

# Gregg Wilhelm, MA, MFA

Writer | Publisher | Teacher | Arts Administrator

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## WORKS IN PROGRESS

### **Hotel COVID** (novel)

Twenty-three stories (minus a 13th floor), 440 rooms, more than 100 “residents,” three dozen medical staff, and three months in the summer of a pandemic. Plus ghosts! Hotel COVID explores the transformation of a 100-year-old landmark hotel into an urban triage, respite, and isolation center during one of America’s most extraordinary summers. In May 2020, the Lord Baltimore Hotel became home for hundreds of the city’s most at-risk populations: people battling addiction, people with mental health conditions, people experiencing homelessness, people living in multi-generational families, and others residing in congregate settings. The pre-pandemic challenges these residents faced on the outside followed them inside the hotel. Residents went missing, scored drugs, ignored protocols, fought, and were hospitalized, but they also missed their families, lost jobs, were evicted from homes, and struggled to keep their lives together. Three main story threads follow Amalia and her children isolated from a large immigrant family, Krista a young Johns Hopkins nurse thrown into a role of leadership among the chaos, and Cunny the ex-military-turned-hotel-manager trying to keep order. Meanwhile, readers are guided through these interweaving stories by the apparition of 9-year-old Sadie, based on the “real” ghost of the daughter of Great Depression-ruined “jumpers” from the hotel’s 19th floor deck (the ghosts of Babe Ruth, Amelia Earhart, and nurses from the 1929 University of Maryland Nurses Alumni Association annual banquet make cameos—as mediums say—at the “crowded” hotel). Then, in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, which occurred just weeks after the fifth anniversary of Freddie Gray’s death while in the custody of the Baltimore Police Department, protesters flooded the streets around the hotel. The fuse to the powder keg that Baltimore can be seemed primed to be lit.

### **Untitled Howard Cooper Project** (novel)

Howard Cooper, an African American resident of Towson, was accused of the assault, rape, and attempted murder of a white teenager in 1885. Just 15 himself, Cooper was lynched by a mob at the old Baltimore County Courthouse, which still stands today. Reports noted that the conductor of the Maryland & Pennsylvania railroad line slowed the train down as it approached the Towson overpass at York Road so that riders could view the swaying corpse. I have long been concerned about Maryland’s racist and murderous past, such as lynchings on the Easter Shore covered by HL Mencken and part of the tapestry of a memoir of an African American poet I published. Our move a few blocks north of the city coincided with the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project’s erecting a historical marker on the courthouse site. Set in a swath of land from Hampton Mansion across Towson to forgotten Rockland, land cut by the Jones Falls, this fictionalized retelling of a historical tragedy seeks to humanize an already dramatic event to reach a wider readership.

### **Backbeat the Waves** (novel)

The summer of 1977 is going to rock thirteen-year-old Mercury Widdershins’s world. Over the course of a month, his Elvis-infatuated single mother struggles to keep the family, his strung-out sister drifts away from what remains of the family, his transit authority uncle stresses over kickbacks and corners cut with the new toll bridge that completes the city’s beltway circuit, the

King of Rock and Roll dies, and Voyager 2 blasts into outer space. And foul-mouthed Nixie Fossgrim, Merck's ill young cousin from Appalachia, arrives for one last hope at a cure. Together, Merck and Nixie discover their own liberating music, their unique sexual identities, and their separate solutions to what the future holds. Set in a time between glam rock and filthy punk, in a city not-unlike Baltimore with corner bars, steel mills, and stevedores, *Backbeat the Waves* explores moments when people exist between things: city and country, adolescence and adulthood, male and female, perseverance and mortality. For a summer that witnessed the death of a universal "king" and the launch of human culture into space, the most dramatic events happened at home.

