HOW TO BE YOUR OWN AGENT

Category: Publishing, career advancement

DESCRIPTION
How can you place your manuscript with a good publisher if you don’t have a literary agent? A group of writers from diverse backgrounds will explain their process. This discussion will identify presses that consider unsolicited manuscripts and will explain how to find reading periods and contests. The focus will be on narrowing one's targets and submitting at low cost. Panelists are prose writers or poets who have successfully placed one or more books with a reputable independent publisher.

STATEMENT OF MERIT
Publishing a book is every writer’s goal. But many manuscripts of literary merit go unread or unpublished because their authors can’t connect with the right editor or publisher. This panel of diverse writers will provide information on getting your manuscript read and accepted. We will discuss our own experiences—both the hits and the misses. We will encourage writers of diverse backgrounds, at all stages in their careers, to act as their own agent to find the best home for their books.

AGENDA
The moderator will describe the discussion topic and introduce the panelists. Each presenter will speak for a maximum of ten minutes; then the panelists will take questions for the remainder of the time. The focus will be on the panelists' own experiences as working writers, and how what they’ve learned might be useful to attendees. When the speakers have finished, viewers, attendees, or the moderator may ask them to clarify or expand on points they’ve made. The moderator will keep time and end the discussion.

INTRODUCTION
Many of the panels at the AWP Conference are about publishing with an agent. These other events will focus on finding an agent, submitting through that agent to an editor, and making a deal at a commercial publisher. This panel, on the other hand, is for participants who don’t have the traditional option, yet are writing publishable work. We will discuss how to take an independent route and find a good, suitable publisher on your own. All of our presenters have done just that, and will offer helpful advice to attendees so they can do the same.

MODERATOR
Thaddeus Rutkowski is author of eight books, most recently Safe Colors, a novel in short fictions. His novel Haywire won an Asian American Writers Workshop award. He teaches at Medgar Evers College and Columbia University and received a fiction fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts. Email: Thadrutkowski@aol.com

PARTICIPANTS
Anne Elliott is the author of *The Artstars: Stories*. Her short fiction can be found in *A Public Space*, *STORY*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Witness*, *Hobart*, and other journals. Honors include the Blue Light Books Prize, the Story Foundation Prize, and a grant from the Elizabeth George foundation. Email: bigfatpress@yahoo.com

Ariel Gore is a LAMBDA Award-winning author and editor whose most recent book, *The Wayward Writer*, champions creative liberation and demystifies publishing. Other titles include *F*uck Happiness, *The End of Eve*, and *We Were Witches*. She teaches writing at LiteraryKitchen.net and is her own agent. Email: arielfiona@gmail.com

Pedro Ponce is the author of *The Devil and the Dairy Princess: Stories*, winner of the Don Belton Fiction Prize and a finalist for the Big Other Book Award for Fiction. He teaches writing and literary theory at St. Lawrence University. Email: poncejr72@gmail.com

Joanna Sit was born in China and grew up in New York City. She is the author of *My Last Century* (2012), *In Thailand with the Apostles* (2014), and most recently, *Track Works*. She teaches Creative Writing at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York. Email: jsit@mec.cuny.edu