

**Susan B.A. Somers-Willett**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

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Department of English, The University of Texas at Austin  
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**EDUCATION**

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| 2003      | <b>Ph.D., American Literature</b><br>With additional doctoral portfolios in Women's Studies and Cultural Studies<br>Developed the Poetry and Poetics graduate concentration in English | <b>The University of Texas at Austin</b> |
| 1998      | <b>M.A., Creative Writing</b><br>With a concentration in Poetry  | <b>The University of Texas at Austin</b> |
| 1995      | <b>A.B., Anthropology and Women's Studies</b><br>Phi Beta Kappa, <i>Cum Laude</i>  | <b>Duke University</b>                   |
| Fall 1993 | <b>Duke in New York Arts Program</b>   | <b>New York University</b>               |

**TEACHING INTERESTS**

Creative Writing, 20<sup>th</sup> Century/Contemporary American Poetry and Poetics, African American Literature and Culture, Women's Studies, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies

**TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**Visiting Writer and Lecturer, English Department, 2008-2009**

- *341L: Advanced Poetry Workshop*
- *379S: Senior Seminar: Poetry and Performance*
- *376M: African American Poetry and Poetics*

**Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA**

**Visiting Artist, Center for the Arts in Society, 2006-2007**

- *64-401/76-401/76-701: Contemporary American Poetry, Poetics, and Publics* (senior/graduate seminar)
- *64-301/76-211: Poetry and Performance*

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

**Visiting Assistant Professor and Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, English Department, 2004-2006**

- *461: Contemporary American Poetry and Poetics* (senior/graduate course)
- *460: Feminism and the African American Literary Tradition* (senior/graduate course)
- *274: Poetry and Performance*

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**Assistant Director of the Creative Writing Program, 2001-2003**

Duties: To help develop curricula for introductory-level creative writing courses, organize a reading series, develop an advertising campaign for the program to appear in trade journals, advise undergraduate writers about pursuing graduate creative writing degrees, and design and maintain website for the graduate concentration.

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**Assistant Instructor, English Department, 1998-2002**

- *318L: Introductory Creative Writing Workshop*
- *318L: Women and the Writing of Poetry*
- *309K: Race, Gender, and the Image in Black Culture*
- *306: First-Year Rhetoric and Composition*

## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

- Quiver* (poetry). *VQR Poetry Series*, University of Georgia Press, 2009.
- The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America* (scholarly criticism), University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- Roam* (poetry). Crab Orchard Award Series in Poetry Open Competition Award, Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.

### Selected Poetry

- “The Last Known Confederate Civil War Widow Writes from the Dead Letter Office of Heaven” and “Insomnia Chiaroscuro,” *If These Walls Could Speak* installation, Blanton Museum of Art, 2008.
- “The Golden Lesson,” *The Iowa Review*, April 2008.
- “Half-Life,” *Gulf Coast*, Summer/Fall 2008.
- “*Petites Curie*” and “Object Lesson: Horses,” *Indiana Review* 29.2, Winter 2007.
- “Campanology” and “Oppenheimer’s Lament,” *West Branch*, Fall/Winter 2007.
- “*Girl, 7, Seeking U.S. Flight Record, Dies in Crash*,” “The Birds,” *Connecticut Review*, Spring 2007.
- “The Order of a House” and “Cotyledon,” *Pebble Lake Review*, Spring 2007.
- “Ophelia’s Technicolor G-String” and “The Gift,” *Spoken Word Revolution Redux*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2007.
- “What the Doctors Forget to Tell You About Morphine,” *Poets & Writers Online*, October 2006.
- “Thaw and the Beginning of Everything,” *Painted Bride Quarterly* Issue 75, 2006.
- “Notes for Living in NOLA,” *RATTLE*, Summer 2006.
- “Darwin Strikes a Match,” “First Sex,” “My Natural History,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 2006.
- “Cow Song,” *Verse Daily*, Poem of the Day, May 8, 2006.
- “Decorum,” “The Boy Who Would Be Achilles,” “Cow Song,” *Crab Orchard Review*, Winter/Spring 2006.
- “Polaris.” Ann Stanford Poetry Prize, First Place winner selected by Al Young, *Southern California Anthology*, Volume XXI, 2006.
- “Celestial Music,” Finalist, Annual Writing Contest, *GSU Review*, Spring 2005.
- “Virginia Dare (*i-vi*).” *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review*, Spring/Summer 2005.
- “Circus Acts: Ring One,” “Circus Acts: Ring Three,” “The Naming of Eve.” *The Cream City Review*, Spring 2005.
- “Heat.” *Iris: A Journal About Women*, Spring 2004.
- “Self-Portrait as Interstate 10.” *Big City Lit Review*, June 2003.
- “Cowboys and Indians.” *The St. Ann’s Review*, Summer/Fall 2003.
- “A Note on the Type.” *Spoon River Poetry Review*, Finalist, Editor’s Prize, Fall 2002.
- “Circe with Her Hair Down,” “Where He Lives Rhymes with Rome,” “Self-Portrait as Interstate 10.” *The Madison Review*, Spring 2000. Winner of the Phillis Smart Young Prize in Poetry.
- “Ohio Season.” *Midwest Poetry Review*, July 1999.
- “Ophelia’s Technicolor G-String.” *Earth’s Daughters* 52, 1999.
- “Dedications for the 8th Ward Clinic.” *Beloit Poetry Journal*, Winter 1997-1998.
- “The Blood Club.” *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review*, Spring/Summer 1998.
- “Song of Lady Day at Midnight.” *This Order* no. 2, Summer 1998.
- “A Pain, A Fencepost, A Black-and-White Film.” *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, Fall/Winter 1998.
- “My Father’s Absence in Africa,” “The Gift,” “What the Doctors Forget to Tell You About Morphine,” “In Memory of a Girl.” *Spoon River Poetry Review*, Fall 1996.

