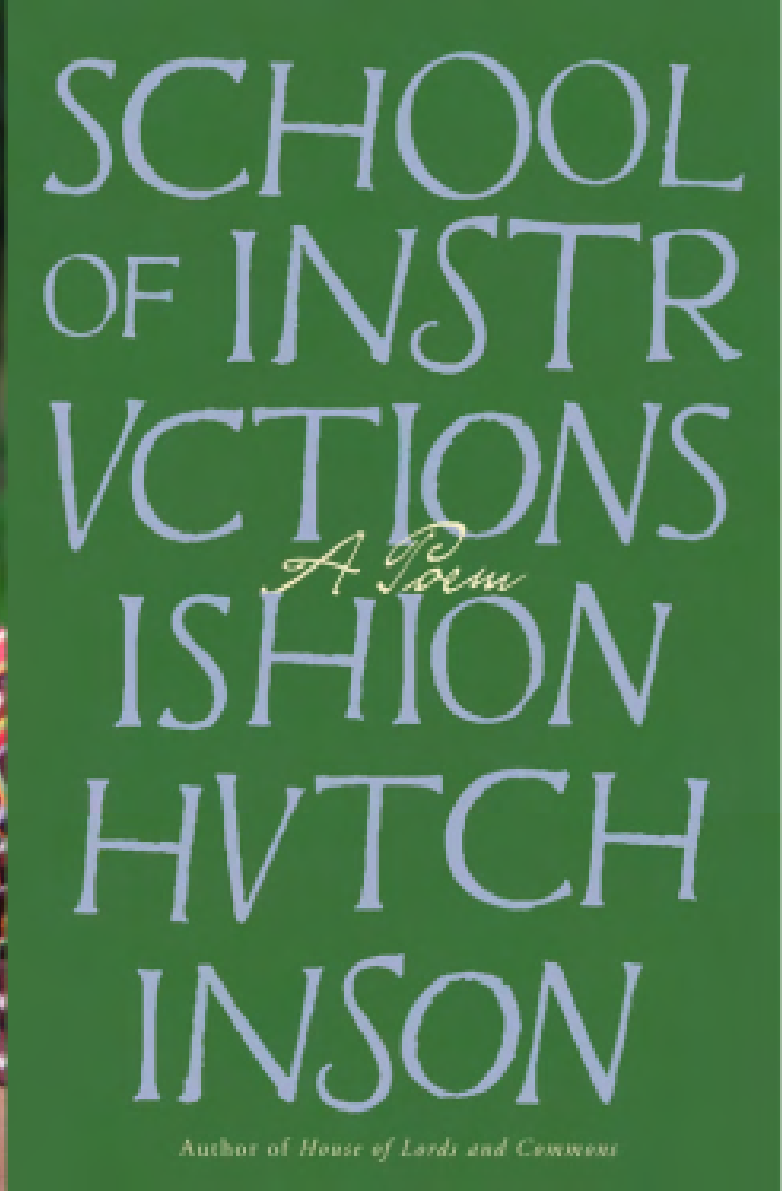

2025 UNT Rilke Prize

Ishion Hutchinson – *School of Instructions*

Ishion Hutchinson's *School of Instructions* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) has won the 2025 UNT Rilke Prize. The $10,000 prize recognizes a book written by a mid-career poet and published in the preceding year that demonstrates exceptional artistry and vision. Hutchinson is scheduled to visit UNT on October 8th and 9th for a reading and signing of his prize-winning book.

Hutchinson's *School of Instructions* is a visionary exploration of coming-of-age and the memorializing of forgotten lives. The collection blends lyricism with research, the private and the personal intersecting with the brutal, far-reaching consequences of empire and of war. This

ambitious, book-length poem twists together the story of young Godspeed, a boy growing up in Jamaica in the 1990s, with the lives of the West Indian soldiers who once served in British regiments in "the HOLY PLACES of EGYPT SINAI PALESTINE and of SYRIA" during the Great War. As Godspeed studies for exams and copes with the usual, small catastrophes of the school day, he discovers the larger world in the pages of an Encyclopedia Brittanica, "his eyes lunar and remote and full of years lightly borne with the breeze of history." With great skill and subtlety, Hutchinson puts the reader inside Godspeed's inquisitive mind while showing us simultaneously what it means for these soldiers—many of them barely old enough to be called men—to have received an education in "bayonet fighting and rapid firing." Hutchinson shows readers the "wild butchery of souls...in the desert"; he demonstrates how learning such brutal history changes Godspeed's sense of self. Ultimately, the purpose of *School of Instructions* is to record these soldiers' deaths and to honor their lives, recovering them "for belated praise."

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