

The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College Public Schedule – Winter 2014

The public is welcome to attend the morning lectures and evening readings in fiction and poetry offered during the Master of Fine Arts Program winter 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 8:15 PM
in the Ransom Fellowship Hall behind the Chapel, unless indicated otherwise.

READINGS by FACULTY

Friday, January 3– 8:00 PM in Gladfelter, Canon Lounge

Judith Grossman, James Longenbach, Jeremy Gavron, Monica Youn, David Shields

Saturday, January 4

Daisy Fried, Liam Callanan, Jennifer Grotz, Megan Staffel

Sunday, January 5—in Gladfelter, Canon Lounge

Robin Romm, Connie Voisine, Dominic Smith, Eleanor Wilner

Monday, January 6

Marianne Boruch, Dean Bakopoulos, Alan Williamson, Antonya Nelson

Tuesday, January 7

Maurice Manning, Karen Brennan, Ellen Bryant Voigt, C.J. Hribal

Wednesday, January 8—no readings

Thursday, January 9

Debra Allbery, David Haynes, Alan Shapiro, Kevin McIlvoy

READINGS by GRADUATING STUDENTS

Friday, January 10

Cheney Crow, Laura Thomas, Daye Phillipppo

Saturday, January 11

Jan Bender, Andrea Donderi, Susan Okie

Sunday, January 12—4:30 PM, followed by Graduation Ceremony

Luke Brekke, Torrey Crim, Kaisa Edy

The schedule of lectures by Warren Wilson MFA faculty follows →

Tuesday, January 7
9:30 AM

KEVIN McILVOY: The Equilibrist & the Dynamist

Under varying circumstances, the writer's work presents two intriguing options that affect her/his composing and revising processes. In one case, the work presents the choice for the writer to attempt to equilibrate, that is, to have elements of the work "cancelled" by other elements, with the result that the work presents a "stable system," a system in *equilibrium*. In another case, the work presents the choice for the writer to attempt *dynamic balance*, that is, the state in which one element influences another element, with the result that the work presents a system simultaneously falling into and out of balance. In this lecture I'll explore examples of The Equilibrist and The Dynamist at work in very different kinds of American fiction and poetry. I'll provide reading materials and a lecture ladder at the residency.

Tuesday, January 7
10:45 AM in the JENSEN LECTURE HALL (J308)

MONICA YOUN: Nora / Laura

In 1909, the young and habitually impoverished James Joyce commissioned a remarkable necklace for his wife Nora Barnacle. He was on a visit back to Dublin, and buying the necklace was so important to him that he spent the money on it he had intended for his trip back to Switzerland, so that he was forced to postpone his return home to Nora by several months. The necklace consisted of a tablet of antique ivory on a gold chain, inscribed with the words "Love is unhappy when love is away." Why did Joyce go to such trouble and expense to commission the necklace, what lay behind the details of its design, and what does all of this have to do with poetic form? Answers – in the form of rank speculation, dubious assertions, and wild generalizations – will be supplied. We will also discuss poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Milton, Ted Berrigan, Bernadette Mayer, Rita Dove, and others.

Saturday, January 11
9:30 AM

MARIANNE BORUCH: Poetry as Diagnosis

How do we know, figure out, anything at all? How does that happen physically, structurally in a poem, this thing that Robert Hass calls "the shape of its understanding"? This lecture is triggered by endless unanswerable questions, but are we down-hearted? WE ARE NOT!

Along the way, we'll be looking at the rather plodding and pretty much unsurprising (sorry!) Arthur Conan Doyle, whose quest to find out, to deduce and intuit nevertheless produced one of the great lasting characters--Sherlock Holmes--who has risen above that writer's sometimes (often) terrible prose and imagination to turn up in the oddest places over a century later (TV's Dr. House, for instance, and way before that, to start his off-the-page life, a silent film adaptation in 1914). Obviously, there is value to Doyle's leap onto fiction from the art and science of medicine which he learned in Edinburgh and practiced fairly seriously and without much luck in England for several years. Of course, Keats--a couple of generations earlier--did a similar thing, throwing himself into his studies at Guy's Hospital in London only to find that he was deeply elsewhere amid and beyond personal tragedy and public distress, using his dissection skills and fearlessness to surprise and ground and lose himself in poems.

How even to think about such transformation--a hard, workaday life flash-forwarding to literature, be it great or on-and-off mediocre? And what is "diagnosis" vs. "healing"? And how does a poem manage the former without the intention-ridden, self-congratulatory heavy hand of the latter. And why bother? Handouts provided on the spot, but it is more than fine and perhaps even useful to advance-read Keats' odes, sonnets, and his remarkable letters, plus Conan Doyle's first successful effort, *A Study in Scarlet*, and talk among yourselves.

**Saturday, January 11
10:45 AM**

C.J. HRIBAL: Obsession in General and the Novella in Particular

As writers, we often worry about writing something new, about not repeating ourselves, yet many wonderful writers return to the same essential material, and find new angles, new aspects to explore. This lecture is on the virtues of obsession, and the value in recognizing and working (and reworking) the material you find most compelling. It's also a paean to the novella, a narrative form that allows you to embody your inner obsessive. No required texts, but novellas by Andre Dubus and Jane Smiley, among others, will be discussed. (NOTE: If you want to peruse any one of these novellas before the residency, please do: from Andre Dubus: "We Don't Live Here Anymore," "Adultery," "Finding a Girl in America," "Rose," "Molly," "Voices from the Moon" and "The Pretty Girl"; from Jane Smiley: "Ordinary Love" and "The Age of Grief.")

Saturday, January 11

**PANEL: Mixing It Up: Boruch, Brennan, Gavron,
Romm, Shields, Shapiro**

1:00-2:15 PM in GLADFELTER, CANON LOUNGE

What prompts a poet to write fiction, or poets/fiction writers to undertake a memoir? Is the impulse toward "another genre" purely a formal choice, or is it made necessary by the material to be served? Are valuable lessons brought back to one's "primary" genre? Or, will some of us spend our writing lives happily alternating among poems, novels, stories, essays, memoir and admixtures that defy taxonomy? Six current faculty members will report from own their experiences crossing the genre divide.

Sunday, January 12

ROBIN ROMM: Great Neurotics

10:00 AM in GLADFELTER, CANON LOUNGE

This lecture will examine a few examples of great neurotic narrators in fiction. What makes a neurotic narrator so compelling, so full of life for so many writers (and readers)? I will explore the craft implications of hyper-vigilance, obsession, compulsion, "habitual fantasizing," as well as other classic neurotic symptoms. How do these "symptoms" become narrative drivers? Why are there so many books that put neurotics in the driver's seat? Texts will include Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Dorothy Baker's *Cassandra at the Wedding*, Sara Levine's *Treasure Island!!!*, Herman Koch's *The Dinner*, and (possibly) Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Sunday, January 12

**MAURICE MANNING: Fat Man's Misery, or,
The Mind of the Poem**

11:00 AM in GLADFELTER, CANON LOUNGE

This lecture will examine how what is missing from a poem or story, how what is not explicitly stated, can make its presence known by its absence. Leaving inexplicable and unaccounted for "gaps" in a poem or story may give the reader room to wander off the page into the larger, murkier mind of the poem. Works discussed in this lecture will include: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a couple of poems from various sections of *Leaves of Grass*, references to Stephen Vincent Benet's *John Brown's Body*, and Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People." Copies of the necessary sections of these texts will be provided.