

Winter Residency 2020



*All events will be held at [Hotel Zero Degrees](#) in Danbury, except for the last day of residency, which will be in Higgins Hall on the [WCSU Midtown Campus](#).

Thursday, January 2nd

Arrivals/Check-in at Hotel Zero Degrees
Address: 15 Milestone Rd, Danbury, CT 06810
Phone: [\(203\) 730-9200](tel:(203)730-9200)

Friday, January 3rd

10:00-11:45: *New Student Orientation* (Cypress Room)

All students starting the program in January are required to attend. We'll discuss the residency schedule, MFA courses, and mentor selection. New students will also meet their peer mentors. Faculty are welcome to attend.

12:00-1:15: *Lunch*

Lunch is included with the residency and will be served each day at the hotel. Coffee/tea/water is also available all day.

1:30-2:45: *Nobody Ever Said "Show Me a Story" - What Prose Writers Shouldn't Learn from Movies (...and a Few Things They Should)* – Matthew Quinn Martin – (Cypress Room)

"Show don't tell..." We've all heard it. We may have even said it. But what does it mean when you are "telling" a story? Drawing on two decades of experience writing for both print and screen, Matthew will

give you clear-cut and actionable techniques to make sure your writing delivers the experience your readership expects and clear up myths of “cinematic prose” you may have fallen prey to.

3:00-5:00: *Enrichment Project Presentations* (Cypress Room)

Come support your fellow writers and learn more about their [Enrichment Projects](#).

5:00-7:15: *Dinner*

There are many excellent dinner options in and around Danbury. Feel free to ask MFA Coordinator, Anthony D’Aries, faculty, and students for suggestions.

7:30-9:00: *Graduate Student Reading: John Bonanni, Gabbie Frulla, Mattea Heller, and Lisa Peterson* (Juniper Room)

Recent graduates will share an excerpt from their thesis. Genres include memoir, horror, literary fiction, and true crime/memoir.

Saturday, January 4th

9:00-11:45: *Remembering that Writing is Fun* – Sara Whitestone (Cypress Room)

Remember when writing was fun? What happened to those days of innocence, and how do we get that joy back—even when we’re writing something hard? This interactive workshop will guide us into thinking (and then writing) about the psychological roadblocks we each put in front of our creative selves. And then we’ll learn how to crash through those, clearing the way to simply enjoy our process again.

12:00-1:15: *Lunch/Online Multi-Genre Workshop Meeting*

All students enrolled in the Online Multi-Genre Workshop (OMG) for the spring are required to attend this lunch info. session. We’ll discuss the syllabus, course expectations, and Blackboard.

1:30-2:45: *From My Side of the Table* – Suzanne Strempek Shea and Tommy Shea (Cypress Room)

In “From My Side of the Table”, veteran writers and teachers Suzanne Strempek Shea and Tommy Shea share some of what each has learned from the other about writing and the writing life over 35 years of married life writing at the same desk. They’ll swap lessons and inspiration gleaned across the four-foot surface. Among the topics: idea-mining, interviewing, reading, freelancing, publishing, promotion and perseverance.

3:00-5:00: *Mentor Meetings* (Cypress Room and Lobby)

Students who have scheduled meetings with their spring mentors will meet at this time to begin planning their syllabi. Any students who do not have meetings scheduled can use this as free time to read, write, or relax.

5:00-7:15: Dinner

7:30-9:00: Readings – Suzanne Strempek Shea and Tommy Shea (Juniper Room)

Sunday, January 5th

9:00-11:45: Mastering Story Structure – Jane Cleland (Cypress Room)

Structure is the foundation of your story. In this workshop, you'll discover when to use a linear structure and when a nonlinear structure is the better choice. We'll consider how to structure your primary plot, your subplots, and the ideal ending—a twist after the final twist. No matter your genre, from literary to crime to horror and from literary nonfiction to memoir and romance, using this methodical approach will help you create page-turners that sell.

12:00-1:15: Lunch/Dublin Residency Info. Session

Students, alumni, and faculty interested in learning more about our [Dublin Residency](#) are welcome to attend.

1:30-2:45: Thesis Rearview Mirror Panel (Cypress Room)

Join recent MFA graduate Lisa N. Peterson as she leads a panel discussion and Q&A with fellow alumni John Bonanni, Mattea Heller, and Beth Turley, as they recount their experiences—the challenges and the triumphs— during their thesis semester. Panelists will take you on their personal journeys on how they chose their thesis mentors, the difference between their primary and secondary mentors, their revision processes, and how they tackled the final submission.

