AWP CONFERENCE
by Laurel Fantauzzo

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) brought thousands of writers together from around the United States and beyond. The event—the largest gathering of writers and writing teachers in America—took place this year at the Los Angeles Convention Center in California from Wednesday, March 31, to Saturday, April 2.

Along with hundreds of panels ranging from issues of equity and representation, classroom pedagogy, the politics of publishing, and much more, the AWP bookfair showcased nearly one thousand presses, journals, and literary organizations from around the world.

Emerging writer-in-residence Laurel Fantauzzo co-presented a panel—Women Writers Confront Violence and Its Aftermath—with writers Inara Verzemnieks, Lina Maria Ferreira Cabeza-Vargas, and Catina Bacote. WC

Interested in presenting at the fiftieth anniversary 2017 conference? The deadline for panel proposals is on May 1, 2016. awpwriter.org

Talk to our Writers’ Centre staff about more opportunities!

Writers’ Centre Reading Series
by Laurel Fantauzzo

Writers from near and far graced our lounges and our Centre this semester, bringing with them a sense of the intimate and a sense of the world.

Singaporean poet Cyril Wong sat during his reading, educating us about the politics of apples, scenes of romance, and reactions to his work in Singapore. Lawrence Ypil read his historical poems of family and nation, inspired in part by Beyoncé. Roshan Singh read a short story on a priest’s confession that doesn’t exactly go to plan. Suchen Lim brought us back to the Singapore of the mid-twentieth century, when neighbours were louder and women sang in hawker centres. Ritika Biswas transported us into the complicated emotions touched off by international travel. Laurel Fantauzzo read the opening of her book on the lives and deaths of two young film journalists.

Dai Fan ushered us into the world of her intimate, family-based fiction set in China. Kaushik Swaminathan read his meditation on journalists’ murders in the Philippines. The semester ends on a strong note, with readings in April from student Aleithia Wang, our own acting director Heidi Stalla, and Malaysian memoirist Bernice Chauly. WC

Follow our webpage for readings to come! http://writerscentre.yale-nus.edu.sg/events/

7 THINGS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED IN THE WRITERS’ CENTRE
by Tse Hao Guang & Caroline Manela

185 Yale-NUS students have already booked appointments at the Writers’ Centre this academic year, and even more have attended our readings and workshops. But how many of you know all the ins and outs of our space? Here are seven things you might have missed in the Writers’ Centre…

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STRUCTURING is a pyramid game: Some of you who have done consultations may already be familiar with this. At the behest of several members of our community, though, we figured this might be a nice tool to have handy for the next time you are trying to write an essay, or creative writing piece, or an article, or, well, pretty much any kind of writing. A couple of bonuses: 1) it works for both your whole essay and individual paragraphs. 2) it is easy visualisation, ie. height = depth, width = breadth (of argument).

How does this work?

In the first section, you lay out your broadest ideas, your background, and the premise of your writing – also known as your introduction and thesis statement. The next section is where you go in real deep – picking out all the finer points and laying out exactly what your argument/body is. The pyramid then flips back outwards, indicating that at this point you should be wrapping things up and making your conclusion. Note that it is not as broad as the first section – one way to understand this is that what you are trying to achieve from your conclusion is a more nuanced understanding of your thesis statement, having done all the legwork in the body of your essay.

What, then, is the last bit? That shaded section you see is in no way necessary, but may be useful for a couple of reasons: 1) Say you are trying to figure out your argument. Your thoughts are a jumble because there is this point that is seemingly important, but may somewhat derail your train of thought. Instead of putting it all in and scrambling to get back on track in time for your next point, why not instead tack it on at the end as further developments, limitations, and thoughts? This then also highlights to your reader that you are not just writing your essay for the sake of it, but also engaging with the subject matter.

In terms of your individual paragraph, then, the first section? – you guessed it – the topic sentence. The next bit is where you pull out all your fancy quotes, facts, case studies and the likes, and unpack it as your explanation, evidence and elaboration. The next section serves as a concluding statement to link everything to your topic sentence. Then, that last section, again not necessary, but again useful, whether it be to then link your paragraph/point to your larger thesis statement, or to simply make the link to your next paragraph.

We hope this helps with all those pesky questions and crippling self-doubt about the structure of your essays!
“From the moment a sound is set into vibration, a composition is in a constant state of exposition or discontinuity. Time is not a ball in music, so composers need to consider the forward trajectory or directionality of their idea that preserves both the target and the initial moment that set the current in motion. The continuity of the idea is the essence for both the writer and the composer, for it is the cohesiveness of the journey that the idea takes that is important to the creator.”

