"Now, more than ever," was a refrain I heard repeated at the annual AWP writers conference in Washington D.C. Twelve thousand writers assembled in the heart of Trumpalooza—our national tumult, turned distraction, tuned to the latest breaking news that has gripped the electorate. "Now, more than ever" is a call to write: to inform, to challenge, to entertain, to remember. Writers leave conferences like AWP hungry for their journal. The place makes you want to finish something. Every panel and bookfair pitch is a call to the page. At the Yale booth I met many eager writers. Now more than ever they have something that needs saying. It’s what we as writers have always done. Today there’s an urgency.

To help eager writers start, or finish, the YWC staff has planned a terrific June conference. We tweaked Session I by scheduling evening events and faculty lectures on publishing, and added craft talks to Session II. This year we are partnering with a few magazines who will be publishing YWC writers. The visiting magazines have agreed to open special reading periods just for attendees.

I appreciate the time and treasure writers invest when they attend Yale. Consider your time in New Haven as a retreat as well as a conference. Our programming is second to none. Come prepared to write.

During my trip to Washington I walked to the White House, just to be sure the Prez hadn’t painted the columns green. I spotted a woman in the window of Starbucks. Her canvas AWP souvenir tote bag pressed against the glass. She was scribbling in her journal. For her the pressure was too great. In the shadow of the People’s House she had stopped to write. She had something to say. I know you do too. At Yale or elsewhere. Just write.

Enjoy our first newsletter. There’s some news, advice, market suggestions, and faculty profiles. Hope to see you in June. Please keep in touch.
Master Teachers

2017 Roster

Ana Castillo  Chris Bohjalian  Alexander Chee

Caryl Phillips  Lily King  Francine Prose

New This Summer!

The Summer Writing Institute offers five-week for-credit courses taught by Yale faculty. Students in Institute participate in Writers' Conference activities. Full details online.

Scholarships
Partial scholarships for Session I.
1. M.F.A Scholarship
2. Connecticut Writer Scholarship
Full Details Online.
Applications Open March 1
Q: What publishing trends are you following?
A: The trends that are currently interesting me right now in book publishing are occurring among Wattpad sensations, authors that have made a name of themselves in the self-publishing sphere, with Amazon Publishing, or award announcements via Shelf Awareness, the Reddit Books aggregate, Inkitt success stories, social media sensations from various sites (such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). I am also interested in authors publishing in prestigious literary magazines such as Ploughshares. I also keep a close eye on the news coming out of publications such as Publishers Weekly, Poets & Writers, and Publishers Marketplace.

Q: How many queries do you get per week?
A: I receive hundreds of query letters per week, but I give every letter its due.

Q: What common mistakes do you see in those hundreds of query letters?
A: There are many mistakes that I’ve seen in query letters, but I will name just a few that would absolutely deter me from requesting the manuscript from an author.
1. Submitting queries for novellas, short story collections, poetry, or textbooks will usually turn a literary agent off, as most literary agents do not represent such things. Publishers tend not to buy from literary agents in those areas in the first place.
2. Word count is also very important. Traditional book length is 80–120K, and commercial fiction tends to be in the 80–90K-word range.

Going outside of normal book length will not produce good results for an author querying a literary agent for a shot at going into major trade publishing.
3. Writing within struggling genres such as cozy mysteries, erotica, or urban fantasy is also another way to turn a literary agent off in the querying process. We tend to be weary of that at Trident Media Group.

Q: What advice do you give to emerging writers?
A: I call them “the three peas in a pod” and often look at them in this order:
Persistence: Don’t be discouraged by rejection. This being a subjective business, rejection is bound to happen many times over. It does not mean that you’re not good—it means you’re not quite good enough as of yet. Learn from constructive criticism and grow.
Patience: This being a “hurry-up-and-wait business,” since reading and editing can take time, it is important to be willing to wait patiently for editors/publishers to consider work once it is submitted by a literary agent. There have been instances, though, where I’ve sold a project in as little as four days. In other instances, it has taken months. It may seem like a nail-biting experience as rejections start to flow in along the submission process, but it is often worth the wait once an offer finally arrives.
Participation: As I mentioned before, an author has a central role in the book publishing process. Authors that merely want to write their manuscripts and then check out rarely experience successful publications. Asking one’s publisher or literary agent how they can help leading up to publication and in the months thereafter is a great starting point. Being curious about a publisher’s marketing/publicity plans and commenting on them is also of key importance.

Mark is an agent at Trident Media Group. Pitch Mark your novel during Session I.
Faculty


Kirsten Bakis: 20th anniversary edition of her novel *Lives of the Monster Dogs*, due out in May, with new introduction by Jeff VanderMeer. ABC has optioned the TV rights.


