[redacted] [redacted]

Conference Description:

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) was created in 1967 to represent thirteen creative writing programs. The new non-profit sought to support the emergence of creative writing in higher education. English departments of the time were against the establishment of creative writing programs and AWP was created to overcome this resistance and provide a forum for new programs to flourish and for new writers to connect with publishers. Since 1967, AWP has grown to support nearly 50,000 writers and 550 college and university writing programs (including Notre Dame's own). Their mission is too "foster literary achievement, advance the art of writing as essential to a good education, and serve the makers, teachers, students, and readers of contemporary writing". Held every year, this four-day conference hosts over two hundred scholarly panels, over three hundred literary magazines and their editors, and nearly every serious MFA program in the country. The conference this year is going to be held in Los Angeles, California from March 30th to April 2nd at the Los Angeles Convention Center and I wish to attend it to find a publisher for my senior thesis ([redacted], engage with the contemporary techniques professionals use to teach writing—both in an academic setting and in the non-profit field—and to participate in AWP's mentee to mentor program.

Panels of Interest:

I have enclosed a complete list of the panels I wish to attend at the end of my proposal if they are of interest, but I will also mention three briefly here. "Laugh to Keep from Crying: Using Humor to Write Through Pain" is the first panel I would like to attend on Thursday. My own writing taps into universal notions of pain: the death of a

loved one, sexual assault, unrequited love. I would love to expand my own writing style with this panel, because I have never used humor to show pain. In fact, it seems fairly paradoxical to me, so I am highly interested in seeing how these scholars have engaged with this painful type of humor.

"From MFA to JOB: Making a Living, Making a Difference" is the second panel I am highly interested in. While at Notre Dame I have discovered that I have a true passion for teaching at both the university level and within non-profits. This panel explains what avenues are available to me after graduate school to continue making a difference in young peoples lives. This is extremely important to me because I want to take the spirit of giving and community that Notre Dame has fostered within me out into the wider world.

The final, but certainly not the only, panel I am interested in is called "In the Realms of the Real and the Unreal". This panel is perhaps closest to my current interests, because I am straddling the line between realism and fabulist while completing the critical introduction to my senior thesis this semester. Italo Calvino, himself a proponent on the merging of realism and fabulist modes, emphasizes, "Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don't mean escaping into dreams or the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification" (Calvino, 50). It is this conception of a "different space", one where realist and non-realist elements merge, that I hope this panel can touch on a bit for me. Such a discussion will be extremely beneficial for finalizing my senior

thesis, but it will also be helpful in my future career as a writer, because I plan to continue writing in the liminal space of the real/unreal.

My Plan:

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs is a highly respected conference for writers who wish to further their careers and develop relationships with writers, editors, and agents from all over the country. Additionally, the panels that the conference offers directly relate to both my senior thesis and my future career as a writer and educator.

The first day of the conference I plan to attend six panels, from 9AM until 6PM. This day will primarily be focused on engaging with other scholars and writers in my discipline and understanding the stylistic and thematic trends that is happening in contemporary literature. The specific panels I have chosen focus on disability, trauma, hybrid forms, community service, and specific techniques for teaching in a classroom. Such topics coalesce around my central interest: transgressive teaching and writing. Exploring art that pushes against the dominant hegemonic order is my true passion and these specific programs at AWP would contribute to a continued understanding and development of my thought process on transgressive literature. A better grasp of this subset of literature will uniquely prepare me to re-apply for a Marshall Scholarship through Notre Dame, again focusing on transgressive literature, in the coming years and for teaching and writing in this field as a professor of creative writing.

The second and third days of the conference will still be focused on attending panels, but I will also explore the extensive Bookfair and Mentee to Mentor Program that AWP offers. The Bookfair showcases hundreds of established, experimental, and up-and-

coming publishers, literary magazines, and small presses. Such an environment will provide me with an opportunity to pitch my writing to my peers and perhaps showcase my senior thesis to potential publishers while establishing connections within the literary community I hope to work within. In pursuit of this goal, I wish to participate in the Mentee to Mentor program that AWP has pioneered over the past few years. After signing up at the conference, respected writers choose their mentees and nurture their work while providing helpful criticism and feedback over a course of three months. In this way, my participation at the conference will continue to benefit me long after I have left Los Angeles.

