

The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College Public Schedule – Summer 2013

The public is welcome to attend the morning lectures and evening readings in fiction and poetry offered during the Master of Fine Arts Program summer residency. Events last approximately one hour. Admission is free. The schedule is subject to change.

For more information, call the MFA Office: (828) 771-3715.

Readings will begin at 8:15pm
in the Ransom Fellowship Hall behind the Chapel, unless indicated otherwise.

READINGS by FACULTY

Wednesday, July 3 – 8:00pm

Tony Hoagland, Caitlin Horrocks, Mary Szybist, Peter Orner

Thursday, July 4

Robert Boswell, Brooks Haxton, Maud Casey, A. Van Jordan

Friday, July 5

C.J. Hribal, Alan Shapiro, Sarah Stone, Alan Williamson

Saturday, July 6

Joan Aleshire, Charles Baxter, Gabrielle Calvocoressi, Susan Neville, Stephen Dobyns

Sunday, July 7 – in Gladfelter, Canon Lounge

Christopher Castellani, Heather McHugh, Kevin McIlvoy, Ellen Bryant Voigt, Peter Turchi

Monday, July 8 – No readings

Tuesday, July 9

Debra Allbery, David Haynes, Marianne Boruch, Maurice Manning, Debra Spark

READINGS by GRADUATING STUDENTS

Wednesday, July 10

Lindsay Ahl, Alexandra Carter, Ronald Alexander, Brandi Gentry, Victor Valcik, Marit MacArthur

Thursday, July 11

Tommye Blount, Elisabeth Hamilton, Sean Patrick Hill, Steve Weed, Carrie Mar, Judith Whelchel

Friday, July 12 – 4:30pm, followed by Graduation Ceremony

Patricia Grace King, Lia Greenwell, Adrienne Perry, Nathan McClain, Garrett Simmons

The schedule of lectures by Warren Wilson MFA faculty follows →

Faculty Lectures – Summer 2013
The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College

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For more information, call the MFA Office at Warren Wilson College: **(828) 771-3715**.

The schedule is subject to change.

Thursday, July 4 CHARLES BAXTER: Dramatic Intervention: The Request Moment
11:15am

I'll begin by describing one of Shakespeare's favorite dramatic devices, at least in the tragedies: the request moment (think of the openings of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*). I want to talk about requests as engines of the story, especially when they create a form of subjectivity over which the protagonist no longer has any ownership. Readers and writers interested in this subject may want to read Alice Munro's "Child's Play" in *Too Much Happiness*, or the Adam and Eve story in the Book of Genesis, in case you don't know it.

Thursday, July 4 HEATHER McHUGH: Composition as Conversation—
1:30-3:00pm and Vice Versa

The utility of artistic principles in conceiving models for civic intercourse, and examples of lively checks-and-balances in the literary arts. It is recommended that the assembled be familiar with Plato's premises for considering poets banishable from the republic; and with the correspondence between George Sand and Gustave Flaubert. Also be prepared to consider, on the spot, a few literary items in printed handout, made available the day of the lecture.

Friday, July 5 MARIANNE BORUCH: Do It Anyway: A Triptych
9:30am

This lecture is in the making—which is largely its subject—and we'll start with boredom (as trigger and grace), and perhaps move to melodrama, and on to the necessity of pilgrimage. It may flash on Plath, Roethke, Auden, Yeats, Russell Edson, Elizabeth Bishop, Larkin, and who knows who else. It may have do-wah girls and young men jumping out of cakes, but probably not. It might cast its lot to poetry but there is poetry in fiction, in *story*, maybe its best parts. No prior reading required except what you've been doing all your life, which is what got you here in the first place. A handout will be available on site.

Friday, July 5 PETER TURCHI: Power Play
10:45am

This lecture is not about politics, or ice hockey, but about the usefulness of giving power, or authority, to two or more characters in a story, and to have that power shift in various ways. Among the texts mentioned will be Ernest Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Katherine Anne Porter's "Noon Wine," and Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. No advance reading is required, but if you haven't read "The Short Happy Life," do.

Saturday, July 6
9:30am

DEBRA SPARK: Can I Have Some Information, Please?

What's it like to live in a subway tunnel, be a Latvian immigrant in 1970s Rome, or work as an avalanche expert in Switzerland? Read Colum McCann, David Bezmozgis, and Jim Shepard to find out. They all write the sort of fact-based fiction that reminds you that one of the great pleasures of fiction can simply be the truth. Psychological truth and emotional truth, sure, but also plain old information. For a certain kind of story, imagination will take you only so far. Then you need to do some research. But of what kind and how much? In this lecture, I'll consider the craft and process challenges that arise when writers try to get their imagination to play with factual information. No reading required, though I will probably make reference to recent works by the writers mentioned above, as well as books by Kate Atkinson, Katherine Boo and Julie Otsuka.

Sunday, July 7 – 9:30am
Gladfelter – CANON LOUNGE

PETER ORNER: Reading as Experience

“And experience is certainly what reading is.”