**Maryland: America in Literature** (nonfiction with fiction, nonfiction, and poetry excerpts)

"America in Miniature," coined as a state slogan in 1939, has served to describe the small state of Maryland for nearly a century. With sandy Atlantic shores on its eastern border and the Alleghenies rising 300 miles to the west, the state contains the country's largest estuary, an extensive multi-county metropolitan area, rolling farmland, a vast network of watersheds, a colonial capital that once served as the emerging nation's capital, and a demarcation line that acted as a fulcrum between slave states and free states. It stands to reason that the people who populate these places within Maryland – past and present – and their stories and stanzas are as diverse as the topography. This led to the hypothesis, could Maryland represent "America in literature?" How have these disparate landscapes informed various literary artists? What different types of creative writing captured the people, places, and times in a state just 12,000 square miles, a third of which is water, with more than forty other states measuring larger? We will explore writers of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Some names will be recognizable, many will not. Some will be immediately identifiable as Marylanders, others will not. However, the unifying criterion is these writers' settings and inspirations sprang from their surroundings or other parts of the state, or from their explorations of these places. How does this collection of writers and their art demonstrate that, within its modest footprint we can trace the steps of America in Literature?

**SELECT PUBLICATIONS**

"Checking Out of Hotel COVID: One family's story from the front lines of Baltimore's pandemic healthcare response this year." *Baltimore Magazine*. December 2020. NONFICTION

"Leaning Into Purple Lines," "Sakura," "Thief River Scrap," "Tight with Hemingway," and "Coyotes at Dawn" *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*. Summer 2019. POETRY

"Thief River Scrap" and "Jutting Out." *Gargoyle*. No. 65. 40th Anniversary Edition. POETRY

"Ephibiphobia Rainfall." *Loch Raven Review*. Vol. 1 2016. SHORT STORY

"Jutting Out (Patapsco) and "Arithmetic of an Argument." *The Light Ekphrastic* (Baltimore LED Project). Spring 2015. POETRY

"What Ink." *Gargoyle*. No. 61. Summer 2014. POETRY

"Coal Mines." *Smile, Hon, You're in Baltimore*. Occupational Hazards No. 17. Fall 2013. ESSAY

"The 82nd Eunuch," "Irony (Hemochromatosis)," "Garden City," and "Coyotes." *The Broadkill Review*. Volume 6, No. 6 November/December 2012: 32-33. POETRY

“University Press or Teaching Press: University of Missouri Proposes New Model for Its UP.” *Tampa Review Online*. Publish 2, 2012. ESSAY

“Adoptive Grandmother Continues to Watch Over Me,” *Tampa Review Online*. Publish 1, 2012. NONFICTION

“Black Infiniti: A Used Car Proves the Vehicle For a Local Poet’s Legacy.” *City Paper*. 28 May 2008: 20. NONFICTION

“Reaching Out to Others Living in the ‘War Zone.’” *Johns Hopkins Public Health*. Fall 2006: 13. NONFICTION

“When Depression Is a Family Matter.” *Johns Hopkins Public Health*. Fall 2006: 14. NONFICTION

“Hard-Wired to Heal.” *Johns Hopkins Nursing Magazine*. Spring 2006: 23-27. NONFICTION

“Cutting Through the Smoke” (Devra Davis, *When Smoke Ran Like Water*). *Johns Hopkins Magazine*. June 2003: 36-41. NONFICTION

## PROFESSIONAL

2018- George Mason University  
 Director, Mason Creative Writing (BFA and MFA Programs)  
 Co-Founder, Watershed Lit:  
 Center for Literary Engagement and Publishing Practice  
 Assistant Professor, Department of English  
 Mason’s MFA in Creative Writing is one of the older programs in the country, started in 1980 by novelist Susan Richards Shreve and poet Peter Klappert were its original architects and key faculty. The MFA was the first terminal-degree program in the English Department at Mason. As such, it has always received the attention and solid support from the English Department and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) within which it is housed (an undergraduate BFA program was launched in 2013). Over time, it developed various opportunities for students to expand and deepen their literary citizenship and knowledge of publishing: Fall for the Book literary festival, Stillhouse Press, the Cheuse Center for International Writers, *Poetry Daily*, and two acclaimed literary journals, *phoebe* and *So To Speak*. Guided by award-winning faculty and accomplished publishing professionals, students graduate as emerging writers who are highly prepared to sustain writerly lives and attain career goals. In Fall 2020, launched Watershed Lit as a chartered center of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

