magic appear, and Ellie investigates with the help of her ghost dog, Kirby, and her best friend, Jay.

Thomas asked Little Badger about the genesis of the novel, which *Time* magazine called "groundbreaking." Little Badger said she began writing and thinking about ghost animals as a teen and wrote a scary story about an attic haunted by a ghost parrot. She originally started the work that would become *Elatsoe* with an adult protagonist. Ten thousand words in, Little Badger realized that the story needed to be told from a teen perspective. Once she settled on the protagonist, it took her less than two years to write and edit the manuscript and send it to an agent.

Recounting an earlier interview, Thomas noted that Little Badger assessed the lack of representation of indigenous peoples in books for young readers as akin to standing before "a funhouse mirror with no reflection." Little Badger said she was a voracious reader of books as a child, but none portrayed the culture in which she grew up. She started to doubt herself and her reality, despite having strong family support and community connections. She expressed happiness at seeing more books from an indigenous perspective and said that, judging by the success of *Elatsoe*, the wider world wants to read more about other cultures.

In response to Little Badger's question about why he chose *Elatsoe*, Thomas said her voice struck him most. He also liked the unusual phrasing and structure, the way Little Badger wove in the protagonist's sixth great-grandmother, and the sense of love and compassion coursing through the novel. He said he was happy to find voices that we haven't heard before.

Concerning the cover art and illustrations that open each chapter, Little Badger said that artist Rovina Cai's illustrations, up for a Lodestar Hugo

Award, tell a separate story about the sixth great-grandmother that connects to the main plot. The artist, who had to convey a lot without words, researched Apache dress over the centuries.

Acknowledging *Elatsoe* as a fusion of fantasy, science fiction, magical realism and indigenous futurism, Valentine asked Little Badger to explain how and why Lipan Apache culture infuses the book. Little Badger explained that Native writers' storytelling techniques defy genre conventions. For example, what might be elements of fantasy or magic to some people might not be that at all to indigenous peoples. With an academic background in science rather than literature, Little Badger admits she does not always know literary terms and genre expectations. She writes from the heart. Her science background does inform her writing, however. For example, the novel's ghost ocean and trilobites grew out of her science education.

Both Thomas and Valentine spoke highly of Little Badger's animal characters, especially Kirby, Ellie's ghost dog. Kirby was based on the dog Little Badger had while growing up, an English springer spaniel from a shelter that was the gentlest and sweetest dog she has known.

Valentine asked about the distinctions between magic and ancestral knowledge and between justice and vengeance. Little Badger indicated she wanted to be specific about magic, defining it as an extra-dimensional force that can influence things on earth. It is distinct from knowledge about the earth passed down through ancestors. Sometimes people say indigenous ceremonies are "magic," but a powwow is not a magical ceremony. With respect to revenge versus justice, Little Badger does not have an answer yet, but she says it is an issue she continues to ponder. When grievous harm affects families, a desire exists not only for accountability but for equal hurt to occur to those who have caused harm; those emotions lie heavily on people.

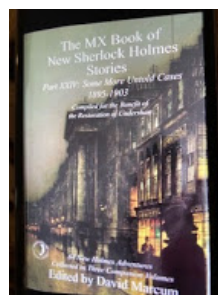
Asked about her childhood reading, Little Badger said her favorite books were fantasies and science fiction. She loved Goosebumps, Animorphs, and the Redwall series, in which she especially loved the badgers. During his childhood, Thomas read His Dark Materials, fantasies by Jonathan Stroud, Animorphs, and books by Octavia Butler and Ursula Le Guin.

Valentine asked Little Badger and Thomas to reflect on *Elatsoe*'s success. Little Badger pointed to the dog Kirby as one reason for it. Another is that Ellie's search for justice resonates with readers young and old. Not only does the story bring them a sense of strength, but it also can bring them solace. Thomas said that *Elatsoe* feeds a hunger for books that speak to the indigenous experience, and that using the fantasy genre to paint reality in today's world draws readers in.

Thomas shared a cover reveal for Little Badger's new book, *A Snake Falls to Earth*, another YA fantasy mystery that spans two worlds. It is due out in October. Little Badger also is working on a graphic novel.

