



2019 Inductees
to the
South Carolina
Academy of Authors

Elise Blackwell is the author of five novels: *Hunger* (2003), *The Unnatural History of Cypress Parish* (2007), *Grub* (2010), *An Unfinished Score* (2010) and *The Lower Quarter* (2015). Her work has been translated into several languages, and her books have been named to numerous best-of-the-year lists, including the Los Angeles Times, the Sydney Morning Herald and Kirkus.

Born in Austin, Texas, Elise was raised in southern Louisiana about an hour from New Orleans, an area that figures prominently in two of her novels. She studied writing as an undergraduate at Louisiana State University and earned an MFA from the University of California-Irvine. After beginning her teaching career at Boise State University, she took a teaching position at the University of South Carolina in 2005 and was named director of the MFA program in creative writing in 2009. At USC she hosts the community literary series The Open Book, which has brought to Columbia such writers as Anthony Doerr, Celeste Ng, Jonathan Franzen and Jennifer Egan.

Her work has been translated into several languages, as well as adapted for the stage. Her short stories and essays have been published in the Atlantic, The Millions, Witness, Brick and elsewhere. One of her books inspired the song “When the War Came” by the Decemberists. She has served on the board of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs and the Thomas Cooper Society.

An elegant writer with unusual range, her novels have addressed such topics as the siege of Leningrad, classical music, art restoration, young novelists in New York City, and the Mississippi River flood of 1927. She once said in an interview with storySouth: “If you want to read about people you’d invite to dinner at your mother’s house, I’m not the person you should read.”

Elise is an “urban homesteader” devoted to seed saving, raising heirloom vegetables, growing fruit trees, canning, and other forms of food preservation. She and writer David Bajo are parents of a daughter, Esme, a student at the University of Chicago studying art, math and computer science.

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