**Event Title:** Transgender Nonfiction: Memoir and Essays Beyond the Transition Narrative

**Event Description:** For decades, the transition memoir was the only readily available transgender nonfiction. The mainstream publishing world has been slow to catch up, but contemporary trans and nonbinary writers are breathing new life into nonfiction. These writers are telling their nuanced true stories beyond a linear transition narrative. This panel will bring together five transgender and nonbinary memoirists and essayists for an engaging discussion about trans stories and the future of trans nonfiction.

**Event Category:** Nonfiction Craft & Criticism

**Event Organizer & Moderator**

**Mel King:** Mel King is a trans and queer writer. His work has appeared in Catapult, Cortland Review, and North American Review, among others. He holds an MFA in Fiction from Rutgers-Newark and has been awarded fellowships from the Truman Capote Foundation, Lambda Literary, and the Yiddish Book Center.

**Event Participants**

**T.L. Pavlich:** T.L. Pavlich is a writer, theatre artist, & storyteller whose writing has appeared in Foglifter Journal, HAD, The Offing, & others. They received the 2018 SMC Lambda Literary Fellowship and a residency at Banff Center of Arts and Creativity. T.L. is currently a Features Editor at The Rumpus.

**Meredith Talusan:** Meredith Talusan (she/they) received a Creative Capital Award and MacDowell Fellowship for fiction in 2023; her stories and essays have appeared in The Atlantic, The New York Times, Guernica, Kenyon Review and many other outlets. Her debut memoir, Fairest, was a 2020 Lambda Literary Award finalist.

**M. K. Thekkumkattil:** M. K. Thekkumkattil (they/them) is a trans writer and Critical Care nurse. Their writing is informed by disability justice, BDSM,
sobriety, and queer theory. They are a recipient of a 2023 Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award and a 2023 Lambda Literary Fellow.

Opening Remarks and Housekeeping Announcements
Good afternoon, and welcome to Transgender Nonfiction: Memoir and Essays Beyond the Transition Narrative.

Before we get started, a few reminders:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, (identify moderator), 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.

I’ll ground us in how this panel came together and then introduce the panel. Each panelist will read for 5-7 minutes. Then, I will moderate a brief discussion before we open it up to the audience for Q&A.

My day job is at a national LGBTQ+ nonprofit, working on the frontlines with partner organizations in nearly every state. I am acutely aware that 2022 was the most devastating year on record for transgender issues across the country. From bans on gender-affirming care to forced outing bills, it has become impossible to deny that there are some in this country who would like to erase our voices and experiences from public life.

In a moment like this, hearing true stories directly from trans people is a political act. Nonfiction can be a balm when it feels like we cannot escape the crosshairs. The stories and memoirs that have given me words to understand my own life
experiences have saved me a little at a time. I think that is what good nonfiction does: it offers one person’s map through the wilderness of life. It might not be your route, but it may offer possibilities you never could have imagined.

In the eight years I’ve been attending AWP, I’ve been waiting, hoping someone else would be interested enough in nonfiction and trans voices to put a panel like this one together. Organizing this conversation has been a joy because it gives us all an opportunity to celebrate trans writers of nonfiction, whose work I have long admired.

I’ll read the panelists’ bios in the order they are sitting, and then each person will give a brief reading.

**Participant Readings:**
The panelists will briefly introduce their work, including a short reading, for 5-7 minutes each.

**T.L. Pavlich**
I’m planning to read from a new nonfiction project.

**Meredith Talusan**
I’m planning to read an essay from a new nonfiction project.

**M. K. Thekkumkattil**
I’m planning to read from a new nonfiction project.

**Moderated Discussion**
Mel will then open a discussion for about 20 minutes with a list of prepared questions.

1. As our resident French scholar Meredith reminded us, *gender* and *genre* have the same root. This group of writers is more experienced than most in questioning assigned boxes. Boundaries and containers offer both limitations and possibilities. Given that, how might we define trans nonfiction?

2. As a trans writer of nonfiction, I’m often thinking about a trans nonfiction canon that encompasses the multiplicities of our lives. Who could it include?
Are there key works or authors that have had a significant impact in shaping the discourse?

3. The transition narrative has been pervasive in trans literature for decades, especially in memoir. What room do you see to write this story anew?

4. What trans writing are you excited about right now? Who are you looking toward?

5. What challenges and opportunities do you experience in publishing as a trans writer? Who is publishing your favorite trans nonfiction right now?

6. Crystal ball moment: What do you see for the future of trans nonfiction? What new work are you longing to read?

As we open the floor for questions, our panel would love to know what you are wrestling with about trans nonfiction.

**Q&A Session**

There will be time for a 10–15-minute Q&A session. Please pass the wireless microphone to the person posing the question or repeat all questions into one of the wired microphones.

**Closing**

Mel: To close, where can readers find you and your work?

Thank you for coming! We are so grateful for your attention and your time this afternoon.