

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

Spring Writer's Conference 2010

“Writing Childhood”

Saturday, April 17, 2010

9:00 am – 3:30 pm

featuring keynote speaker

David Means

David Means—is the author of the short story collections: Assorted Fire Events, A Quick Kiss of Redemption and The Secret Goldfish. His work has appeared in The New Yorker, Harper's, Esquire, The O. Henry Prize Stories, and The Best American Short Stories. He lives in Nyack, N.Y.—as did one of his artistic influences, Edward Hopper—and teaches at Vassar College. Contemporary Authors writes: "With Means's second collection, Assorted Fire Events: Stories, he was compared favorably to such esteemed writers as Raymond Carver and Alice Munro and praised by critics for his sharp prose." James Wood, in The London Review of Books, notes that "Means' language offers an exquisitely precise and sensuous register of an often crazy American reality. Sentences gleaming with lustre are sewn through the stories. One will go a long way with a writer possessed of such skill. You can hear the influence of Flannery O'Connor in Means' prose: in the scintillating shiver of the beautiful imagery, in the lack of sentimentality, in the interest in grotesque violence, and gothic tricksterism." Means' newest book, The Spot: Stories, is forthcoming in May from Faber/FSG.

Today's Schedule

9:00-9:45 AM, BREAKFAST, REGISTRATION & ORIENTATION, in the Atrium Lobby

9:45-11:15 AM, PLENARY READING with David Means, in the Atrium Auditorium

11:15 AM-12:45 PM, MORNING WORKSHOPS, in Hunziker Wing

12:45-2:00 PM, LUNCH, in the Atrium Lobby

2:00-3:30 PM, AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS, in Hunziker Wing

MORNING WORKSHOPS, 11:15-12:45

◇ **Fiction, with David Means.** The songwriter Tom Waits once said: "In order to catch a song you have to begin thinking like one; they are illogical and unexpected and if they ask you to write them down, you'd better do it or they will get mad. . ." This workshop will center on the process of thinking and acting like a fiction writer in order to catch stories. How does one go about discovering his or her unique, individual, and ever changing process of finding ideas, creating drafts, and editing? Why is writing so easy and so hard at the same time? **Hunziker Wing, Room 129**

◇ **Panel: Publishing Adolescent Writing.** Two young adult authors will discuss their own work and the vital, flourishing field of young adult literature. This panel offers an opportunity to learn more about the possibilities opened up by the young adult market and the exciting work that is being published in the field today. A question and answer session will conclude the discussion. The panel will be moderated by Marina Budhos, with panelists Neesha Meminger and Rita Williams-Garcia. **Hunziker Wing, Room 122**

Neesha Meminger was born in Punjab, India, where she lived until she was almost five. Neesha holds a BA in Film and Media Arts from Ryerson University in Toronto, and an MFA in Creative Writing from The New School For Social Research in New York City. Shine, Coconut Moon, her first novel, is on the Smithsonian Institute's "Smithsonian Notable Books for Children 2009" list, has been selected as the New York Public Library's Top 100 Books of 2009, and was nominated as an American Library Association's Best Books for YA, 2009. Neesha lives in New York City with her husband and their two children.

Rita Williams-Garcia is the author of seven award-winning novels, including Like Sisters on the Homefront, Every Time a Rainbow Dies, and the 2009 National Book Award Finalist Jumped. Williams-Garcia's works have been recognized by the Coretta Scott King Award Committee, PEN/Norma Klein Award, American Library Association, and Parents' Choice, among others. She is on faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA Program for Writing for Children and Young Adults, has served on the National Book Award Committee for Young People's Literature, and sponsors a short story contest for young writers.

