**AWP 2024 Conference & Bookfair/Outline**

**Title:** Writing Trauma: Nonlinear Challenges of Survival. A Perspective of Women Writers  
**Number:** S150  
**Date/Time:** 10:35am - 11:50am on Saturday February 10, 2024  
**Location:** Room 2215C, Kansas City Convention Center, Street Level

1. **Event Title:** Writing Trauma: Nonlinear Challenges of Survival. A Perspective of Women Writers

2. **Event Description:** As survivors of traumatic events, writers often engage with the art of writing as a form of therapy. What is the relation between testimonial writing, the craft of producing a text that connects with readers, and the praxis of healing? To explore this question, a panel of women writers will discuss about memory and healing. Through their stories, they will challenge biased assumptions about the seemingly harmonious relationship between writing and healing.

3. **Type of Event:** Fiction Craft and Criticism

4. Event organizer: Claudia Morales

5. Event moderator: Claudia Morales

6. Event participants and short biographies:

Moderator:
Claudia Morales is a novelist and scholar from Chiapas, Mexico. She holds a PhD in Medical Anthropology from UMass Amherst and is currently an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Dominican University of California. Her debut novel, No Habrá Retorno (2015), won Rosario Castellanos Prize for novel in Mexico. With her work being supported by the Fulbright Program and the Mexican Foundation for Literature, Claudia's fictions have been published in various US-based publications such as the Offing Magazine, Rio Grande Review, and Latin American Literature Today. Recently, she has published her second novel, Calao Bicorne, through Fondo Blanco Editorial, Mexico.
Panelist:

Jo Blair Cipriano is the winner of an Academy of American Poets Prize, and has received support from Tin House, the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop, and Brooklyn Poets. Jo is an MFA candidate at the University of Arizona, where they are a Southwest Field Studies in Writing Fellow.

Devi S. Laskar is a poet, novelist, photographer, former newspaper reporter and lifelong TarHeel. She is the author of award-winning The Atlas of Reds and Blues, which was named by The Washington Post as one of the 50 best books of 2019. Her second novel, Circa, was published by Mariner Books and selected as a Goop Book Club pick. Her third novel, Midnight, At The War will be published by Mariner Books next year. She holds degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Columbia University. She now lives in California with her family.

Britta is the author of award-winning children’s books. Her flash fiction appears in Bending Genres Journal. She was a finalist for the Bellingham Review Tobias Wolff Award for Fiction 2021. She is a teaching artist at Marin School of the Arts, CA, a member of the National Writing Project Council, Page Street, LitCamp, & PEN, and SCBWI. She has been a reader for the Firecracker Awards. A former editor for Tuxedo Literature & Arts & FastForward Magazine, she holds an MFA from Dominican University, CA, a Masters in International Communication from American University, and a Certificate in Novel Writing from Stanford University. www.brittastromeyer.com

Event Information

Event Agenda: The moderator will begin the event by introducing the panelists and reading their short biographies. The four panelists will give a brief introduction of their own work for five to seven minutes each. The moderator will then open discussion with a list of questions prepared in advance for about 40 minutes. The panel will end with a ten-to-fifteen-minute audience Q&A.

1. Welcome to Writing Trauma: Nonlinear Challenges of Survival. A Perspective of Women Writers. A few reminders before we begin:
• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, CM, know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
  
  • Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
  • Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
  • Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
  • Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

2. Opening moderator remarks and housekeeping announcements

- Introductions to the conversations: Key points on the importance of the panel. challenge the commonly held belief that writing. Our aim is to challenge the commonly held belief that writing, and healing are always harmoniously interlinked and follow a linear progression. By engaging in this dialogue, we hope to highlight the intricate and complex relation between trauma, craft, and writing. Our panel is made up of women with a wide range of experiences, backgrounds, and ethnicities.

- Event Description: As survivors of traumatic events, writers often engage with the art of writing as a form of therapy. What is the relation between testimonial writing, the craft of producing a text that connects with readers, and the praxis of healing? To explore this question, a panel of women writers will discuss memory and healing. Through their stories, they will challenge biased assumptions about the seemingly harmonious relationship between writing and healing.

3. Moderator questions

1. Introduce yourselves by sharing the story of your name, while
reflecting on how writing has shaped your life and how your life has been shaped by your writing? (This will be the author’s introduction to the audience)

2. As survivors of traumatic events, writers often engage with the art of writing as a form of therapy or as a praxis of healing. Do you think this is the case in your relationship with writing? And if so, could you share your writing process with us?

3. What are the general assumptions and biases about the praxis of writing and healing from trauma that you think we should challenge? Do you think there’s a narrative bias when it comes to writing and healing? For example, the assumption that there is only one "correct" way to construct a narrative for healing, restricting the recognition of multiple storytelling forms and cultural expressions of grief, trauma and healing.

Open the discussion to 1 follow up question from the audience

4. In your experience, what is the relation between testimonial writing, the craft of producing a text that connects with readers, and the process of healing? Is there a tension between writing as an intimate praxis and publishing as a text that is meant to be circulated?

5. Do you think there is a gender bias when talking about healing from trauma and writing?

6. What are the ethical obligations we hold as creative writers engaging with trauma and healing?

7. Is writing about trauma using different modalities and genres of writing inherently healing? How can community-based writing initiatives contribute to the collective healing of a group or community that have experienced collective trauma?

8. Read a piece of your work for 5 minutes.

Participants

Moderator: Claudia Morales
(claudia.morales@dominican.edu) **Participant:** Britta Stromeyer Esmail
(britta.author@gmail.com) **Participant:** Jo Cipriano (joeybcipriano@gmail.com)
**Participant:** Devi Laskar
(dlaskar@mac.com)