Alumni


Brian Lance: Story, "Crime of the Ancient Mariner" in *Electric Literature*.


Tanya Ponton: Finalist for the Keene Prize from the University of Texas. She received a $17,000 award.

Patrick Redmond, Exhibition, "The Textile and Fiber Art Book Design of Patrick Redmond, M.A." Textile Center, Minneapolis, MN.


Charlie Watts: Story, "Transfer Station" in *Narrative*. 
Submit!

Short Prose Markets

Chicago-based print and online journal publishes all genres and reviews. Engaged in cultural exchange with Mexican writers. Fiction Editor Kamilah Foreman will be joining us in June. She'll be publishing a YWC writer in Make. Stay tuned for details.

Editor Dinty Moore deserves our gratitude for publishing superb flash creative nonfiction. Terrific craft essays too. Submit your best to Brevity.

The Common is a biannual digital and print magazine out of Amherst, MA. All the usual genres. Tip: Their Dispatches section might be a good way to break in. Good luck.

The menu bar of Bodega includes clip art of donuts, cheese, and carrots. Gotta a love a magazine with whimsy. Digital issues posted the first Monday of the month. As they say, "essential pieces you can digest in one sitting." Submit.

LISA PAGE’S
FICTION WORKSHOP
SUMMER 2016.
Writing is Hard

MISHKA SHUBALY

Writing is the worst. It's exhausting and exasperating but still somehow irresistible. A mosquito buzzing lazily in your face, almost too fat to fly but still somehow slipping between your fingers as soon as you relent and make a grab for it. The worst kind of writing is writing songs. Like a successful written piece, a good song is a collision of the banal and the cosmic. "Sleepwalk" by Santo and Johnny is only four chords—yes, just four chords and some mysterious, oozing, sunset-colored magic. You've got the chords, great and ungainly piles of them in the bedroom and kitchen, ready to topple into the dish rack, so you organize them and shuffle them and reshape them till your fingertips balloon up. You've got words, sentences, paragraphs. You write, delete, re-write, cut and paste and cut and paste and cut and paste, swirl and mush it all together like cold leftovers till your eyes burn from staring at the screen. No magic. None. Not a drop. It gets worse.

The mind never rests. Even asleep and dreaming, you're once again naked in your high school French class trying to conjugate irregular verbs. How do you make that magic? Diligence. Diligence and trickery. Nabokov will write your songs with you; John Prine will help you finish that story about your mother. Hunch over your guitar, labor over the fingerboard. You are writing a song, you are writing a song and nothing else.

Staring at your aching fingers, you see, out of the corner of your eye, a small pile of the good stuff well up on the lid of an old Chinese food container like a blob of radioactive hand sanitizer. Do not look at it! Without warning, fling your guitar from you, grab the blob, and then run to your computer. Did you get it? No, it got away. Most of it, anyway, but between your fingertips and the grimy keys on your Mac, you feel a slight, clinging viscosity. Not a ton of magic, but a tiny taste—enough. Write.

Mishka Shubaly has been on the road, logging 145 shows in 5 different countries to promote "Coward's Path," his latest album, and I Swear I'll Make It Up To You, his memoir. In 2017, he'll release a deluxe vinyl reissue of "How to Make a Bad Situation Worse," a live album called "Never Touring Again," and a new studio record called "Not From Here."

He'll touch down to teach both sessions this June.
This year Session II will feature twenty genre workshops. The usual suspects of fiction, poetry, playwriting, and nonfiction plus favorites in historical fiction and sci fi. We've added new workshops in comics, horror, and personal narrative for performance, (read: *The Moth*). The new faculty discuss their specialities.

Comics: Stories in Graphic Form with Josh Neufeld

S.O., I'M A COMICS JOURNALIST. THE TYPICAL RESPONSES I GET TO THAT INFORMATION ARE...

OH, YOU WRITE ABOUT COMICS FOR A NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE? ZZZZZZZZ...

ACTUALLY, I'M JUST LIKE ANY OTHER KIND OF JOURNALIST, EXCEPT I TELL MY STORIES IN COMICS FORM. NO SUPERHEROES, NO FUNNY ANIMALS -- JUST REAL STORIES ABOUT REAL PEOPLE.

AND COMICS DON'T HAVE TO BE FUNNY!!

I'VE MOSTLY DONE STORIES ABOUT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPHAVEAL, TOLD THROUGH THE VOICES OF WITNESSES. I THINK COMICS HAVE A UNIQUE POWER TO BRING THE READER INTO MY SUBJECTS' MINDS AND EXPERIENCES.