- Manage, develop, and adapt graduate and undergraduate creative writing programs in accordance to program guidelines, departmental bylaws, college objectives, and institutional and accrediting bodies’ regulations
- Serve as chief spokesperson and representative for the program at campus, community, and industry functions
- Develop and implement marketing and communications strategies to achieve recruitment, enrollment, and retention goals

- Collaborate with director of composition and director of writing center to evaluate and interview teaching assistantship candidates (TAs receive stipend, tuition waiver, and optional health care coverage)
- Develop, collect, and assess data according to assessment criteria set forth by the department (on both grad and undergrad levels)
- Maintain effective website and social media presence
- Advise students in regard to course registration, program requirements, and professional and/or internship opportunities
- Consult with faculty for academic year course offerings and enrollment goals
- Lead searches for new faculty
- Collaborate with college advancement colleagues to develop, implement, and evaluate various fundraising
- Create ways to coalesce the combined synergy of program assets (Fall for the Book, New Leaves Writers' Conference, Cheuse Center for International Writers, Stillhouse Press, *Poetry Daily*, two highly regarded literary journals) to benefit students, to raise the program's profile among its peer programs and contribute to the English Department's status at the university, to engage and enlighten other campus and community constituents, and to entice donors toward making larger, more transformational gifts
- Serve as executive director of Daily Poetry Association, publishers of *Poetry Daily*
- Teach courses as assigned by the department chair
- Serve the department, college, and university as required
- Created Graduate Professional Assistantships to complement Graduate Teaching Assistantships as funding channel to support talented student-writers who prefer other professional development opportunities outside of the classroom (these positions, in turn, have significantly increased the operational capacities and program outcomes of entities like Fall for the Book, *Poetry Daily*, Stillhouse Press, and the Cheuse Center for International Writers)
- Co-Founded with English Department Chair Watershed Lit: Center for Literary Engagement and Publishing Practice chartered by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (Fall 2020)
- Co-Developed with a faculty peer a graduate Certificate in Publishing Practice (Fall 2022) and undergraduate Minor in Publishing (Fall 2023)

2019- Daily Poetry Association  
Executive Director  
Manage operations, governance, fundraising, advertising, and strategic planning efforts of a nonprofit arts organization that publishes *Poetry Daily*. Founded in 1997, Poetry Daily entered into a partnership with Mason Creative Writing in 2019 and took residence at the Fairfax campus. In addition to overhauling the website (poems.com) and convening a new editorial board, the new leadership model has created a curriculum that dovetails with the online journal and engages Creative Writing students as interns, readers, administrative specialists, and sponsorship managers.

2019- Fall for the Book

Member and Past-Vice Chair, Board of Directors

Assist with organizational governance, strategic planning, and operational capacities of nationally prominent literary festival established in 1998. Especially involved with the four-day live festival's transformation to a year-long online format in the wake of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, both expanding the content delivered and extending the reach of festival sponsors.

2013-2018

Maryland Institute College of Art

Director of Marketing and Enrollment Development

Develop strategy and implement initiatives toward promoting programs and recruiting/retaining students within MICA's School for Professional and Continuing Studies. Division's programs include lifelong-learner studio courses, summer camps for youth, professional development opportunities for artists, two on-line Masters of Professional Studies programs, an MBA/MA in Design Leadership in partnership with Johns Hopkins, and international travel programs.

- Develop, execute, implement, and evaluate messaging and marketing strategy for division, including social media strategies and mobile advertising
- Develop recruiting and retention strategies
- Writing and editing copy for publications/web
- Selects images and provides art direction for publications/web
- Coordinate recruitment and marketing events such as open houses, informational sessions, and exhibitions
- Spokesperson for division with the goal of increasing enrollment

2004-2016

CityLit Project

Founder and Director Emeritus

CityLit Press, Publisher (2010- )

Founded nonprofit literary arts organization that serves readers and writers in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Organization presents literary festivals, conducts writers' workshops, delivers creative writing curricula for youth, inspires diverse audiences of all ages to engage with literature, and publishes work of exceptional literary quality and work of regional interest.

