

New Historical Novel by Former UT English Professor to Release this Fall

Posted on **March 2, 2015** by **Jessica Sinn**



Former UT Austin fiction writing and modern literature professor **Elizabeth Harris** will be releasing a novel *Mayhem: Three Lives of a Woman* (Gival Press) this fall.

The historical novel, scheduled to drop Oct. 5, 2015, engages issues of gender, vigilantism, recovery from trauma, and nostalgia for the rural and small-town past.

Winner of the 2014 Gival Press Fiction Award, the book follows two stock farmers in 1936 Texas who are accused of castrating a neighbor. *Mayhem* is the story of their crime and its consequences, the violent past and standard gender relations that enable it, and its economic displacement of the modest, well-connected woman who occasions it.

“A great novel gives us Genesis, and so *Mayhem: Three Lives of a Woman* calls a world into being. We get not only the odor and crackle of rural Texas beginning a hundred years ago, but also the spirits of that time and place. We suffer with a rancher’s wife, a woman catastrophically misunderstood. Violence proves inevitable — but then comes the real miracle. Elizabeth Harris summons up not one world but several, in rich and moving succession. It’s as if redemption were sympathy: as if to peer deeply into anyone is to understand everyone. If this sounds less like a God and more like a great storyteller, well, that’s what we’ve got. Harris squeezes palaver and tears from her Texas clay, even while making sure we see the gifted hands at work.”

— John Domini, author of *A Tomb on the Periphery* and other novels, as well as stories, criticism, and poetry.

Harris' stories have appeared in a number of literary journals and have been anthologized in *New Stories from the South*, *Best of Wind*, *The Iowa Award*, and *Literary Austin*. Her first book, *The Ant Generator*, received the University of Iowa's coveted short fiction award.

The Writers' League of Texas recently [interviewed Elizabeth Harris](#) about her favorite writers. She stated: "People ask you who your favorite writers are when they want you to talk about reading, and I name some books and their writers, but I seldom love everything a writer has written. I've been a passionate reader all my life, and I love many different books for different reasons."

As yet untitled, Elizabeth's current project is another contemporary novel with a historical setting. She and her husband, who are birders, divide their time between the Texas Coast and Austin.

Preview an excerpt of *Mayhem* at: www.elizabethharriswriter.com.

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