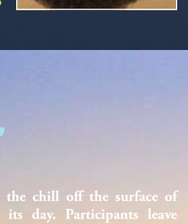
Director's Statement

James McCullough and Richard Tillinghast first planned the Bear River Writers' Conference as a place where writers from outside northern Michigan could enjoy the beauties of this place and where they could meet the writers who live here. They hoped to bring people with above average literary interests together with those who were interested in writing about place and the natural environment. They hoped the mix would create new ideas that would seed all the writers home with good work to continue… And they thought the shores of Walloon Lake—which had already inspired one American classic—would be a good place to help accomplish their idea. I'm pleased to report that so far it seems to be working!



The Writer in Nature

Essayist and poet Mary Oliver says she must "surround and surmount" a subject before she can write about it. We'll explore that idea and many others that can help us discover through writing, personal connections with the natural world and fresh perspectives on our places in it. Participants will be encouraged to complete daily writing exercises and offer them for critique, with the goal of completing work suitable for publication.

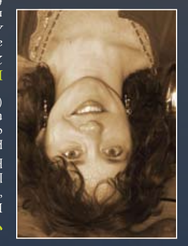
Jerry Dennis has been a full-time writer since 1986 and has published essays and stories in *The New York Times*, *Smithsonian*, *Orion*, *Audubon*, *River Teeth*, and many other publications. His texts included, including *A Place on the Water*, *It Rained Frogs and Fishes*, and *The Living Great Lakes*, have won many awards and have been translated into five languages.

Nature Writing

Stepping into the Scene: How to Write with the Full Imagination

By experimenting with writing processes, and discussing the mechanics of the "scene," we'll see how the writing experience is one that can fuse reality and dream, life and death, logic and mystery in ways that precisely render the experience we have of ourselves as both physical and time-bound beings; as beings existing in a psychological and spiritual realm that seems to have no barriers or laws. Literature can create a space between those places where "the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and incommunicable…cease to be perceived as contradictions…" (Andre Breton).

Laura Kasischke has published four novels (most recently, *Be Mine*, Harcourt, 2007), six collections of poetry (most recently *Lifeboat*, Alfred A. Knopf, Ausable 2007), and a novel for young adults. She has published writing in *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, and elsewhere, and been the recipient of several Pushcart Prizes and two fellowships for the National Endowment for the Arts. Her third novel *The Life Before Her Eyes* is being made into a film starring Uma Thurman, directed by Vadim Perelman. She teaches at the University of Michigan.

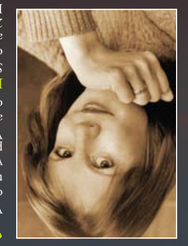


Poetry/Fiction

Fiction and Painting (5)

What can the visual act of art or the action writer? How does the act of putting color on canvas resemble or differ from the act of putting thought into words? Is it possible to describe a painting? In this workshop, we'll explore some of the many ways in which painting and painters can function as subject or inspiration for fiction. In the process, we'll look at works by A. S. Byatt, Alex Miller, Chaim Potok, and Oscar Wilde, among others, and will work on short and long fiction of our own. Bring along a sketchpad (absolutely no drawing experience necessary) and a reproduction of a painting that fascinates you.

Elizabeth Kostova was born in Connecticut in 1964. She holds a B.A. in British Studies from Yale University and a M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Michigan. Her work has appeared in *Mississippi Review*, *Ploughshares* & *Writers Magazine*, and *The Best American Poetry*. Her first novel, *The Historian*, (Little, Brown, June 2005) was a #1 New York Times Bestseller and is being translated into 40 languages. It has been optioned by Sony Pictures as an upcoming film. She is also co-author of a travel book entitled *1927: The Good-Natured Chronicle of a Journey*. Kostova is co-founder of the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, which assists contemporary Bulgarian writers and translators.

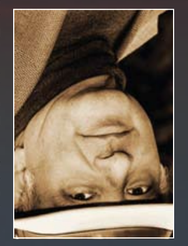


Fiction

Writing Fiction by Imitation

As that book, *The Sincerest Form: Writing Fiction by Imitation* suggests, an excellent way to improve onés own work is to pay attention to the work of others; close reading and careful writing are two sides of the one coin. We will look at examples of prose from such modern masters as Raymond Carver, Ernest Hemingway, Bernard Malamud and Flannery O'Connor, along with present-day practitioners such as Andrea Barrett, Richard Ford, Jamaica Kincaid and Lorrie Moore. The article of faith on which this workshop will be based is that imitation is not only the sincerest form of flattery, but also a good way to grow.

