

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 meet the writers who live here. They hoped to bring people with general literary interests together with those interested in writing about place and the natural environment. They hoped the mix would create new ideas that would send 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!

Keith Taylor is the Director of the Bear River Writers' Conference. His most recent book, *If the World Becomes So Bright*, was published in 2009. He has published ten earlier books, collections of poems and stories, and edited and translated volumes. 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.

WORKSHOPS AND FACULTY PROFILES

Give your writing some life!

By writing scenes, we will learn how to dramatize a situation, and make your characters come alive. Through the use of dialogue and gesture, characterization is made real and can offer the complexity of human emotions. With the use of specific details, a place becomes visual. This workshop will offer exercises to create new work, or to give life to work already started.

Elizabeth Cox has published four novels: *Familiar Ground*, *The Ragged Way People Fall Out Of Love*, *Night Talk*, and *The Slow Moon*. She has also published a collection of short stories, *Barneys in the Real World*. One of these stories, "The Third of July," was chosen for the *O. Henry Collection* and she has written essays for *Mrs. Magazine*, *Lears*, *North Carolina Magazine*, and *The Oxford American*. She has published poetry in *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Kentucky Review*, *The Southern Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and others. She shares a Chair of Humanities with her husband, C. Michael Curtis, at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Writers Behaving Badly

Paradoxically, while there are many, often helpful "rules of thumb" for writing good fiction - show don't tell, write what you know, etc - writers, at heart, are rule breakers. In this class we'll consider some of the unspoken "you-can't-write-that" rules that censor our work...and then set out to break them. A workshop for those just getting started, those starting anew, and those looking for a jump start.

Peter Ho Davies is the author of the novel *The Welsh Girl*, long-listed for the Man Booker Prize, and the story collections, *The Lightest House in the World* and *Equal Love*. His work has appeared in *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Paris Review*, and has been selected for *Prize Stories: The O. Henry Award* and *Best American Short Stories*. One of *Gnomes'* Best of Young British Novelists," he teaches in the MFA Program of the University of Michigan.



Fiction



Fiction



Nonfiction



Poetry and Fiction



Fiction

"The moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow," observed Thoreau. This course will be a "boot camp" for creative nonfiction writers. In addition to workshopping participants' stories and discussing basic concepts of the craft, we'll pay close attention to the relationship between walking and writing. By studying the ways in which all nonfiction writers, from memoirists to literary journalists, can gain insight and inspiration through exploration of their immediate surroundings.

Miles Harvey is the author of *Painter in a Savage Land: The Strange Saga of the First European Artist in North America* which received a 2008 Editors' Choice award from *Booklist* and a best-books citation from *The Chicago Tribune*. His previous book, *The Island of Lost Maps: A True Story of Cartographic Crime*, was selected by *USA Today* as one of the top ten books of 2000. The recipient of a 2007-2008 Knight-Wallace fellowship at the University of Michigan and a 2004-2005 Illinois Arts Council Award for fiction, Harvey has taught at Northwestern University, the University of Chicago and the University of New Orleans. He recently joined the faculty at DePaul University in Chicago.

Memory, Imagination, & Material

In this workshop, through a series of exercises and assignments, we will explore the ways that we might tap into remembered experience and detail, transform it through imaginative processes, and turn it into material for poems and stories. If you've despaired upon facing a blank page, hopefully this workshop will help you learn how to fill the page before you even have to face it. My hope is that you will learn some approaches to the writing process that will help you find new material among some of the old passions and obsessions, and that this will result in new work to take away with you from the conference.

Laura Kasischke has published five novels (most recently, *In a Perfect World*, 2009), six collections of poetry (most recently *Gardening in the Dark*, 2004), and two novels for young adults. She has published in *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The New England Review*, and elsewhere. She has been the recipient of several Pushcart Prizes and two fellowships for the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Laura teaches at the University of Michigan.

Fiction and History

History is an inexhaustible fund of fact and legend we can use to enrich our fiction. In this workshop, we will select incidents from history, brainstorm about how we might use them, and look into the question of what to research for a piece of historical fiction. Along the way we'll address several urgent matters such as: What purposes can historical fiction serve that "factual" history writing can't or how important is accuracy? Each participant will keep a workshop journal, write a short-short story, and begin an historical novel. Participants are encouraged to bring to the workshop historical writing, documents, or tales from history that interest them.

Elizabeth Johnson Kostova, an American fiction writer and essayist, was born in New London, Connecticut in 1964. She holds a BA from Yale University and an MFA from the University of Michigan. Her first novel, *The Historian* (Little, Brown, 2005), has been translated into 40 languages and optioned by Sony Pictures for an upcoming film. Kostova's second novel, *The Swan Thieves*, was published January 2010. She has also published essays, short fiction, and poetry. In 2007 Kostova created the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation, which is dedicated to promoting, translating, and supporting contemporary Bulgarian literature worldwide.

Creative Nonfiction: Writing with Your Feet