

SARAH CYPHER

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BRIEF BIO

I am an award-winning writer, instructor, and freelance editor in Austin, Texas. I write literary fiction with a speculative twist and am represented by Adam Schear at DeFiore and Company (adam@defliterary.com).

EDUCATION

MFA in Creative Writing, Fiction | The Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College (2017–2020)

- Thesis essay: *The Garden Wall: How the Unreal Enables the Real in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West*

Certificate, Arabic Language and Culture | Pennsylvania Western University (2011–2015)

- Six semesters in written and spoken Modern Standard Arabic, 4.0 GPA

B.A. Creative Writing, Minor in Psychology | Carnegie Mellon University (1998–2002)

- Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society

Study Abroad, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland | Iowa Writers' Workshop (Summer 2001)

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

The Skin and Its Girl: A Novel, Ballantine Books/Penguin Random House, April 2023

The Editor's Lexicon: Essential Writing Terms for Novelists, self-published reference for my editing clients, April 2010

SELECTED SHORT FICTION

Brood, *Rowayat* Issue 7, November 2023

Abu Hani's Middle Eastern Foods and Gifts, *New Ohio Review*, Fall 2021

Ghost Town, *North American Review*, August 2020. Anthologized for educators in the open-access online textbook, *Elements of Creative Writing*, eds. Rachel Morgan, Jeremy Schraffenberger, and Grant Tracey, "Chapter 7: Setting, Stillness and Voice," 2023, available at manifold.open.umn.edu/projects/elements-of-creative-writing.

The Overkill, *LEON Literary Review*, June 2020

Hamsa, *Crab Orchard Review*, September 2006

SELECTED ESSAYS

Who Comes to the Ancestor Picnic?, *The Rumpus*, forthcoming in summer 2024

7 Books about Storytelling by Arab Diaspora Writers, *Electric Literature*, April 2023

8 Books That Use Direct-Address Storytelling, *Electric Literature*, April 2023

Feral, Beautiful, and Free: Sarah Cypher on Turkish Cats, *Literary Hub*, April 2023

A Feral Year: The Novel Beyond the End of Communication, *Majuscule* vol. 8, 2023

A Letter from Washington, DC, *Majuscule*, essay, August 2021

A Letter from California, *Majuscule*, October 2019

Get to Know the Lesbians!, *Salon*, January 2013

PUBLISHED EXCERPTS

Postmortem, *Mizna*, vol. 24.1, 2023

The Lord's Tower Had Many Fine Rooms, *LEON Literary Review*, June 2020

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

The Novel, Itself, Is Both a Telling and a Memorial, interviewed by George Abraham for *Mizna* 24.1, 2023

"The Skin and Its Girl" Tells an Intricate Family Story, interviewed by Sarah Nielson for *Shondaland*, April 27, 2023

Authors Making a Difference: Celebrating Women's History Month with a Panel of Women and Gender-Expansive Authors, interviewed for the Trevor Project, March 7, 2023

SELECTED BOOK REVIEWS

Kaveh Akbar's *Martyr!*: "Kaveh Akbar's 'Martyr!' is a wonderfully strange delight," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2024

Khaled Khalifa's *No One Prayed Over Their Graves*: "A catastrophic flood alters a city – and a lifelong friendship," *Washington Post*, July 18, 2023

Isabella Hammad's *Enter Ghost*: "Isabella Hammad tackles 'Hamlet' and politics in her clever new novel," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2023

Diana Abu Jaber's *Fencing with the King*: "In 'Fencing with the King,' a search for family truths puts a woman at odds with her powerful uncle," *Washington Post*, March 15, 2022

Over 30 book reviews in *The Oregonian*, 2005–2011

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent Editor, Sole Proprietor | The Threepenny Editor (January 2003–Present)

- Provide developmental and substantive editing to dozens of writers per year
- Manage small subcontractor staff of editors and book designers
- Maintain business operations, IT, accounting, and marketing efforts

Advisory Committee | Forest Avenue Press, Portland, Oregon (Remote, June 2015–2017)

- Submissions reader and selection committee
- Networking events in Portland, Oregon and New York City

Technical Editor | Dr. Myung Jhon, Carnegie Mellon Chemical Engineering Dept. (August 2001–June 2002)

- Edit draft textbook chapters and ESL graduate student papers according to house style

Assistant Editor | Carnegie Mellon University Press (August 1999–June 2002)

- Select short story collections for publication and provide editorial letters
- Attended annual AWP conference to gain book sales experience

Bookseller | Waldenbooks, Natrona Heights, PA (November 1996–1998)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Writing with Writers, 15-session in-person craft seminar, Furman University, planned for May 2024

What to Expect When Debuting, 3-hour virtual class, The Loft Literary Center, March 2, 2024

Best Practices in Applying for Grants and Residencies for Writers, 3-hour virtual class, The Loft Literary Center, February 17, 2024

One-session master class and reading, Furman University, January 25–26, 2024

Breaking Storytelling Norms Through Form: A Generative Writing Class, 4-week virtual class, Center for Fiction, November 2023

First-Person & the Hidden I: A Revision Class, 4-week virtual class, The Loft Literary Center, November 2023

First-Person & the Hidden I: A Craft Class, 90-minute in-person undergraduate session at Lebanon Valley College, September 18, 2023.