Nicholas Delbanco is the Robert Frost Distinguished University Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, where he also directs the Hopwood Awards Program. His new novel, *The Count of Concord*, is his twenty-fourth book. His previous works of fiction and non-fiction include the novels, *What Remains* and *Spring and Fall*; the essay collections, *The Last Station* and *Anything Else in the World* and such travel texts as *Running in Place: Scenes from the South of France*. His work has won numerous literary awards—among them the J.S. Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship and, twice, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Fiction; he was the Michigan Author of the Year in 2002. Delbanco was the founding Director (together with the late John Gardner) of the Bennington Writing Workshops. For many years he was a regular member of the staff at the Bread Loaf Writers Conference and The New York Stare Writers Summer Institute.



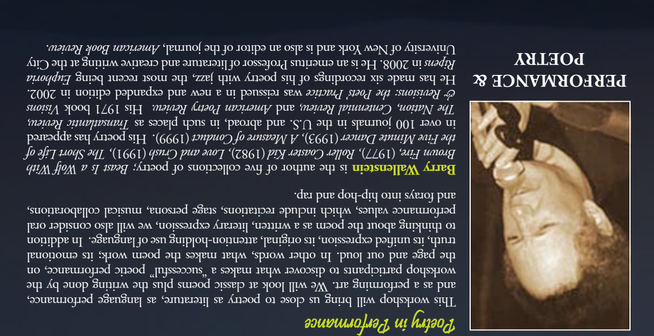
Fiction

Zoomboming Metaphors: Writing Poetry in Response to Music and Visual Art

As writers, we are used to being inspired by our reading—look at the large number of poems with epigraphs quoting other writers. But there's also a long history of poetry's links to music and to the visual arts, and I'm hoping in this workshop to inspire poets to try new approaches that might cross over the arts in new and creative ways, to steal a little bit of the magic, the fire, from an artist or musician and transform it into an entirely new work of art, a poem.

Jim Daniels won the Blue Lynx Poetry Prize for his book, *Revolt of the Cash-Fed Dummies* (2007). Two other books were published in 2007, his third collection of short fiction, *Mr. Pleasant*, and his eleventh book of poems, *In Line for the Exterminator*. *Street*, a book of his poems accompanying the photographs of Charles Bodsky, won the Tillie Olsen Prize, in addition, he has edited four anthologies, including *Letters to America: Contemporary American Poetry on Race*. He has received the Bittingham Prize for Poetry, two Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and two from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His poems have appeared in the Pushcart Prize and Best American Poetry anthologies. He directs the Creative Writing Program at Carnegie Mellon.

Poetry



Conference Registration Information

Registration and pricing information and a downloadable registration form are available on our website (see address below). A nonrefundable deposit of $150 is due at the time of registration. Please fill out both pages of the registration form and mail them (or fax them if credit card payment) with your deposit or full payment to the address on the form. If not paid in full, the conference balance is due by May 18. Before May 18, the conference fee minus the $150 deposit is 50% refundable. After May 18, there will be no refunds. If you have questions, please email us at beariver@umich.edu or call (734) 764-4139.

Plan A: Includes tuition, lodging and all meals. Lodging options and pricing for Plan A are listed below.

Private room and private bath: $775 per person
Private room and shared bath: $725 per person
Bunk room: $650 per person
(Single bunk bed in a 4-bunk bedroom shared with 1-3 others/shared bath with 1-3 others)

Plan B: Includes tuition and all meals, but not lodging for those who live in the Petoskey area. In addition, there are many hotels and motels available within twenty minutes of the conference for those who prefer greater privacy: $575 per person

Register early to secure your workshop choice: Workshops will be assigned on a first come first serve basis. In the unlikely event of a workshop cancellation, your entire payment will be refunded upon request if you do not wish to enroll in an alternate workshop.

For more information or to download a registration form, please visit our website.

www.lsa.umich.edu/bearriver

Find Your Natural Inspiration

The Bear River Writers' Conference

May 29 - June 2, 2008

AMY HEMPEL'S *The Collected Stories* came out in 2006. It was named one of the New York Times Ten Best Books of the Year and was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a USA Foundation Fellowship, and the Ambassador Book Award for Best Book of Fiction of 2006. Her stories have been anthologized in the *Best American Short Stories*, *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, and many others. She lives in New York City and teaches at Bennington College and at Sarah Lawrence.

Special Guest
AMY HEMPEL

Amy Hempel photo: Kenneth Chen; Background image from photo by Cyan James

A space for you . . .

