

## Poet Gunsberg welcomes 'dangerous life' in Jan. 29 reading of new poems

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Poet Ben Gunsberg, an assistant professor of English, will read from his new collection, *Welcome, Dangerous Life*, at a public reading on Jan. 29.

A new volume of poetry by Ben Gunsberg touches on the dangers presented in each moment.

Honey bees that mistake McDonald's signs for dandelions. Wasp nests. The anxiety of selling a home. Too-honest graffiti.

In *Welcome, Dangerous Life* (Turning Point, 2018), Gunsberg writes about the threats that stipple our lives. And the vulnerability, especially of being a parent.

"The stakes are raised once you've got children," Gunsberg said. "The title sort of hints at the way life seems more dangerous once you have children, once you have this vulnerable being you're responsible for, and the way the world has colored and changed."

Gunsberg, an assistant professor of English, will present a **reading of poems from his new collection at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29**, in room 101 of the Merrill-Cazier Library. The event is free and open to the public.

This is Gunsberg's first published volume, but he has appeared in other venues like the literary journals *Mid-American Review*, *DIAGRAM* and *Tupelo Quarterly Review*. In late 2016, he earned one of two top awards at the Utah Arts Council Original Writing Competition. (First place went to fellow USU poet, Jason Olsen, an assistant professor of English at USU-Eastern.) Gunsberg, a native of the Midwest, joined USU's Department of English in 2012 and teaches courses on creative writing and English education.

The poems in *Welcome, Dangerous Life* fall into four thematic pockets. The first of the sections is "Lost and Found," which Gunsberg said "deals with the speaker's childhood for the most part, perhaps the past more generally."

The poems in "Love Debt" revolve around romance and loss of love. Also, the complication of money.

"Restless Animals" focuses on the natural world. And many of the poems in the final section "Less-than-Perfect Chain" revolve around death and loss, he said.

Gunberg's poems come not from categorization, however, but from life's moments. A baby crying, a newspaper story about the world largest-ever gathering of twins, the "click here"s voiced by a computer.

Or a troubled childbirth. In the titular poem, "Welcome, Dangerous Life," he writes:

*"Nurses take you out and there we sit*

*stewed in antiseptic air. A wheeled IV*

*squeaks, sour smell of grief, our minds*

*buttoned to your body down the hall, ..."*

There are plenty of perhaps lighter moments, like a modern-day Jack who uses his smart phone to prove the existence of the big bean stalk. Or, despite telling his children that his spirit animal is a hawk, Gunsberg admits identifying more with the mole "because something soft and harmless should survive a holocaust."

Read more about Dr. Gunsberg at [www.bengunsberg.com](http://www.bengunsberg.com) or contact him at [ben.gunsberg@usu.edu](mailto:ben.gunsberg@usu.edu)