3:00-5:00: Poetry Master Class – Sean Thomas Dougherty (Cypress Room)

When writers talk about the “poetic,” what they often mean by that specifically is the use of figurative language. Metaphors are generated from the collision of our individual life-experience with language. Our brains make connections between disparate things. By putting them together, we see the world anew. But how specifically do we make metaphors? This workshop will examine and name the actual metaphorical structures we use in English as a strategy for invention, and particularly for revision. You will learn how to embed metaphors, revise sentences to include them, and to recognize points for new meaning-making and expanding narrative. You will learn the major forms of metaphorical sentences and write a character sketch or a prose poem using these techniques.

5:00-7:15: Dinner

7:30-9:00: Reading - 2019 [Housatonic Book Award](#) Winner: Sean Thomas Dougherty (Juniper Room)

9:00: “Bad” Poetry Slam (Juniper Room)

Join students, faculty, and alumni for the most anticipated event of the winter residency! Share a poem that's so bad it's good and you just might win one of our three fabulous prizes (or at least a tin-foil crown).

Monday, January 6th

9:00-11:45: *What's the Story: Finding the Narrative Arc in Memoir* – Onnesha Roychoudhuri (Cypress Room)

In this workshop, we'll explore the challenges of building tension and constructing a narrative arc in memoir—whether book- or essay-length. We'll look at how other writers have successfully used form and focus to tackle questions such as: What is this narrative about (and not about)? What is/are the overarching theme(s)? What form most organically serves this narrative?

Attendees will be expected to read 2-3 essays/excerpts (to be emailed beforehand) in preparation for the workshop. Attendees are also encouraged to come to the workshop with a specific memoir project in mind—even if it's at its very nascent stages

12:00-1:15: *Lunch*

1:30-2:45: *YA Reading and Q&A: A.K. Small and Sarah Darer Littman* (Cypress Room)

Debut YA novelist A.K. Small and MFA mentor Sarah Darer Littman will discuss Small's book, *Bright Burning Stars*. The event will include a brief reading followed by a Q&A session.

3:00-5:00: *Agent Pitch Session: Stephanie Koven* (Cypress Room)

Students who submitted their work ahead of time will meet one-on-one with literary agent Stephanie Koven.

5:00-7:15: *Dinner*

7:30-9:00: *Reading - Sonja Mongar & Onnesha Roychoudhuri* (Juniper Room)

Tuesday, January 7th

9:30 – 10:30: *Breakfast and Tour of Higgins Hall, WCSU Midtown Campus* (Higgins Lobby)

Take a tour of the recently-renovated Higgins Hall, home to the Writing Department and the Housatonic Book Award Library. A continental breakfast will be served in the main lobby.

10:30 – 12:30: *Writing from the Body: What Lies Beneath?* – Sonja Mongar (Higgins, room #116)

According to author, Lidia Yuknavitch (*Chronology of Water*), the body is an “experience collector” and for nonfiction and fiction writers alike, “we are living our stories every day.” And because of the unique times and challenges we are living today, traditional narrative forms don't always meet the needs of our contemporary stories. Via a series of interactive exercises and writing prompts, we will explore ways to access those images and stories that lie deeply embedded in our body's experience – touching upon a

range of modern themes including trauma, loss, visible and invisible disability, among others. We will also identify and practice sharpening those core metaphors that continually appear in our writing. A reading list will be provided as well as an initial writing prompt to be brought to class and shared. Dress comfortably.

1:00-2:30: *MFA Community Lunch* – [Rosy Tomorrow's](#)

Celebrate the end of another fantastic residency with faculty, students, and alumni. All are welcome!

2:30: *Departures*

Bios

Jane K. Cleland writes both fiction and nonfiction, including the multiple award-winning and long-running Josie Prescott Antiques Mysteries [St. Martin's & Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine (AHMM)] and the Agatha Award-winning bestsellers *Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot* and *Mastering Plot Twists* [Writer's Digest Books]. She is a member of the fulltime faculty at Lehman College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), a contributing Editor for *Writer's Digest Magazine*, and the chair of the Wolfe Pack's Black Orchid Novella Award (BONA), in partnership with AHMM. She is a frequent workshop leader and guest author at writing conferences and MFA Residencies. www.janeclendland.com

Brian Clements is the founding Coordinator of the MFA program and Professor of Writing, Linguistics, and Creative Process. He is author or editor of over a dozen books of poetry, including *A Book of Common Rituals* (Quale Press), *Disappointed Psalms* (Meritage Press), and the anthologies *An Introduction to the Prose Poem* (Firewheel Editions) and *Bullets into Bells: Poets and Citizens Respond to Gun Violence*. Prof. Clements also has worked professionally in technical communications, corporate communications, grant-writing, and non-profit administration.

