

## **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, Debra Spark, Maurice Manning

### **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 →**



**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 Break*. 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.