Breaking Storytelling Norms Through Borrowed Forms: A Generative Writing Class, 60-minute in-person community session at Lebanon Valley College, September 16, 2023.

Troubleshooting the "Revise and Resubmit" Rejection, 3-hour virtual revision workshop, The Loft Literary Center, August 17, 2023

Best Practices in Applying for Grants and Residencies for Writers, 3-hour virtual class, The Loft Literary Center, August 5, 2023

Breaking Storytelling Norms Through Symbiotic Forms: A Generative Writing Class, 4-week virtual generative workshop, The Loft Literary Center, July–August 2023

Discovery and Redefinition: Creating Openness and Agency via Queer Growth Routes, MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, one-session in-person MFA graduate class, January 2020.

Crafting Diplomatic Author Queries, Editorial Freelancers Association guest speaker, Bay Area Chapter, November 30, 2017.

Make Your Query Letter and First Pages Pop: All About Voice, community class with poet Kate Gray, September 24, 2016.

Biannual community workshop facilitation, Write Around Portland, 2006–2009.

PANEL EXPERIENCE

First Time's the Charm: Debut Writers on How to Debut, with Holly Wendt, Kate Reed Petty, and Sarah Marian Seltzer, moderated by Jeremy Broyles | AWP, St. Louis, February 2024

1+ Generation SWANA Writers on Writing "Home," moderator, with Zaina Arafat, Eman Quotah, and Leila Chatti | RAWIFest+Mizna, Radius of Arab American Writers biannual conference, October 28, 2023 (hybrid)

Mizna “Myth and Memory” Launch and Discussion, with Lena Khalaf Tuffaha and Zeina Hashem Beck, moderated by George Abraham | Wordplay Festival, Minneapolis, July 8, 2023
Pathway to a Published Novel, with Adam Schear and Chelcee Johns, moderated by Kristine Hansen | American Society of Journalists and Authors annual conference, June 13, 2023 (virtual)
Penguin Random House Arab American Heritage Month panel, with Reem Assil and Malaka Gharib, moderated by Lana Barkawi | April 16, 2023 (virtual)
Feature, Not Flaw: Gatekeepers Discuss Support for Unconventional Stories, with Chelcee Johns and Jeremy Schraffenberger, moderated by tammy lynne stoner | AWP, Seattle, March 2023
Creative Writing Salon: On Style, with Taylor Brorby and Maria Nazos, moderated by Jeremy Schraffenberger | University of Northern Iowa, March 2022 (virtual)
Creative Writing Careers, with Laura Leigh Morris | Carnegie Mellon University English Department 50th Anniversary, Pittsburgh, October 2018.

INVITED SPEAKER

GUEST SPEAKER

Reading and lecture, Furman University, January 2024
Visiting writer, Carnegie Mellon University, October 2023
Michaelson, Briner & Kildahl Literary Symposium, Wartburg College, 45-minute reading and talk for National Coming Out Day, October 9, 2023
Archway Reading Series, Dubuque University, October 12, 2023
“Writing and Finishing Long Fiction Projects,” Harvard Extension Capstone course taught by Leah De Forest, November 19, 2022

SELECTED PODCASTS AND RADIO

All interviews available online through links found at www.sarahcypher.com/media

Debutiful, “First Taste: Sarah Cypher Reads From The Skin And Its Girl,” July 24, 2023
P&T Knitwear, “The Hook with Sarah Cypher,” June 8, 2023
KVNF (Paonia, CO) with Taya Jae’s The Pen and the Sword: “Sarah Cypher discusses symbolism, the role of queer stories and defining truth in her debut Novel, The Skin and Its Girl,” April 29, 2023
Pop Fiction Women, “Sarah Cypher: Complicated Conversations Series,” April 27, 2023
Queer Everything, “Sarah Cypher, author of The Skin and Its Girl,” April 28, 2023
The Chills at Will Podcast, “Episode 179 with Sarah Cypher,” April 24, 2023