Early morning at Camp Michigania and the sun is skimming the chill off the surface of Walloon Lake. The Bear River Writers' Conference begins its day. Participants leave their cozy lodges and wander along the paths to the dining hall to chat and fill themselves with a good breakfast. The hall is loud with conversation as attendees and faculty renew acquaintances and find new friendships. Outside the windows, the landscape brightens to full day and writers pause in their discussions to consider the spectacular views that surround them.

This is the singular experience of Bear River — the fabric of the conference woven from twin loves, for the worlds of words and nature. Bear River is a place of diverse community that welcomes all of the individual voices of its many participants.

Afternoon arrives and the rhythm of the conference changes. The options for recreation multiply as, each day, faculty and special guests offer readings and craft talks in the camp's education center. Participants have the opportunity to engage in active interchange with published authors, to find answers to the questions inspired by these writers' works. Those seeking a brief break from the demands of their pens may decide to use this time to wander the nature trails of the camp, go flyfishing or take a canoe and explore the calm of Walloon Lake.

Some participants elect to spend the afternoon reading or writing. Others investigate the nearby attractions in Petoskey, Boyne City, Harbor Springs, Bay Harbor and East Jordan. As the sun edges down toward the horizon, participants return again to the comfortable space of the dining hall to relax with one another over a satisfying meal and relive the day's highlights.

. . . outside . . .

Workshop slips into motion around 9am, the breakfast crowd dispersed into small groups of twelve. With their coffee cups and notebooks, writers gather around tables and in front of fireplaces and begin the work of the day. Conversation quickly condenses into an intent discussion of writing, process and products. Poets squint at their journals, deciphering lines from the previous night's inspiration. Fiction writers contemplate their newly minted pages and invite suggestions from the group. The atmosphere is alternately relaxed and avid, laughter a familiar punctuation to these hours.

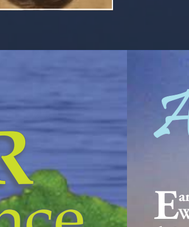
After an intense morning of creative dialogue, participants shuffle back to the dining halls for lunch, and more conversation, about the morning's achievements and their various passions for writing. The conference is deeply embedded in the natural world and the striking landscape of northern Michigan is not simply backdrop for the session, but inspiration for the creative work of participants and faculty.

. . . of the everyday

Evening at Bear River and participants once again disperse, to read, to write, to listen to the creative work of their teachers. Faculty readings carry the conference to twilight. Later, some participants bring stories and instruments and gather around the campfire down by the lake. Some, under the thrall of the day's creative energy, find a quiet spot in front of one of the camp's many fireplaces and work filling the blank pages of their notebooks. On Saturday, many participants venture away from the campgrounds to enjoy an evening of words and music at Crooked Tree Arts Center. The conference's creative endeavors culminate on the final night in a special reading that showcases the work of participants, with some students performing their work to music, often for the first time.

The Bear River Writers' Conference, which runs from dinner on Thursday through breakfast on Monday, is defined by its own particular geography, situated as it is at the intersection of the natural and creative worlds. Populated by an eclectic collection of writers of all levels of experience, it offers community members a hiatus from daily routine and the chance to find a space for themselves and their words.

Find your place at Bear River



Creative Non-Fiction/ Memoir

Life Stories

In this workshop, we'll explore the autobiographical origins of our work, whether in nonfiction or fiction, through remembering story-telling techniques, and well attempt to locate the fragmentary raw materials of memory—such as images, settings, and bits of dialogue—that contain the stories that have been granted to us through the experience of our own lives. Come prepared to generate new work and bring along a few old photos to yourself as well as of other people that prove important to your life.

Richard McCann is the author of *Mother of Sorrows*, which novelist Michael Cunningham describes as "almost unbearably beautiful . . . a book so innocent it felt, so magnificently written, that it can stand unembarrassed beside the mystery of life itself." *Mother of Sorrows* was chosen by Amazon as one of the 50 Best Books of 2005 and was a Borders Original Voices selection. His work has appeared in *The Atlantic Equine*, *Ms.*, *Best American Essays 2000*, and *The O. Henry Prize Stories 2007*. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Christopher Isherwood Foundation, and several others. He is a professor in the MFA Program in Creative Writing at American University in Washington, D.C.

Performance & Poetry

Prose Poem/ Very Short Story

For a long time many of us have been interested in that place where the lyric intensity of the prose poem begins to cross over into the narrative drive and characterization more typical of the very short story. In this workshop we will try to explore the place between the two, that place by reading and writing. With luck, some work, and a bit of inspiration, we hope each of us will have drafts of a couple of new prose pieces by the last workshop session.

