Close Escapes: Four Poets on Leaving Georgia
March 26, April 2, 9, 16 · 7-9pm

Born in Georgia, poets John Rollins Ridge, Conrad Aiken, and Alice Walker all experienced moments of extreme trauma that pushed them out of their home state. Born in Florida, Chelsea Rathburn moved to Georgia in 2001, returning to a place that had once been her family’s longtime home. Just months ago, Rathburn became Georgia’s newest poet laureate. These departures (and, for some, homecomings) marked significant events in these poets’ lives that correspond in turn with some of the state’s most pivotal moments: Indian Removal, the rise of Jim Crow laws, the Great Migration, and contemporary debates about women’s rights as mothers. How does leaving Georgia and leaving for Georgia influence these writers and their work? How do a state’s policies and communities shape the lives of its writers?

This seminar will be moderated by Lizzy LeRud, scholar of American poetry and poetics, a former Fox Center fellow who is currently a Marrion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow at Georgia Institute of Technology. During the final seminar session, Lizzy will be joined by Chelsea Rathburn for a conversation focused on Rathburn’s newest book, Still Life with Mother and Knife (2019). This seminar will meet at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry from 7-9pm on four consecutive Thursday evenings sessions during the spring 2020 semester: March 26, April 2, 9, and 16.

We are grateful to Georgia Humanities for its support of this program. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these seminars do not necessarily reflect those of Georgia Humanities.