- Executive leadership and strategic planning
- Board development and management
- Budgeting and fiscal oversight
- Development (special events, grant writing, foundation and corporate relations)
- External relations and media relations
- Program creation, implementation, and evaluation
- Traditional and social media marketing, including branding and messaging
- Staff and intern management
- Book and marketing collateral design

*Highlights:*

- CityLit Festival named a "can't miss event on the city's cultural scene" (*Baltimore*)
- Featured authors include Pulitzer Prize winners Edward P. Jones, Steve Coll, and Junot Diaz; National Book Award winners Mark Doty and Jaimy Gordon; biographer Walter Isaacson; poets Edward Hirsch, Tom Lux, Dick Allen, Andrei Codrescu, Michael Collier, and Afaa Michael Weaver;

nonfiction writers Jamal Joseph, Benjamin Busch, Jabari Asim, and Taylor Branch; fiction writers Laura Lippman, Danielle Evans, Alan Cheuse, Terese Svoboda, Thomas Glave, George Saunders, John Darnielle

- Harriss Poetry Prize chapbook contest judges include Michael Salcman, Dick Allen, Tom Lux, and Marie Howe

- 2006-10      Apprentice House  
 Director and Editor-in-Chief  
 Directed day-to-day operations of student-staffed teaching press at Loyola University. Student teams developed, designed, and created marketing strategies for book projects.
- 2004-06      Babe Ruth Museum  
 Director of Communications  
 Directed all communications, marketing, re-branding, and media relations initiatives as the nonprofit organization evolved from a 30-year-old historic house to a major downtown attraction with two facilities (Babe Ruth Birthplace and Sports Legends at Camden Yards).
- 2002-04      Tidewater Publishers  
 Marketing and Production Manager  
 Managed both marketing and production departments for independent book publisher located on Maryland's Eastern Shore.
- 1996-2001    Woodholme House Publishers  
 Director and Editor-in-Chief  
 Founded publishing company with the financial backing of nationally recognized independent bookseller Bibelot, developed brand and editorial direction, and executed day-to-day activities.
- 1995-96      Cathedral Foundation Press  
 Director and Editor  
 Managed book publisher affiliated with the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
- 1992-94      Johns Hopkins University Press  
 Acquisitions Assistant  
 Worked with editors maintaining lists in social sciences, political science, economics, U.S. history, history of technology, and Chesapeake Bay regionalia.

## TEACHING POSTS

- 2018-           George Mason University  
 College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
 Department of English  
*Courses taught:*
- ENGH 495 Capstone and Thesis (BFA)
  - ENGH 607 History and Theory of Publishing Practice and Technology (forthcoming as part of new Certificate in Publishing Practice)
- 2011-13        University of Baltimore  
 School of Communications Design (Creative Writing and Publishing Arts)

*Special courses developed:*

- The Great Zombie: The Intersection of Popular Literature and Pop Culture
- iBook, eBook, uBook: How Technology Has Changed Writing, Publishing, and Reading

2007-11

Loyola University  
Communication Department

*Special courses developed:*

- Book Publishing: From Idea to Writer, From Manuscript to Bound Book
- Book Production: History, Typography, Design, and Formats
- Book Marketing: 21st-Century Strategies for 15th-Century Artifacts

2008-

Various Universities  
Continuing Studies Divisions

Creative writing, book publishing, and marketing courses within adult education divisions at Johns Hopkins University, Community College of Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel Community College

*Special courses developed:*

- Publishing Matrix and Self Wars: Options Beyond Legacy Publishers
- Actual Towns and Fake Burgs: Crafting a Real Sense of Place in Fiction Writing
- Prose and the Profession: Writing the Piece and Getting It Published

## EDUCATION

MFA

Creative Writing, Fiction (University of Tampa, Tampa FL, 2014)