—Henry Green

Of the English novelist, Henry Green, Elizabeth Bowen once said, “His novels reproduce, as few do, the actual sensations of living.” I've often wondered why, when we read, we (or many of us, let's say) actually seek out Bowen's “actual sensations of living.” Why not simply put the book or the Kindle down and get out there and live? There seems to be some human need to take a step back and participate in a different way through reading.

Many artists, of course, have wondered brilliantly about this strange phenomena. We won't get to the bottom of it in this lecture, but I will try and demonstrate why the work of one particular writer, Henry Green, has a way of putting a reader so far inside a moment that you aren't merely watching, or over-hearing, but rather actually *experiencing* the interaction of the characters in real time, in your own head. Most writers try and accomplish this near impossible feat, but I agree with Bowen, that few have been able to do it quite like Henry Green. Green is known for his remarkable dialogue, especially in his novels, *Loving* and *Party Going* (he was fond of titles with gerunds), but his singular technique has as much to do with what he withholds than what he gives. Further, there is something especially unique about the way Green transitions from moment to moment, scene to scene, paragraph to paragraph, and even sentence to sentence that has a rare, natural fluidity.

I would suggest reading Green's novel, *Loving*, and if you are very ambitious, *Party Going*, both of which I'll refer to in the lecture. I'll pay special attention to an early scene in *Loving* when Kate and Edith dance together in the unused, dust-sheeted ballroom of the great house where the book is set. Both novels are available together in a Penguin edition with an introduction by John Updike, *Loving, Living, Party Going*. (I'll have Updike's introduction available as a handout.) I'll also allude to Eudora Welty, who loved Green's work, as well as Green's novelist heroes, Celine and Proust.

Sunday, July 7 – 10:45am
Gladfelter – CANON LOUNGE

STEPHEN DOBYNS

The shift in James Wright's work from the formal poetry of his first two books, *The Green Wall* and *Saint Judas*, and the free verse poetry of *The Branch Will Not*. Handouts will be provided.

Thursday, July 11
9:30am

CAITLIN HORROCKS: When Bad Stories Go Good

“...every idea for a story is bad until you make it good. Any time I’ve written anything good I’ve spent the vast majority of the composition process convinced it was an utter stinker. And they were stinkers, until they weren’t, at which point they were done. Debunking the myth of the good idea is essential. The idea is a formality, mere permission. The triumph is what you do with it.”

— Claire Vaye Watkins, asked to name “the worst idea for a story [she] ever had”

As a reader and editor, I’m especially drawn to stories that wear their “bad ideas” proudly, requiring clichés to be redeemed, craft commandments to be broken, challenging or bizarre subjects to be tackled. We recognize the possibility of disaster in these stories, and cheer when the author emerges unscathed. I’ll examine whether there are particular techniques or approaches that help such stories cross that line from stinker to triumph. No reading required, but I’ll reference “Columbine: The Musical” by Todd James Pierce, “The Solutions to Brian’s Problem” by Bonnie Jo Campbell, “The Way We Live Now” by Susan Sontag, and work by Karen Russell and Claire Vaye Watkins.

Thursday, July 11 **TONY HOAGLAND: Information, Layering, and the Composite Poem**
10:45am

Income taxes, French cuisine, Darwinism, fragmentary religious beliefs, the history of perfume-making, the tattoo craze which is going to make the morgues of the future so interesting— Without thinking about it, we all unconsciously exclude many realms and styles of information from the page when we are writing a poem; yet that information has a textural richness and an intellectual particularity that can be “layered” alongside more autobiographical, emotional testimonies. After all, in our lives, don’t these concentric circles of fact and labyrinths of feeling “haunt” each other endlessly?

Is there a poetic structure or strategy that can array these dimensions in provocative harmony? Yes, Maybe So! Let’s consider examples of the “composite” poem, more various in its materials, and more strange and complex in its implications than the average poem; the composite poem may even constitute that sought-after, legendary Yeti: A Humanist Postmodernism.

Friday, July 12
10:00am

**MARY SZYBIST: There Interposed a _____ :
A Few Considerations of Poetic Drama**

Given that poetry tends to specialize in interior dramas, this talk will consider how poems set up the *outward* occasions of those dramas. We’ll focus on one dramatic setup that has proven particularly useful to poets: the drama of interposition. We’ll consider the ways that very different poems set up one basic dramatic occasion: a moment when something comes between the speaker and his or her destination or desire. As we track this geometry, we will take note of its remarkable flexibility as well as the possibilities it engenders. Poets discussed may include Sappho, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, William Stafford, John Ashbery, and the medieval Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym.

Friday, July 12
11:15am

**ROBERT BOSWELL: Having Weight and Having Gravity:
A Lecture on Resonance and Meaning in Fiction**

No texts will be required, but reading the fiction I plan to discuss will likely enhance the experience. I’m still working on the lecture, but I anticipate using the following texts: *Light Years*, James Salter; *The Widow’s Children*, Paula Fox; *Revolutionary Road*, Richard Yates; “A Death in the Woods,” Sherwood Anderson; “The Worn Path,” Eudora Welty; and “Royal Beatings,” Alice Munro.