### Articles

- “Can Slam Poetry Matter?” Introduction, Tribute Issue Celebrating Poetry Slam’s 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary, *RATTLE* 13.1, 2007.
- “Def Poetry’s Public: Spoken Word Poetry and the Racial Politics of Going Mainstream.” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 8/9, 2006.
- “Slam Poetry and the Cultural Politics of Performing Identity.” *Journal of the Midwestern Modern Language Association* 38.1, 2005.
- “Authenticating Voices: Slam Poetry, Politics, and Performances of Black Identity.” *Mantis Journal of Poetry and Poetics* 3, Stanford University, 2003.

“Collateral Damage: Faculty Free Speech after 9/11.” Co-authored with Patricia Somers. *TCRecord Online* Special Issue on Education and September 11th, Teachers College, Columbia University, Fall 2002.

“Representing” Slam Poetry: Ambivalence, Gender, and Black Authenticity in *Slam*.” *Text, Practice, Performance Journal of Cultural Studies* 3.1, 2002.

“Group Piece Discussion on the Group Piece.” Co-authored with Mike Henry et al. *Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry*. Ed. Gary Mex Glazner. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2000.

### Interviews and Reviews

“Performing the Academy.” Cover Story by Jeremy Richards, Poetry Foundation Website, 7 June 2007.

“A ‘Sacred Condition’: A Review of Li-Young Lee’s *Book of My Nights*.” *E3W Review of Books*. Ethnic and Third World Interest Group, The University of Texas at Austin, Spring 2002.

“Music in the Language: A Conversation with Lucille Clifton.” *The American Voice*, Summer 1999.

Review of *Chicana Falsa and Other Stories of Death, Identity and Oxnard* by Michelle Serros. *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* 12, Fall/Winter 1998.

### SELECTED HONORS

#### Grants, Fellowships, and Teaching Awards

Center for Arts in Society Visiting Scholar Fellowship, Carnegie Mellon University, 2006-2007.

Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2004-2006.

American Dissertation Fellowship, American Association of University Women, 2002-2003.

Keene Fellowship for Contributions in Writing, The University of Texas at Austin, 2002-2003.

David Bruton, Jr. Fellowship, The University of Texas at Austin, 2002-2003.

J.M. Coetzee Distinguished Alumnus Fellowship, The University of Texas at Austin, 2001-2002.

Nomination, Teaching Excellence Award, The University of Texas at Austin, 2000-2001.

Nomination, Outstanding Teacher Award, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2005-2006.

#### Writing Honors

Finalist, Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer’s Award, 2008.

Emily Clark Balch Prize for Poetry, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 2006.

Finalist, Helen C. Smith Award for Best Book of Poetry (*Roam*), Texas Institute of Letters, 2006.

Pushcart Prize nomination, Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.

Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition selection, *Roam*, 2005.

Robert Frost Foundation Poetry Award, 2005.

Ann Stanford Poetry Prize, *Southern California Anthology*, 2004.

Phyllis Smart Young Prize in Poetry for best group of poems, *The Madison Review*, 2000.

Louis Sudler Prize for Excellence in the Arts, Duke University, 1995.

Academy of American Poets Award, Duke University, 1994.

#### Residencies

Hedgebrook Foundation Fellowship, May-June 2007.

Millay Colony for the Arts, Martha Martin Fellowship, July 2005.