SELECTED READINGS

University of Northern Iowa, visiting writer for National Coming Out Day, October 11, 2023
Prairie Lights Books (Iowa City, IA) solo reading and talk for Iowa City Book Festival, October 10, 2023
Lebanon Valley College, annual writer-in-residence moderated conversation and reading, September 25, 2023
Books in Bloom Festival (Columbia, MD), reading and conversation with Beth & Julia Singleton, May 13, 2023
White Whale Books (Pittsburgh, PA), reading and conversation with Sarah Sabah Cetra, May 5, 2023
The Writer’s Center (Washington, DC), reading and conversation with Zach Powers, May 4, 2023
The Center for Fiction (Brooklyn, NY), reading and conversation with Zaina Arafat, May 3, 2023
East City Bookshop (Washington, DC), reading and conversation with Lupita Aquino, April 25, 2023
Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa, NC), MFA graduate reading, January 20, 2020

GRANTS

Vermont Studio Center artist fellowship to attend June 2023 residency (2023)
Elizabeth George Foundation Grant (\$20k) for Palestine research in Nablus and writing time (2019)
Rona Jaffe Creative Writing Fellowship (\$22k) for two semesters of MFA (2017–2018)
Creative Capacity Fund Quick Grant to attend NorCal Writers Retreat (February 2017)
BinderCon LA Scholarship (March 2015)
Creative Capacity Fund Quick Grant to attend BinderCon (November 2015)
Key West Literary Seminar Scholarship for Diana Abu-Jaber’s workshop (August 2015)
Vira I. Heinz Study Abroad Scholarship (2001)

ACCOLADES & HONORS

FOR THE SKIN AND ITS GIRL

Barbara Gittings Literature Award, a Stonewall Book Award presented by the American Library Association for the best gay or lesbian novel of the year (January 2024)
Starred reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist* (2023)
Positive reviews: NPR, *New York Times Book Review*, *Pittsburgh City Paper*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Oregonian Bookpage*, *Bustle*, *AudioFile Magazine* (2023)
Pushcart Prize nominations for “Ghost Town” and “The Overkill” (December 2020)
CRAFT magazine’s First Chapters Contest, honorable mention (December 2019)
Marianne Russo Award for a Novel-in-Progress, finalist, (September 2019)
Donna Grear Memorial Award, Carnegie Mellon University (May 2002)

RESIDENCIES

Lebanon Valley College, “Writing: A Life” annual writer-in-residence program (September 2023)
Vermont Studio Center, resident, Johnson, VT (June 2023)
Headlands Center for the Arts, artist-in-residence, Sausalito, CA (Summer 2022)
Oregon Writers Colony, Rockaway Beach, OR (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009)

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS ATTENDED

Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference, St. Louis, MO, planned for February 2024
RAWIFest + Mizna, Minneapolis, MN, October 2023
Iowa City Book Festival, Iowa City, IO, October 2023
Wordplay, Minneapolis, MN, July 2023
Books in Bloom Festival, Columbia, MD, May 2023
Epigraph Reading Festival, virtual, April 2023
Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference, Seattle, WA, March 2023
Muse and the Marketplace, Boston, Massachusetts, April 2020, virtual
Palestine Festival of Literature, West Bank, Palestine, April 2019
Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference, Portland, OR, March 2019
Northern California Writers Retreat, Santa Cruz, CA, March 2017
BinderCon, Los Angeles, March 2016
Key West Literary Seminar, Key West, Florida, January 2016
BinderCon, New York City, November 2015
Shubbak Arab Literature Festival, London, UK, July 2015
Backspace Writers Conference, New York City, May 2013
San Miguel Writers Conference, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, February 2012
Backspace Writers Conference, New York City, May 2009
Association of Writers & Writing Programs Conference, Palm Springs, CA, February 2001

MEMBERSHIPS

Authors Guild since 2021
Radius of Arab American Writers since 2021
Center for Biological Diversity since 2016
Editorial Freelancers Association since 2014
Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society since 2002
St. George’s Syrian Orthodox Church, Arnold, PA since 1981

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

LITERARY COMMUNITY

Bay Area Fellow jury member, Headlands Center for the Arts (April–May 2024)
Fiction contest judge (e.g., Mesa Community College student writing competition, 2023–2024)
Book blurber (Christine Evans’s *Nadia*, Susan Muaddi Darraj’s *Behind You Is the Sea*, Nasser Abu Srouf’s *The Tale of a Wall*)
Book event conversation partner (e.g., Christine Evans’s *Nadia*, People’s Book, Takoma, MD, September 2023)
Career day speaker at local high schools (e.g., Fairfax County School District, April & November 2023)
Offers regular content on writing & publishing to my free Substack, *The Bird’s Eye*, 2022–present

Guest editor (e.g., *LEON Literary Review* First Chapters Special Issue, Issue 15, 2021)

Recommendation letters for clients and students, 2007–present

Active in informal community literary and critique groups, 2002–present

VOLUNTEERING

Twitter volunteer team leader, Editorial Freelancers Association, 2015–2021

Diversity Initiative member, Editorial Freelancers Association, 2018–2020

Volunteer mentor for Communities in Schools, San Antonio, 2011–2012

Volunteer workshop facilitator for Write Around Portland, 2006–2009