7 THINGS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED IN THE WRITERS’ CENTRE

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1. Complementary Beverages – Feel like you need a pick me up at Café Agora before you sit down and write that PPT paper? Why not come to the Writers’ Centre instead? Our pantry is stocked with tea and coffee to help get you through a day of writing. Bring your own mug!

2. Books and Journals – The Writers’ Centre is in the midst of building its own collection of books and magazines, and we’ve got everything from grammar guides and literary journals to common curriculum books. If you want to borrow, remember to sign out with a staff member.

3. Wine Bottles – When people think Writers’ Centre, we hope they think wine, cheese, and creative writing. Our interior decorating reflects those values and preserves our memories of past Writers’ Centre events.

4. Printer – Turn right when you enter the Writers’ Centre to find our printer in the workroom! Perfect for when you need to print off a draft and give it a thorough edit.

5. Poetry on the Walls – Did you know that poems by award winning poets are framed up on our walls? Come in 5 minutes early to your appointment and take some time to appreciate the artistry!

6. Writers’ Centre Swag – We have bookmarks with quotes from the Common Curriculum, brochures for the public, and a new newsletter that is chock-full of goings-on and student submissions. Everything is well-designed and absolutely free.

7. Robin Hemley – If you’ve missed our esteemed director lately, you should know that he is currently on sabbatical, and will be completing a PhD at the University of New South Wales.

8. Bonus! – One hallowed tradition of the Writers’ Centre, which started from its earliest incarnation at RC4, is to host regular, informal screenings of such critically-acclaimed reality TV shows as The Bachelor and Say Yes to the Dress. DFs only.

FROM THE SHELF OF...

Lawrence Ypil

Three Kinds of Motion, by Riley Hanick
Books are intimately tied in my mind to the places that I read them in. In this case, it’s the U.S. In the kind of prose that I love which is both a mix of poetry and prose, Hanick charts, no sings(!), the story of Kerouac, Pollock, and the making of American Highways. When I miss winter in Iowa, I open this book.

Silent Anatomies, by Monica Ong
This book of poetry is really a family memoir— in visual and in verse. A history of South-east Asian diaspora is captured through whitening lotions, x-rays and ultrasounds, one writer’s reckoning with the silences of her past. Anatomical drawings of the human tongue are put side-by-side food recipes of remembering. Where do we look when we are filled with hungrers we cannot fully explain? We look to the past, and tilted slightly.

Fashionable Filipinas, by Gino Gonzales and Mark Lewis Higgings
Early twentieth century fashion meets dictionary of textile and fabric meets women dressed in pineapple fiber and photographed. I’ve been working on a book about Philippine colonial photography and this book seemed like a godsend when I found it. I consider it a miracle when I feel like someone else has done the research for me and all I need to do now is to play with the words and write poems. It’s a book of the history of a dress, which means it’s really a manual on beauty. (The book is also amazingly designed by a friend!)
Dear Night. What are you? — You are eternal. You hold the stars that are a holes in the curtain of heaven. You are the lovely plane ride on the way from China. You are weird but comforting. You give such good embraces but I can’t hug you back. You are a drop, a ripple in the galaxy’s ocean. You are the courage to delve into deep and dangerous questions of life. You are the light of my life: reliant and dependable. You are here when everything else goes away. You are the terror I feel when filling out government forms. You are the bonding that occurs at sleepovers, the insistence that everything is special. You are the three empty seats in an aisle, so empty a plane should never fly. You let me be who I want to be. I am grateful for that — that is if I can stop myself from being distracted by the light — emanating from the moon. You are a keyhole too tiny for me to make out what is on the other side. You are when the usually outshone things are allowed to shine in their own light. You are the soul of my life: deep, heavy, and persistent. You are the roof of the roof. You are my fears. You are the single room in a foreign country that makes you actually aware of the hour. You are the great big fireball burning on the surface of the earth, rising higher, growing rounder, brighter, yellower, white. You have given me your all but I’m still feisty. We have a one-sided relationship. You are a window into the universe. You are the comfort of my life. You are death given a second chance. You are the mouth of a fish closed tight. You watch over me, but stay passive, don’t budge even when you see me struggle myself because I cannot undergo this transformation if you don’t continue blocking out the glare of the light from where you are. You are the promise of an end to all things. You believe in holding on to personal legends. You are the silence that makes my solitude and loneliness even more acute and palpable. You are the TV show that continues playing even after I have switched the TV off. You will never let me go. You are a poem.

* This is a collaborative lyric essay from the Writing as Healing Series, “In the Deep Dark of Night – To Write” held on March 23, 2016. It was written close to midnight.