

## Excellence Awards

## PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES FY 2022

**Alysia Abbott** is the author of *Fairyland, A Memoir of My Father*, which was a *New York Times* Book Review Editors' Choice and an ALA Stonewall Award winner, a winner of the Madame Figaro Prix Heroine, and was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards. She grew up in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, the only child of gay poet and writer, Steve Abbott. As a journalist, essayist, and critic, she's written for *The Boston Globe*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *TheAtlantic.com*, *TriQuarterly* and *Psychology Today*, among other publications. She holds an MFA in Creative Non-Fiction from New School University and was a contributing producer at WNYC Radio. Her first full-length book, *Fairyland* was completed with the help of a Ragdale Fellowship and the wonderful staff at W. W. Norton. She's presented *Fairyland* at bookstores, libraries, literary festivals and universities across the United States as well as on NPR's Weekend Addition, Fresh Air, The Brian Lehrer Show, KQED's Forum, and the BBC's Outlook, among other venues. The French edition of *Fairyland* was published by Edition Globe on March 12, 2015, with a series of events in Paris. Additionally, the book has been translated into Italian, Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese. She is also co-founder of The Recollectors Project, dedicated to remembering parents lost to AIDS and supporting the children they left behind. You can learn more about this project by listening to her interviews on The Leonard Lopate Show and Here & Now. Formerly the Director of the Boston Literary District, she now runs GrubStreet's Memoir Incubator Program in Boston. She currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with her family.

**Shastri Akella** earned his MFA in Creative Writing and PhD. in Comparative Literature at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He previously worked for a street theater troupe and for Google. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Master's Review*, *Guernica*, *Electric Literature*, *World Literature Today*, *Rumpus*, *PANK*, and *The Common*, among other places. He's currently finishing up his novel, a queer love story between a street performer and a Jewish migrant set in 1990s India. He is represented by Chirs Clemans (Janklow & Nesbit). He is a 2021-2022 fiction fellow at the Fine Arts Works Center (Provincetown) His academic writing has appeared in peer-reviewed anthologies published by Northwestern University Press, Vernon Press, and Duke University Press, among others. He teaches English at Deerfield Academy where he also works on issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. He serves as the fiction editor at *Cosmonaut's Avenue* as well. He divides his time between Hyderabad (India) and Massachusetts.

**Melissa Faliveno** is the author of the essay collection, *Tomboyland*, named by NPR, New York Public Library, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* as a Best Book of 2020. Her essays and interviews have appeared in *Esquire*, *Paris Review*, and *Brooklyn Rail*, among others. She is currently the Kenan Visiting Writer at UNC Chapel Hill. Faliveno holds a B.A. in English and creative writing from the University of Wisconsin and an M.F.A. in nonfiction from Sarah Lawrence College, where she has taught in the graduate writing program and Writing Institute.