Qualifications:

My entire undergraduate career has been focused on developing as a writer for both my senior thesis and a future MFA. I developed relationships with the MFA students at Notre Dame and founded the "Rogue Workshop" for undergraduate and graduate students and the "Young Authors Workshop" for underprivileged middle and high schoolers at the Robinson Learning Center. My passion for creative writing and fiction in particular has manifested itself in the fact that I have become the very first Creative Writing Outreach Coordinator at Notre Dame, I have taken every available creative writing class (starting as a freshman with departmental approval), and that I have taken three graduate classes in pursuit of becoming a better writer: The Grotesque, Teaching Creative Writing Practicum, and Ulysses. When I was chosen as a Marshall Finalist and a Fulbright semi-finalist, both my proposals emphasized my abiding love for creative writing and how I hope to make it a central part of not only my creative life but my pedagogy as well.

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Thursday, March 31st:

9:00AM to 10:15AM - The New South: A Reading in Three Genres: With Faulkner's South paved into history, what defines Southern literature today? Do contemporary Southern writers still make use of old tropes like familial loyalty, racial tension, and heavy religion set in a humid landscape of live oaks and wisteria? Does the urban and suburban South require new settings and themes? This reading features five Southern writers reading fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that illuminates and redefines Southern literature today.

10:30AM to 11:45AM - Laugh to Keep from Crying: Using Humor to Write Through Pain: Knock, knock. Who's there? Searing emotional trauma! Emerging and established authors and editors will discuss using humor to explore painful subjects, including racism, mental health, abuse, death, and more, while also looking at what topics, if any, are off limits. A Harper Perennial editor will discuss working with authors going through this funny, yet difficult, and not always fun, process. So go ahead. Let the trauma in. It can't hurt you—if it's hilarious.

12:00PM to 1:15PM - To Hell and Back: Trauma and the Transformational Arc in Personal Narrative: Great storytelling shows how a character grows and changes. This is true whether in fiction or nonfiction, and yet true stories of personal growth and transformation are often belittled as "navel gazing" in the literary community, especially when it comes to women's stories. Five writers, all of whom have taken the risk to write

about difficult life experiences, discuss the transformational arc in personal narrative and what it takes to transcend trauma and turn it into powerful literature.

1:30PM to 2:45PM - The Violence of the Page: This panel explores the various tones, reasons, genealogies, and methodologies writers might choose to employ when representing violence, cruelty, and bodies on the page. The writers on this panel have explored these issues in a variety of genres (fiction, scholarship, and poetry) and in a variety of registers (comedic, elegiac, outrageous, conceptual, documentary, and more), and are uniquely capable of discussing the aesthetic, political, and metabolic effects of such writing.

3:00PM to 4:15PM - Pedagogy's Next Wave: Alternatives to the Whole-Class Workshop: For nearly a century, workshop pedagogy has undergone few, if any, changes. Is it finally time to reimagine it? This panel offers radical alternatives to the traditional whole-class workshop, moving past the “one poem, one story” expectation, as well as small-class and manuscript variations. Not only do we explore “guided” workshops, multimedia workshops, and microworkshops for nontraditional populations, but we challenge the primacy that student texts have in our pedagogy.

4:30PM to 5:45PM - Concentration Camps, USA: A Critical and Artistic Retrospective of Literatures of World War II Internment and Detention: In this tribute to WWII internment literatures, authors of works exploring internment camps and detention centers discuss, contextualize, and celebrate the historical, political, cultural, and creative influences shaping the literature that emerged from, and continues to emerge from, the WWII internment/detention experiences of persons of Japanese, Italian, and German ancestry.