- *Thesis*: “Backbeat the Waves” (novel)
- *Chapbook*: “Out of Miry Clay” (poetry)
- *Essay*: “Off the Map: Creating a Real Sense of Place for Fictitious Towns in Strout’s *Olive Kitteridge* and Kenan’s *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*”
- *Essay*: “Skunks and Armadillos: Foreign Places as Inspiration in Selections by Lowell and Bishop”
- *Mentors*: Terese Svoboda (novel), Erica Dawson (poetry), Jason Ockert (short story), Tony D’Souza (novel, thesis adviser)
- *Guest Lecturers*: Denis Johnson, Miranda July, Peter Meinke, Heather Sellers, Chris Parris-Lamb, Michael Connelly, Arthur Flowers, Nick Flynn, Keith Gessen, Amy Hill Hearth, Eli Horowitz, John Capouya, Ben Lerner, Rebecca Wolff, Francine Prose, Karen Russell, Deborah Treisman, Tom Franklin, George Saunders, Robert Olen Butler, Tom Franklin, Beth Ann Fennelly, Sandra Beasley, Jessica Anthony, Brock Clarke, Kevin Moffett

MA

Theology (St. Mary’s Seminary and University, Baltimore MD, 1994)

- *Thesis*: “Heavy with the Fruits of Violence: Liberation Theology and Revolutionary Violence in Latin America”
- *Primary Reader*: Dr. Stephen Vicchio, College of Notre Dame of Maryland  
*Secondary Reader*: Dr. L. Gregory Jones, Duke University

Graduate

Scholarship Year, Theology (Duke Divinity School, Durham NC, 1991)

- Studied with Stanley Hauerwas
- Audited English course by Reynolds Price

BA Communications / Minor in Fine Arts (Loyola College, Baltimore MD, 1989)  
 • Studied with Karen Fish, David Dobler, Jack Stephens, Paul Lukacs

**SELECT TITLES EDITED/PUBLISHED**

\* = Designed interior and/or cover

**Poetry**

*Baltimore Sons*, Dean Bartoli Smith (Stillhouse Press, 2021)

*Poet Sounds*, Gerry LaFemina and Christine Stroud, eds. (CityLit Press, 2019)\*

*Behind Normalcy*, Burgi Zenhausern (Judged by Erica Dawson, CityLit Press, 2019)\*

*Clash by Night*, Gerry LaFemina and Gregg Wilhelm, eds. (CityLit Press, 2015)\*

*Asphalt*, Rebekah Remington (Judged by Marie Howe, CityLit Press, 2013)\*

*Every Bit of It*, Katherine Bodgen (Judged by Tom Lux, CityLit Press, 2012)

*Famous*, Bruce Sager (Judged by Dick Allen, CityLit Press, 2011)

*An Easy Place / To Die*, Vincent Cellucci (CityLit Press, 2010)

*Supposing for Instance, In the Space-Time Continuum*, John Pursley III (Judged by Lia Purpura, Apprentice House, 2009)

*A Time Before Slaughter*, Paul A. Nelson (Apprentice House, 2009)

**Fiction**

*Basilio Boullosa Stars in the Fountain of Highlandtown*, Rafael Alvarez (CityLit Press, 2017)\*

*Ripple Meets the Deep*, Jason Tinney (CityLit Press, 2014)\*\*

*Habana Libre*, Tim Wendel (CityLit Press, 2013)\*

*City Sages: Baltimore*, Jen Michalski, ed. (CityLit Press, 2010)\*\*

*Oysterback Spoken Here*, Helen Chappell (Woodholme House, 1998)

*The Fountain of Highlandtown*, Rafael Alvarez (Woodholme House, 1997)\*

\*\* Baltimore magazine “Best Book” award winners

**Nonfiction/Photography**

*A Peachy Life: Waiting on Tables and Beating the Odds in the '60s—An Italian-American Woman's Story*, Leonora “Peachy” DiPietro Dixon (CityLit Press, 2011)\*

*Crossroads: Lives & Legacies of Baltimore Jazz*, Mark Osteen, Ed. (Apprentice House, 2010)