A.D.: NEW ORLEANS AFTER THE DELUGE

AFTER ALL, A PICTURE IS WORTH AT LEAST NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-NINE WORDS.

"THOUGH HUMOR IS A PART OF REAL LIFE TOO..."

"BAKRAIN: LINES IN INK, LINES IN THE SAND!"
Horror with Mort Castle

Novelist F. Paul Wilson seems to have it right when he says you’re hard wired for horror or you’re not. It’s a matter of DNA. As far back as I can remember, I was drawn to the horrific, the terrifying, the dark and the scary—and I’ve learned that most horror writers and readers say the same.

Horror is Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Hemingway's "The Battler." Even works that couldn't be classified as horror (the essential single overwhelming effect that Poe tells us about!) can have horrific elements. We see that in stories by Flannery O'Connor, Joyce Carol Oates, Ray Bradbury, Michael Chabon, so many other writers.

Fresh voices in the horror halls include, Usman T. Malik, Michael Bailey, and Mercedes M. Yardley. And then there's an absolute master, Dan Chaon. You’ll find one perfect story after another in his collections, *Among the Missing* and *Stay Awake*. Chaon totally gets that you don't need ghosts to be haunted.

I look forward to working with writers new to the genre and haunted pros this June.

Personal Narrative for Performance with Bobby Biedrzycki

My workshop will explore how writing and performance intersect, inform and inspire each other, and how our own life experiences can be used to craft personal narrative performance pieces.

Narrative performance is red-hot on the radio and podcasts. I’ve worked with Chicago-based 2nd Story. Megan Stielstra’s piece "Channel B" is a great example of a story written for performance that then became a personal essay on the page. It was published at the online magazine, *The Rumpus*, and then chosen for the Best American Essays anthology.

I'm also a fan of *Snap Judgment* radio hour. They call it, "storytelling with a beat." Their pieces pull not just from essay traditions but also from performance poetry. What's interesting here is that, as with 2nd Story, often these are performances for live audiences that then get transferred to radio. So it's valuable to notice what transfers, and what does not.

And of course, *This American Life* often showcases the performance of personal essay. Here though, because it's a show rooted in journalism, the essay performances are more strategically curated alongside more traditional radio journalism in an effort to explore a particular theme.

But no matter the model you have mind, we’ll edit and sculpt your piece from the page to the stage.
Q: Your latest book Immigration Essays is your first nonfiction book. What was it like to make the transition from fiction to nonfiction?
A: It was much harder than I thought it would be. I’d written a few essays before, but I’d never had any real experience in essay writing. I still consider myself a beginner in the form, and I had to revise and completely start over dozens of times. I also had to learn how to balance research, personal stories, and opinion while experimenting with different forms in the collection. If I’d taken a nonfiction workshop like the one at Yale—the process might have been slightly easier.

Q: What were the circumstances that led you to write Immigration Essays?
A: I originally received a local grant to write a series of chapbooks about Chattanooga’s unheard voices. I quickly learned that there are many unheard voices in my city, and so I decided to start first with interviewing local refugees. Those interviews eventually ended up in an essay in The Tishman Review called “Landings.” Later, I also wrote some other essays about encountering Syrian refugees when I was traveling in Southeastern Europe. After those interviews, I decided to write about my own experiences living in a gentrifying neighborhood in Chattanooga. That meant I had to research some of the unfair housing policies, like redlining, that had contributed to our city’s divide. I also began to investigate my own family’s legacy—my father’s family were once slave owners—and my own relationship to race.

Q: How did your own background influence writing the essays?
A: I grew up in a relatively affluent suburb in Fairfax Virginia, outside of Washington, DC. We experienced the rapid development of the area, although we were isolated from many of the people who were pushed out. Later, I moved to South Korea, where I lived for 12 years and managed to travel widely. Those experiences gave me a different perspective on the States when I moved back. Both my parents’ families have Southern roots back to the Revolutionary War. Finally, my husband, a South African, is an immigrant living in the U.S. My sister-in-law is Turkish, and she and my brother and their son live in Ankara, Turkey. All of these experiences informed the essays to some degree.

Q: Why should people read the book?
A: Unfortunately, the topics—refugees and race in particular—are more timely than ever. This book is not a polemic and asks more questions than it has answers for. I am no hero in this book, and I try to interrogate my own ignorance in some of these essays. I would love for this book to open up conversations—with friends, and family as well as people you might not know so well.

Click here to hear Sybil discuss the book on her local NPR station.

Sybil is teaching both sessions in 2017. Her new collection, Immigration Essays, was published in January 2017.