Anthony D'Aries is the author of *The Language of Men: A Memoir* (Hudson Whitman Press, 2012), which received the PEN/New England Discovery Prize and *Foreword's* Memoir-of-the-Year Award. His essays have appeared in *Boston Magazine*, *Solstice*, *The Good Men Project*, *Shelf Awareness*, *Memoir Magazine*, *The Literary Review*, and have been finalists for *Fourth Genre's* Michael Steinberg Essay Prize and the Diana Wood's Memorial Creative Nonfiction Award. He has served on the board of PEN/New England as a member of the Freedom-to-Write Committee, leading writing workshops in prisons, shelters, hospitals, and residential care facilities, and co-chairing the PEN Writing and Trauma Conference. Anthony received the 2014-15 Writers' Room of Boston's fellowship in nonfiction. In 2016, he was selected as the Lighthouse Writers Workshop's Fort Lyon writer in residence, where he taught writing workshops for homeless veterans. He currently directs the low-residency MFA in Creative and Professional Writing at Western Connecticut State University.

Stephanie Koven began her publishing career in 1993 as Assistant Editor at Grand Street. In 1995, she left to work with Carol Brown Janeway at Alfred A. Knopf. During her 13 years at Knopf, Stephanie had the dual position of Assistant Editor and Foreign Rights Manager. She worked to publish many best-selling authors in the US, often in translation, and was also responsible for selling UK and translation

rights to internationally best-selling works, including Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Kay Redfield Jamison's *An Unquiet Mind*, Sherwin B. Nuland's *How We Die*, Edward O. Wilson's *Consilience*, Cormac McCarthy's Border Trilogy, Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, and all of John Updike's titles.

In 2008, Stephanie joined Janklow & Nesbit Associates as an agent, representing authors in the US and international markets. The work Stephanie has sold abroad includes Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of The Tiger Mother*, Jill Lepore's *Book of Ages*, Joanna Rakoff's *My Salinger Year*, Steven Weinberg's *To Explain the World*, Michael Punke's *The Revenant*, Lev Grossman's Magicians Trilogy, and books in many other genres, including middle grade and YA.

In January 2017, Stephanie founded Cullen Stanley International with her long-time colleague Cullen Stanley. Most recently she has represented David Coggins' *Men and Style* and *Men and Manners*, Matthew Viragh's *The Nitehawk Cookbook*, and Joy Rhoades' novels *The Woolgrower's Companion* and *The Burnt Country*. Internationally, she has handled Andre Aciman's *Call Me By Your Name* and *Find Me*, YA best seller Angie Thomas' *On The Come Up* and, in nonfiction, Ronan Farrow's *War On Peace* and *Catch and Kill*.

Sarah Darer Littman is an award-winning author of over 16 books for young people. She also wrote political opinion for fourteen years, with Hearst Newspapers and CTNewsJunkie.com. Her first novel, *Confessions of a Closet Catholic*, won the 2006 Sydney Taylor Book Award for Older Readers. Her novel *Backlash* won the Iowa Teen Book Award. *Anything But Okay* was released from Scholastic in October 2018. Sarah also teaches at the Yale Writers' Workshop. Visit her online at <http://sarahdarerlittman.com>, and on twitter @sarahdarerlitt

Matthew Quinn Martin is the author of the *Nightlife* series (Pocket Star/Simon & Schuster) as well as the co-writer of the feature films *Slingshot* and *Being*. His adaptation of Jenny Milchman's *As Night Falls* is currently in development, along with his original screenplays *The Fish Room* and *Death of the Dogfighter*. His screenplay for *Snowboarders vs. Zombies*, however, is in turnaround.

Sonja Mongar is an 11-year MFA mentor and author of the award-winning novel, *Two Spoons of Bitter, A Story of Love, Betrayal and Redemption* (2018). A former professor of English (University of Puerto Rico,) she specializes in creative nonfiction, survivor/trauma narrative, writing the other, journalism/feature writing, digital storytelling, the creative process, writing theory and writing for nonprofits. Her interests include digital & performance story work, life narrative, auto-ethnographic research, documentary film, screenplay writing, indie publishing, social justice/advocacy, songwriting, and blues harmonica. She is currently working on a 1920s Western screenplay inspired by her fierce Montana grandmothers called *Riders of the Dust*.