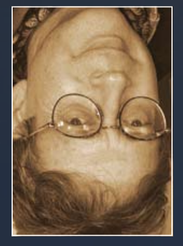
Keith Taylor, the conference Director, published two new books in 2006, *Guilty at the Keyboard*, was named a Michigan Notable Book of the Year for 2007, *Battered Guitars: The Poetry and Prose of Kenneth Rexroth*, a book he co-translated, was published in England. The next book, *If the World Becomes So Bright*, will be published by Wayne State University Press in 2009. Over the years his work has appeared in a couple of hundred places, ranging from *Story* to the *Los Angeles Times*, from *Bird Watcher's Digest* to the *Chicago Tribune* to *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Poetry Ireland*, and *The Southern Review*. He has won awards for his work here and in Europe. He works as the coordinator of undergraduate creative writing at the University of Michigan.

The Very Short Story

People and Places

People are who they are to some degree because of *where* they are—where they come from, where they choose to be. Here we will explore the relationship between personality and place. We will work on voicing a sense of place through the use of vivid language, and then explore why women and men both inhabit a place and embody it. The workshop welcomes both poets and prose writers, as well as those who want to sketch their abilities in a new or rediscovered genre.

Richard Tillinghast co-founded Bear River and was director through 2005. He has written and published in several genres: poetry, essays, travel writing, translation. He is the author of some eight books of poems and three books of essays. For many years he reviewed books and wrote travel pieces for the *New York Times*. A collection of poems, *The New Life*, is out this year from Copper Canyon Press, along with a collection of essays, *Finding Ireland*, and, in collaboration with Julia Clare Tillinghast, a book of translations from Turkish, *Dirty Angels*. He lives in Ireland. He writes full time and publishes feature journalism and book reviews in *The Irish Times*.



Prose & Poetry

Inspiration from Memory and Imagination

You have in your memory and imagination all the grist you need to write successful personal essay. You have the stuff; so how do you weld this powerful genre in compelling and plausible writing that rises off the page and hits the reader with the delicious scent of bread or the ominous drone of planes? We will explore strategies of life writing with particular focus on the structures and stylistic devices we may borrow from poetry and fiction. Though the focus is one new work, do bring a few pages of your writing on which to practice.

Anne-Marie Oomen is author of two collections of essays, *Falling Down the Barn* and *House of Fields*, both Michigan Notable Books (Wayne State University Press), *Encoded Woman*, a collection of poems (Milkweed Editions), and several chapbooks. She has edited *Looking Over My Shoulder: Reflections on the Twentieth Century*, an anthology of seniors essays funded by the Michigan Humanities Council. She has written many plays including the award-winning *Northern Belle* and *Wives of An American King*—based on the James Jesse Strang story. She has served on the boards of Glen Arbor Art Association, Michigan Writers, Old Town Playhouse, and Michigan Humanities Council. She serves as Chair of Creative Writing at Interlochen Arts Academy and is instructor for the Solstice Conference of Pine Manor College, MS.

Personal Essay

Fiction and Painting (1)

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Poetry

Performance & Poetry

Poetry in Performance

This workshop will bring us close to poetry as literature, as language performance, and as a performing art. We will look at classic poems plus the writing done by the workshop participants to discover what makes a "successful" poetic performance, on the page or out loud. In other words, what makes the poem work is emotional truth, its unified expression, its original, attention-holding use of language. In addition to thinking about poetry as a written, literary expression, we will also consider oral performance values, which include reactions, stage persona, musical collaboration, and forays into hip-hop and rap.

Barry Wallenstein is the author of five collections of poetry: *Bear a Wolf With Brown Fire* (1977), *Roller Coaster Kid* (1982), *Love and Crash* (1991), *The Short Life of the Free Minute Dancer* (1993), *A Measure of Conduct* (1999). His poetry has appeared in over 100 journals in the U.S. and abroad, in such places as *Tendril*, *Contemporary Literature*, *The Nation*, *Criminal Record*, and *American Poetry Review*. His 1971 book *Visions & Revisions*, *the Poet Poetry* was issued in a new and expanded edition in 2002. He has made six recordings of his poetry with jazz, the most recent being *Euphonia Alpen* in 2008. He is an emeritus Professor of literature and creative writing at the City University of New York and is also an editor of the journal, *American Book Review*.

Personal Essay

Special thanks to **Meijer, Incorporated** *for its generous support of the Bear River Writers' Conference*

THE BEAR RIVER WRITERS

To learn more about these authors—and the many others affiliated with the Bear River Writers' Conference—please visit our website:

www.lsa.umich.edu/bearriver