

## 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 general 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 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!



## POETRY

### *Borrowing Matches: 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 into other art forms 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 Crash-Test 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 Charlee Brodsky, won the Tillie Olsen Prize. In addition, he has edited or co-edited four anthologies, including *Letters to America: Contemporary American Poetry on Race*. He has received the Brittingham 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.

### *Writing Fiction by Imitation*

As my book, *The Sincerest Form: Writing Fiction by Imitation* suggests, an excellent way to improve one's 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 Lost Suitcase* and *Anywhere Out of 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 State Writers Summer Institute.

## FICTION



## NATURE WRITING

### *The Writer in Nature*

Essayist and poet Mary Oliver says that 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 ten books, including *A Place on the Water*, *It's Raining Frogs and Fishes*, and *The Living Great Lakes*, have won many awards and have been translated into five languages.



## POETRY/FICTION

### *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 illogic 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 *Lilies Without*, Ausable 2007), and a novel for young adults. She has published writing in *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The New England Review*, and elsewhere, and been the recipient of several Pushcart Prizes and two fellowships for the National Endowment for the Arts. Her third novel is being made into a film starring Uma Thurman, directed by Vadim Perelman. She teaches at the University of Michigan.



## FICTION

### *Fiction and Painting(s)*

What can the visual act offer us as fiction writers? 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*, *Poets & 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.



## 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 and story-telling techniques, and we'll 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 of yourself as well as of other people and places 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 intricately 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*, *Esquire*, *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.



## PERSONAL ESSAY

### *Inspiration from Memory and Imagination*

You have in your memory and imagination all the grist you need to write the successful personal essay. You have the stuff, so how do you wield 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, *Pulling Down the Barn and House of Fields*, both Michigan Notable Books (Wayne State University Press), *Uncoded 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 Belles* 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.

## 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](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/bearriver)

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



## THE VERY SHORT STORY

### *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, both 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 Rapture*, was named a Michigan Notable Book of the Year for 2007. *Battered Guitars: The Poetry and Prose of Kostas Karyotakis*, a book he co-translated, was published in England. His 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.



## PROSE & POETRY

### *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 evoking a sense of place through the use of vivid language, and then explore how 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 stretch their abilities and try something new.

**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 Beech, along with a collection of essays, *Finding Ireland*, and, in collaboration with Julia Clare Tillinghast, a book of translations from Turkish, *Dirty August*. He lives in Ireland, where he writes full time and publishes feature journalism and book reviews in *The Irish Times*.



## 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 and out loud. In other words, what makes the poem work: its emotional truth, its unified expression, its original, attention-holding use of language. In addition to thinking about the poem as a written, literary expression, we will also consider oral performance values, which include recitations, stage persona, musical collaborations, and forays into hip-hop and rap.

**Barry Wallenstein** is the author of five collections of poetry; *Beast Is a Wolf With Brown Fire*, (1977), *Roller Coaster Kid* (1982), *Love and Crush* (1991), *The Short Life of the Five 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 *Transatlantic Review*, *The Nation*, *Centennial Review*, and *American Poetry Review*. His 1971 book *Visions & Revisions: the Poets' Practice* was reissued in a new and expanded edition in 2002. He has made six recordings of his poetry with jazz, the most recent being *Euphoria Ripens* 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*.