

## **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

**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**

Karen Brennan, Maurice Manning, C.J. Hribal, David Shields

**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 Phillippo

**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 →**

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

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**Saturday, January 4**  
**11:30 AM**

**JAMES LONGENBACH: The Medium of the English Language**

What would it mean to take seriously the fact that English-language poets and novelists make works of art out of the medium of the English language, the way we more inevitably think about visual artists harnessing the particular qualities of, say, oil paint rather than water color? What particular features of the English language have shaped the sentences that in turn get shaped into the patterned experiences of language we call poems? This lecture will concentrate a little on the nature of English syntax but mostly on the distinctively mongrel nature of English diction, a diction that is divided among radically different roots (most primarily, Germanic and Latinate). After a brief review of how the English language came to be this way over the last thousand years, the lecture will consider the ways in which poets and novelists have harnessed these distinctive qualities of the medium of the English language, examining prose sentences by Henry James and James Joyce, as well as lines from poems by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Yeats, Moore, and Ashbery. Handouts provided.

**Monday, January 6**  
**9:30 AM**

**ELEANOR WILNER: Making Waves: Thinking about  
Form in Nature and Poetry**

This talk will consider what wave-watching can tell us about the powers of poetry and the shaping of story, what the physics of wave motion can tell us about the action of imagination, and how what moves us in a poem, and why, is connected to how it moves, and whose boat it rocks.

**Monday, January 6**  
**10:45 AM**

**JUDITH GROSSMAN: Instead of a Muse: A Genealogy for Stories**

Elements of the folktale, such as those in the Brothers Grimm collection, persist through the transformations of modern story – driven out, their patterns and memes return like the Undead. (Beware!) Along with the Hero/Heroine, the Enemy and the Ally, the Treasure, the loss of a parent or the exile from home, and above all the factor of luck, they work like traditional post-and-beam in narrative. My starting-point is the Grimms’ “The Devil with Three Golden Hairs.” From there, E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” jumps from magic to mechanical horror. A longer jump, to Samuel Beckett’s “First Love,” shows the modernist absorption of elements into one consciousness. Some writers (Donald Barthelme, Angela Carter) rewrite the folktale. Some (Philip Roth, Raymond Carver, et al.) defy those origins. Alice Munro is our great living exemplar of the lineage; I’ll discuss “Simon’s Luck” and “A Wilderness Station.”

Please read the Munro stories in advance, if you can. I’ll supply handouts of the Grimm and the Beckett.

**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.