I-Park Artist’s Enclave, November 2004.

Alden B. Dow Center for Creativity, Northwood University, Summer 2004.

Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets, Stadler Center for Poetry, 1994.

### SELECTED PANELS AND LECTURES

“Twenty Years of New York City Slam.” Panelist, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, New York, NY (January 30-February 2, 2008).

“Slam and the Academy.” *National Poetry Slam*, Austin, TX (August 9-12, 2006 and August 7-11, 2007).

“Is There Such a Thing as Slam Poetry?” *National Poetry Slam*, Austin, TX (August 7-11, 2007).

“Surviving in the Small Press World.” Panelist, *National Poetry Slam*, Austin, TX (August 9-12, 2006).

“Slam Poetry and the Academy.” Moderator and Panelist, *Associated Writing Programs Conference*, Austin, TX (March 8-11, 2006).

“*Def Poetry’s* Public: Spoken Word and the Racial Politics of Going Mainstream.” Delivered at *Attention/Inattention: Writers, Scholars, Theorists Conference*, University of Denver (October 7-9, 2005).

- “Poetry in Public Culture.” Moderator, *Attention/Inattention: Writers, Scholars, Theorists Conference*, University of Denver (October 7-9, 2005).
- “Black Art: A Discussion of Adam Pendelton’s Exhibit *Being Here*.” Panelist, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (October 12, 2004).
- “Authenticating Voices: Performances of Black Identity in Slam Poetry.” Solo lecture, *Américo Paredes Colloquium on Cultural Studies* (March 19, 2003).
- “Re-membering Race: Buck, Music, and the Myth of Black Dick in *Boogie Nights*.” Delivered at *Race/Gender/Nation: 6th Annual Graduate Student Conference on Identity, Representation, and Culture*, The University of Texas at Austin (March 2, 2002).
- “‘lucy and her girls’: The Generational Tradition of Lucille Clifton’s Poetry.” Delivered at the *College Literature Association Annual Conference*, New Orleans, LA (April 18-21, 2001).
- “Representing’ Slam Poetry: Realism, Authenticity, and Images of the Black Poet in *Slam*.” Delivered at the *George Horton Moses Society Annual Conference on African American Poetry*, American Literature Association, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (March 31-April 2, 2000).
- “‘Between Vision and View’: Cinema, Consumerism, and the White Male Gaze in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*.” Delivered at *Women@2K:South Central Women’s Studies Association Conference*, Tulane University (March 11-13, 1999).
- “Writing in the White Space: The Politics of Historical Return in Lucille Clifton’s Poetry.” Delivered at the *American Literature Association Annual Conference*, Baltimore, MD (May 27-30, 1999) and the *Boundaries in Question: Designing Women Conference*, University of California at Berkeley (March 6-8, 1998).

#### SELECTED READINGS AND PERFORMANCES

- Blanton Art Museum, Austin, TX 2008.  
 Trinity University, San Antonio, TX 2008.  
 Bowery Poetry Club, New York, NY, 2003, 2007.  
 Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, 2007.  
 Associated Writing Programs Conference, Austin, TX, 2006.  
 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 2006.  
 Gist Street Reading Series, Pittsburgh, PA, 2006.  
 University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, 2006.  
 Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, 2006.  
 Illinois State University, Bloomington, IL 2005.  
 South by Southwest Spoken Word Showcase, Austin, TX, 1998, 2000.  
 National Poetry Slam, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2007.

#### OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Freelance Editor and Web Designer, 1998-present.  
 Contributing Editor, *RATTLE*, Slam Poetry Tribute Issue, Summer 2007.  
 Instructor, Poetry Cross-Training Conference, SUNY Oneonta, 2007.  
 Editor, Holt, Rinehart and Winston (a division of Harcourt Publishing), 2003-2004.  
 Instructor, Grrl Action, a non-profit writing and performance workshop for teenage girls, 2001-2003.  
 Co-Editor, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, 1998.

#### REFERENCES

- Terrance Hayes  
 Professor of Creative Writing, Carnegie Mellon University  
 Phone: 412-268-9195. E-mail: [thaves@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:thaves@andrew.cmu.edu)
- Kurt O. Heinzelman  
 Professor and Director of the Creative Writing Program, The University of Texas at Austin  
 Phone: 512-471-6688. E-mail: [kheinze@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:kheinze@mail.utexas.edu)
- Michael M. Adams  
 Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor of Creative Writing, The University of Texas at Austin  
 Phone: 512-471-8528, 512-471-1601. E-mail: [adameve@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:adameve@mail.utexas.edu)

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