Lisa N. Peterson is an award-winning writer, podcast host, and journalist. Born in Sleepy Hollow, New York she pens stories about true crime, dogs, and horses. Her weekly newspaper column for *The Newtown Bee* is archived at her blog lisaunleashed.com. Early in her journalism career, she worked as a staff reporter covering the criminal justice system at several Connecticut newspapers. Peterson is a recognized expert for her investigative journalism on the woodchipper murder case and has appeared on *Crime Stories*, *Mansions & Murders*, and *Science of Crime*. She is currently working on a true-crime memoir, *The Look-Back Window*, about the disappearance of Regina Brown in 1987 and her own experiences as a crime victim survivor. Peterson has an MFA in Creative and Professional Writing from

Western Connecticut State University, is a member of the Hudson Valley Writers Center, and the Dog Writer's Association of America. She lives in Newtown, Connecticut with her husband, her horse, and her two hounds. Contact her at lisanpeterson.com.

Onnesha Roychoudhuri's essays and journalism have appeared in publications such as *Rolling Stone*, *Kenyon Review*, *n+1*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Boston Review*, *The Rumpus*, *The Nation*, *The American Prospect*, *Salon*, and *Mother Jones*. She also facilitates storytelling workshops through organizations such as The Moth. Her book, *The Marginalized Majority: Claiming Our Power in a Post-Truth America* (Melville House) was named one of the best books of 2018 by Kirkus Reviews.

Suzanne Strempek Shea is the author of five novels set either in Polish-American Western Massachusetts or the West of Ireland, three memoirs, and a biography that took her from the oncology department to a church in Hawaii to a clinic in Malawi, co-author of a history of an order of nuns, and the co-editor of a collection of essays by soap opera fans. Winner of the 2000 New England Book Award, which recognizes a literary body of work's contribution to the region, Suzanne began writing fiction in her spare time while a reporter for the Springfield (Massachusetts) Newspapers and *The Providence* (Rhode Island) *Journal*. Her freelance journalism and fiction have appeared in magazines and newspapers including *Yankee*, *The Bark*, *Golf World*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Irish Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Organic Style*, and *ESPN the Magazine*. She was a regular contributor to *Obit* magazine. Suzanne is a member of the faculty at the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast MFA program in creative writing and is writer-in-residence and director of the creative writing program at Bay Path University in Longmeadow, Mass. She has taught in the MFA program at Emerson College and in the creative writing program at the University of South Florida. She also teaches in Ireland through Bay Path University's annual summer field seminar in Dingle, and has been on the faculty at the Curlew Writers Conferences there and at Stonecoast MFA's Ireland residency.

Tommy Shea spent 40 years working at the Springfield Newspapers, starting as a sportswriter while in high school. He finished his sports career covering the Boston Red Sox. After leaving sports in 1985, he worked as a general assignment reporter for ten years before being given his own column in *The Republican*. It ran for 17 years and was noted by the *Boston Globe* as a column that chronicled "little-noticed acts of kindness and grace perpetrated by everyday people." Most recently, he was a senior foreign editor at *The National*, a newspaper in Abu Dhabi. He is now an author, freelance writer, and writing coach. Tommy has taught journalism and communications at Bay Path University, as well as at Springfield, Holyoke Community, and Elms Colleges. His writing has appeared in *USA Today*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Baseball America* and the former *New England Monthly*. His awards and recognitions include the New England Associated Press News Executive Award for best local New England column, a Pulitzer Prize nomination, and an honorary doctorate from Western New England University.

A.K. Small's debut novel, *Bright Burning Stars*, was released in May 2019 through Algonquin Young Readers. Her talent for writing and passion for classical ballet fuse together in this novel and earned her the honor of a "Grade A" *Entertainment Weekly* review as well as a Kirkus Review. In addition to her novel, A.K. Small spends time on short stories. Her short story, "Anthrocon" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2017 by the Bellevue Literary Review. Other stories such as "Flour Baby" and "The Interior Designer" were also nominated or runner-up to prizes. She graduated from Vermont College of Fine Arts in 2009 with an MFA in fiction.

Sara Whitestone is a novelist-in-progress, an essayist-in-practice, and an un-tortured-poet-in-process. Her words and artwork have appeared in many print and online magazines and journals, and her current

long-form project is a duet of novels titled *Wanting* and *Wandering*. To learn more about Whitestone's inner and outer adventures, visit sarawhitestone.com and follow her on Instagram and Twitter @sarawhitestone.