The conversation with Little Badger, Thomas and Valentine was enlightening and inspiring, and Karen Deans ended the afternoon with a warm thank you to Valentine and both guests

MEMBER NEWS



BRENDA SEABROOKE's ninth Sherlock Holmes pastiche, writing as Dr. Watson, was just published in edition XIV of the MX anthology. The edition received a starred review from *Publishers Weekly*, and Brenda's story "The Case of the Accused Cook" was mentioned as plausibly fleshing out the character of Inspector Lestrade. All royalties from these MX editions support Stepping Stones, the special-needs school housed in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's former home.



KALLI DAKOS's book *My Story Friend* will be released in May. In the book, a child treks across the land in search of someone who will listen to his sad story. He meets a gruff mountain man who doesn't like unhappy stories and a cabbage farmer who is too busy to listen. Finally, he finds an old woman by a fire who takes the time to listen with her heart. The sheer act of telling his story to someone who really cares lifts his heavy heart and helps him find solutions to his problems. The child discovers that a Story Friend is one of the greatest treasures we can find. Even if it is a hard journey, we must search for this special friendship.



Two handmade books by **PAIGE BILLIN-FRYE** will be in two shows this spring. Paige designed both books on cake themes.



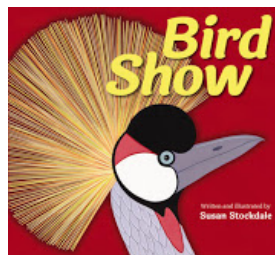
The first is part of a group project called "Let's Eat Cake," with the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Guild of Book Workers. Each participant made a page for the book and sent a copy to each of the others. The artists then bound the pages in their own unique bindings. Had the pandemic ended, the books would have been mounted in a physical show in Philadelphia. For now, though, all 26 can be seen online at <https://dvc-gbw.org/lets-eat-cake/>.

"Once I got going with creating a book that looked like a piece of cake," Paige states, "I kept going!" The second book will be part of the Creative Crafts Council Biennial Show at Strathmore Hall in North Bethesda, MD, in June and July of this year. The CCC is a consortium of 11 fine craft guilds from around the DC/MD/VA region. The show will also be online at: <https://www.creativecraftscouncil.org/2021-biennial.html>.



SUSAN L. ROTH's newest book, *Little Doves, Pequeñas Tórtolas*, published by Barranca Press, was officially out on April Fools Day 2021.

With text in English and Spanish, it is "a bilingual celebration of birds and a baby," Susan writes.



SUSAN STOCKDALE will present *Bird Show* as a participant on the Gaithersburg Book Festival's virtual **Picture Books You'll Love** panel, on Thursday, May 27, at 5 p.m. Laminated pages displaying her books *Carry Me!* and *Stripes of All Types* will be featured at public sites in Gaithersburg, MD, as part of the festival's **StoryWalk® project**.

FRED BOWEN, HENA KHAN and DEBORAH WILES will also take part in the festival, which will be presented virtually throughout May. Learn more about the 2021 Gaithersburg Book Festival here: <https://www.gaithersburgbookfestival.org>.

On May 5, at 4:30 p.m., **TERRY CATASUS JENNINGS** will lead a writers' workshop for all kids who would like to participate in the WETA PBS Kids Writers Contest. Information on how to participate can be found at WETA.org/write.



Picture courtesy of Jennifer O'Connell

LEZLIE EVANS recently donned a dino costume to celebrate the US release of her latest picture book, *I'm a Feel-O-Saur*. The virtual book launch, hosted by The King's English Bookshop in Salt Lake City, included a visit with a real paleontologist, games, a craft demonstration, a Q&A and, of course, a book reading. *I'm a Feel-O-Saur*, illustrated by Kate Chappell, features a diverse group of children, all dressed up in adorable dinosaur costumes, with names such as Grumpy-saurus, Happy-saurus, and Scared-o-saurus. The rhyming text reassures young readers that whatever their mood is today, it's all OK! This title was released in the UK earlier this year.

Virtual Programs at Politics and Prose

During the pandemic, Politics and Prose continues to host free events for children and adults--virtually. These can be viewed live, in real time, or afterward, as recordings. You can find P&P's events calendar and register for events at: <https://www.politics-prose.com/events>. (Advance registration is required to receive a link.)

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