

THESE WORD ALCHEMISTS ARE **IGNITING OUR IMAGINATIVE POTENTIAL**, TRANSFORMING AUDIENCES, AND CREATING LINGUISTIC AND LITERARY GOLD.

“I never would have created a language if I hadn’t gone to Cal; it changed my life.”

## The Dothraki word for encouragement

Is there a word for “encouragement” in Dothraki, a language spoken on HBO’s *Game of Thrones*? Language creator **DAVID PETERSON ’03** may not have included it in the vocabulary he designed for the horse-lords of the Dothraki sea, but he certainly encourages others. A co-founder of the Language Creation Society, **Peterson guides fellow enthusiasts to create viable grammars and unique vocabularies for TV and film**, games, and other media. His new book, *The Art of Language Invention*, details how he turned thin air into Dothraki and High Valyrian for *Game of Thrones*, Trigedasleng for CW’s *The 100*, and more. ■

## Literature is not a competitive sport

When Berkeley English professor **NAMWALI SERPELL** won the Caine Prize for African Writing, she performed a mutinous act: she split the prize money with the four runners up. “It’s such a wonderful group of writers,” Serpell said in an NPR interview. “**It felt weird and sad that we were going to be pitted against each other in some kind of battle royal.** ... Literature is not a competitive sport.” A native of Zambia, Serpell is an avowed feminist whose fiction ranges from traditional narratives to surreal works such as her Caine-winning short story, “The Sack.” At Berkeley, she teaches courses on literary craft and theory, encouraging her students to explore art for art’s sake and create their own magic on the page. ■

“Literature is not a competitive sport!”



## Bad ideas, great plays

Playwright **YOUNG JEAN LEE '96** engages in an unusual ritual to create her work. **She thinks of the worst possible idea for a play and then forces herself to write about it.** This method bewitches her inner critic long enough to let her tap her unconscious for challenging subjects, such as privilege, death, gender, and identity politics. Working with her eponymous theater company, she helps audiences drop their defenses and confront difficult questions by keeping them “disoriented and laughing.” Called “the most adventurous downtown playwright of her generation” by *The New York Times*, Lee ascribes her success to a willingness to meet fear of failure head on. Also known for her openness, she invites actors to help develop her scripts and encourages audiences to have their say at lively post-show talkbacks. ■