Friday, April 1st

9:00AM to 10:15AM - How to Get Away with Murdering Your Darlings: Revision in the Classroom: Jenny Molberg) Writing is revision, but how to teach it? Students leave workshop with ample feedback on drafts, but they're often baffled when moving forward. From the fine-tuning of a line to the reshaping of a plot, revision is a re-visioning of the project at hand. Proceeding from the belief that the best is yet to come, this panel will offer practical strategies and pedagogical models for guiding students of every level and genre—poetry, fiction, and nonfiction—into and through the process of revision.

10:30AM to 11:45AM - Hybrids, Bastards, and Half-Breeds: On Writing Hybrid Forms: Hybrid forms tend to be heartier than the recognized, canonical genres, according to Kim Wright at The Millions. This panel explores the glories of mixing: the formidable creative power that can be won from blending memoir with magic realism or trenchant social critique, fiction with visual art, lyric with essay, fiction, or even journalism. Does the decision to resist the firm divisions of genre let us go beyond expected sentiments, statements, and permissible content?

12:00PM to 1:15PM – Lunch and exploring the bookfair!

1:30PM to 2:45PM - From MFA to JOB: Making a Living, Making a Difference: While tenure-track teaching and publishing are often the dream of MFA candidates, the competition is increasingly competitive. The creative and nonprofit sectors hold alternative employment possibilities for writers while making a real difference for communities. This panel ignites the imagination around the journey to meaningful careers

that allow MFA graduates to work within a community of writers and artists, cultivate and curate artistic experiences and opportunities, and make a living.

3:00PM to 4:15PM - Where Are You Going, Where Have We Been?: Five Editors Discuss the History and Future of Flash Fiction Anthologies: Since 1992, when the original Flash Fiction anthology gave the genre a name that caught on, flash fiction has grown steadily in stature and popularity. Numerous popular anthologies have followed. Five well-known editors of flash fiction anthologies—three who were there from the beginning, and two who will be shepherding the genre into the future—discuss the past, present, and future of flash fiction, especially in regard to its appearance in book form.

4:30PM to 5:45PM – Go to the Mentee to Mentor Booth! (Closes at 5:00PM)

Saturday, April 2nd

9:00AM to 10:15AM - The Other Side of the Slushpile: Agents on Agenting - The world of literary agents can seem murky and impenetrable to authors beginning the querying process, but it doesn't have to be that way! This panel focuses on candidly exploring how authors and agents actually find each other in the real world. What do agents actually do, why do they do it, and what does it take to get their attention? With an extended question-and-answer session, writers have the opportunity to ask our panel of actively acquiring agents their most burning questions.

10:30AM to 11:45AM – Have lunch!

12:00PM to 1:15PM – In the Realms of the Real and the Unreal: This panel explores genres of fiction that juxtapose the real and the unreal in experimental ways: historical fiction, literary fantasy/science fiction, weird fiction, and satire. Where do we draw the line between a secondary world and a distorted reflection of our own world's beauty,

violence, and diversity? Can we discern a poetics of the unreal in contemporary fiction? How have the continual debates over generic boundaries—and/or their irrelevance—affected the ways contemporary writers work?

1:30PM to 2:45PM - Linked and Unlinked: Reimagining Story Writing: The creative spectrum between linked versus unlinked, novel-in-stories versus novel, has become rich, complex, and daunting. Too often the conversation narrowly focuses on genre, place, marketability, and identity—and thus marginalizes the imaginative possibilities of writing between linked and unlinked stories, between novel-in-stories and novel. Four fiction writers focus on the intention, process, difficulties, and craft issues that arise in reimagining this spectrum of story writing.

3:00PM to 4:15PM – Go to the Bookfair!

4:30PM to 5:45PM – Easy A's and Epic Fails: Grading the Creative Writer: What does it mean to fail a poem? Will students dare to experiment if a conventional story earns a 98%? This panel examines the ramifications of attaching grades to creative work, debating the value of this assessment on student writing improvement. Agreeing to disagree, the members of this panel reflect on our varied assessment practices and wrestle with the question of how to grade while simultaneously encouraging students to take the risks necessary for artistic growth.