

AWP EVENT PLAN

Event Title: To Lie or Not to Lie? How Writers Choose Between Fiction and Nonfiction

Event Description: How do writers decide between fiction and memoir? How does the process of writing shift when shifting genres? In this panel, writers who have written and published in both genres will discuss the craft choices, ethical questions, research inquiries, and publishing concerns that lie behind each. Rather than approaching the topic as fiction v. nonfiction, we will offer examples of how to navigate both, and encourage people to consider the possibilities that emerge from multi-genre writing.

Event Category: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Event Organizer/Moderator: Adrienne Brodeur

Event Participants and short Biographies:

- **Adrienne Brodeur** -- is the author of the novel, *Man Camp*, and the best-selling memoir, [*Wild Game: My Mother, Her Lover and Me*](#), which was named a "Best Book of the Year" by Amazon, Audible, BuzzFeed, Library Journal, NPR, People, Real Simple, Slate and The Washington Post. The book won the 2020 New England Book Award and is in development for film with Netflix. Her essays have appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *Glamour*, *O Magazine*, *The National*, *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and other publications. Adrienne is the Executive Director of Aspen Words, a literary nonprofit and program of the Aspen Institute. She is completing a new novel, slated to be published in 2023.
- **Mira Jacob** -- is a novelist, memoirist, illustrator, and cultural critic. Her graphic memoir [*Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations*](#) was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award, longlisted for the PEN Open Book Award, named a New York Times Notable Book, as well as a best book of the year by *Time*, *Esquire*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *Library Journal*. It is currently in development as a television series with Film 44. Her novel [*The Sleepwalker's Guide to Dancing*](#) was a Barnes & Noble Discover New Writers pick, shortlisted for India's Tata First Literature Award, longlisted for the Brooklyn Literary Eagles Prize and named one of the best books of 2014 by Kirkus Reviews, the Boston Globe, Goodreads, Bustle, and The Millions. She is currently the visiting professor at MFA Creative Writing program at The New School, and a founding faculty member of the MFA Program at Randolph College.
- **Beth Nguyen** -- is the author of the memoir *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*, the novels *Short Girls* and *Pioneer Girl*, and the forthcoming memoir *Owner of a Lonely Heart*. She is a professor in the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- **Joanna Rakoff** -- is the author of the international bestselling memoir *My Salinger Year* and the novel *A Fortunate Age*, winner of the Goldberg Prize for Fiction, the Elle Readers' Prize, and a San Francisco Chronicle Bestseller. Rakoff's books have been translated into twenty languages and nominated for major prizes in The Netherlands and France. She has written frequently for *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, and many other publications. The film adaptation of *My Salinger*

Year stars Margaret Qualley as Joanna and Sigourney Weaver as her boss. Directed by Oscar-nominee Philippe Falardeau, the film opened in sixty-five countries in 2021, and is available for streaming wherever you rent movies.

- **Saïd Sayrafiezadeh** -- is the author of two short story collections, *American Estrangement*, published last August, and *Brief Encounters With the Enemy*, and the memoir, *When Skateboards Will Be Free*. His writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The Best American Short Stories*, *Granta*, *McSweeney's*, *The New York Times*, and *New American Stories*, among other publications. He is the recipient of a *Whiting Writers' Award* for nonfiction and a *Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers'* fiction fellowship. Saïd teaches creative writing at Hunter College and New York University, where he received an Outstanding Teaching Award.

AB/Moderator – Welcome and Housekeeping (approx. 10-15 minutes)

- Good afternoon and welcome to: To Lie or Not to Lie? How Writers Choose Between Fiction and Nonfiction
- Before we get started, a couple of administrative notes:
 - Read the AWP Housekeeping Script
 - We're going to introduce ourselves briefly – if you want more, you can read all the presenter bios on the AWP website
- I'm Adrienne Brodeur, Introduce SELF
- Invite panelists -- MIRA, BETH, JOANNA, & SAID to introduce themselves in seating order

Panelists Mira Jacob, Beth Nguyen, Joanna Rakoff, and Saïd Sayrafiezadeh to introduce themselves and, if they want, to provide any insights into the subject matter.

AB/Moderator Questions (30 mins or so of conversation)

1. Which do you think is harder – fiction or memoir? And why? And is there a different feeling of satisfaction?
2. How does your thinking about the relationship between form and content change when you're working in fiction v. nonfiction?
3. Are there different techniques for creating scenes in fiction and nonfiction? And for using dialogue?
4. What ethical concerns have you faced or struggled with and how have they shifted based on genre?
5. What do you do if you can't remember something from the past when writing nonfiction?
6. What do you do if you don't think you have a strong enough imagination for fiction?
7. Do you have examples of stories that began as fiction and then turned into nonfiction? And vice versa? If so, why and how did the story change?
8. Have you ever written about the same subject as both fiction and nonfiction?