*Deranged: Finding a Sense of Place in the Landscape and in the Lifespan*, Jill Sisson Quinn (Apprentice House, 2010)

*Who Killed Donte Manning? The Story of an American Neighborhood*, Rose Marie Berger with Foreword by Jim Wallis (Apprentice House, 2010)

*Flashes in the Night: The Sinking of the Estonia*, Jack A. Nelson (Apprentice House, 2010)\*

*Exhaust the Limits: The Life and Times of a Global Peacebuilder*, Charles F. Dambach (Apprentice House, 2010)

*Prayer for the Morning Headlines: On the Sanctity of Life and Death*, Adrianna Amari, Photography with Poems by Daniel Berrigan and Introduction by Howard Zinn (Apprentice House, 2007)\*

Note: Garnered the last endorsement given by Kurt Vonnegut

*Bodine's Chesapeake Bay Country, Photographs by A. Aubrey Bodine*, Edited by Jennifer Bodine (Tidewater Publishers, 2005)

*Out of the Fog: The Sinking of the Andrea Dora*, Allot Mattsson, English Translation Edited by Gordon W. Paulsen and Bruce G. Paulsen (Tidewater Publishers, 2003)

*Leap Into Darkness: Seven Years on the Run in Wartime Europe*, Leo Bretholz and Michael Olesker (Woodholme House, 2000)\*

*Down on the Shore: The Family and Place that Forged a Poet's Voice*, Adele V. Holden (Woodholme House, 1999)\*

*Fighting Chance: Journeys Through Childhood Cancer*, Harry Connolly with Dr. Curt I. Civin and Foreword by Tom Clancy (Woodholme House, 1998)

*KAL Draws a Crowd*, Kevin Kallaugher (Woodholme House, 1997)

\* Political cartoonist for *The Sun* and *The Economist*

*The Papal Visit: Pope John Paul II in Baltimore* (Cathedral Foundation, 1995)

### **Children's/YA**

*Battle Creek: A Tale of Slavery and Freedom in Colonial Maryland*, Neil Didriksen (CityLit Press, 2013)

*Perry's Baltimore Adventure: A Bird's-Eye View of Charm City*, Peter Dans and Kim Harrell (Tidewater Publishers, 2004)

*Majesty from Assateague*, Harvey Hangman and David Aiken (Children's, Tidewater Publishers, 2003)

## MISCELLANY

Lecturer, panelist, and moderator at several writers' conferences, including Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), Florida Literary Arts Coalition, Mid-Atlantic Fiction Writers Institute (Hagerstown Community College), Bay to Ocean Writers' Conference (Chesapeake College), Maryland Writers' Conference, Virginia Festival for the Book, Small Press Expo, and Conversations & Connections (Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia), 1455 Summer Literary Festival (Winchester, VA)

Resident in Fiction, Taos Novelists Retreat (Taos, 2018, John Dufresne)

Resident in Poetry, Northwoods Writers' Conference (Bemidji State University, 2017, Elizabeth Bradfield)

Select Participant, First-Ever *Publishers Weekly* Publishers Delegation to Cuba (Havana, 2016)

Resident in Fiction, DISQUIET International Literary Program (Lisbon, 2015, Stefan Kiesbye)

Resident in Fiction, Sewanee Writers' Conference (University of the South, 2014, Tony Earley and Alice McDermott)

Recipient, Literary Arts, Rubys Artist Project Grant (Fiction, 2014)

Panelist, Literature: Audience Development, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

Panelist, Literature: The Big Read, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

Member, Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP)

Member, Modern Language Association (MLA)

Member, Maryland Citizens for the Arts (MCA)

Member, Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (MANO)

Director, Poe Baltimore (2012-2016) *Vice-President* and *Chair, Education Committee*

Director, Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (2012–2014)

Advisory Committee, Maryland Humanities Council, Maryland Center for the Book

Advisory Committee, Maryland State Arts Council, "Imagine Maryland" Strategic Plan

Past President, MidAtlantic Book Publishers Association

"40 Under 40" Profile, *Baltimore Business Journal*

"Best of Baltimore" Arts MVP, *Baltimore*