◇ **Remembering: Memoir, with Judith Broome.** A memoir can begin with a single memory; or, in the case of childhood memory, with an image, a scent, a song. We will read one or two short memoirs that center around a childhood memory and gradually spin outward to connect the past with the present. We will examine the ways that a childhood memory can be developed into a reflection on our contemporary lives. Students will choose a persistent memory from childhood and explore the way that memory can be a catalyst for thoughtful and revealing writing. **Hunziker Wing, Room 128**

Judith Broome teaches British and Global literature in the English Department at WPU. Her translations of Latin American fiction have been published in TriQuarterly, Fiction, and Webster Review, and her short story, "The Effect of Light upon Water," appeared in Primavera. Her book, Fictive Domains: Body, Landscape, and Nostalgia, 1717-1770 was published in 2007 by Bucknell University Press.

◇ **Playwriting, with Brian Ó Broin.** An introductory class on playwriting, focusing on one major element: dialogue. The seminar will particularly examine how to incorporate children and memories of childhood into a script. **Hunziker Wing, Room 111**

Brian Ó Broin, a professor of linguistics and medieval literature at WPU, won first prize for his full-length play in the Irish national literary competition "An t-Oireachtas" in 2002.

◇ **Prose Poetry, with Martha Witt.** In this workshop, we will explore our own childhood memories through writing prose poetry. This border genre, particularly suited to rendering memory in both narrative as well as lyrical prose, will simultaneously challenge traditional notions about genre separation and offer writers a new entrée into old material. We will begin by attempting to define what constitutes a prose poem, read practitioners of the form such as Juan Felipe Herrera, Naomi Shahib Nye, and Charles Simic, and then address aesthetic questions that arise from our reading. With the majority of the workshop devoted to guided writing exercises, oral sharing, and feedback, writers should emerge with a deeper and broader sense of the possibilities for structuring their work. **Hunziker Wing, Room 130**

Martha Witt grew up in Hillsborough, N.C., the setting of her first novel. She has received grants from the New York Times Foundation as well as the Thomas J. Watson Foundation and has held residencies at both the Yaddo and Ragdale artist colonies.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS, 2:00-3:30

◇ **Memoir, with Nahid Rachlin.** To reach readers in a personal memoir, it is important to engage them with your story, as you would in writing fiction. In this workshop we will discuss how to make your own life story interesting by giving it the right structure, voice, complexity. Students are asked to bring, if possible, 3-4 pages of their own pieces, focused on childhood experiences, some of which we will read aloud in class and comment on. The criticism will be constructive. We will point out strengths as well as weaknesses and make suggestions for improvement. **Hunziker Wing, Room 129**

Nahid Rachlin's publications include a memoir, *Perisan Girls* (Penguin), four novels, and a collection of short stories. Her individual short stories have appeared in about fifty magazines. She has held a Doubleday-Columbia fellowship and a Wallace Stegner Fellowship (Stanford).

◇ **Panel: Publishing & Marketing.** The afternoon publishing panel will discuss publishing and editing with a focus on how books are promoted, sold and marketed. Professional publishers and editors will respond to questions from the audience. The panel will be moderated by Martha Witt, with panelists Tavia Kowalchuk and Randall Klein. **Hunziker Wing, Room 122**

Tavia Kowalchuk is the senior marketing director at William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins. Over the past four years, she has worked on publishing campaigns for many *New York Times* bestselling authors, including Christopher Moore, Brunonia Barry, Bruce Feiler, Marisa de los Santos, Dorothea Benton Frank, Gregory

Maguire, and Ree Drummond. During her twelve years with HarperCollins Publishers, she has also worked as a sales rep to various channels including international markets, local independent booksellers, and a national chain.

Randall Klein, after starting his career in the Subrights Department of Trident Media Group, moved over to the editorial side at Bantam Dell, an imprint of the Random House Publishing Group. He is currently an associate editor.

◆ **Advanced Editing for Grammar & Style, with Alice Deakins.** Both teachers and writers need to know how to edit for grammar and style. Editing for sentence level grammar involves knowing the minimal structures of the English sentence as well as the conventions of sentence punctuation in formal written English. These—structures and conventions—are the foundations on which sophisticated writing is constructed by adding the mortar of cohesion, the architecture of information structuring, and the bricks of extra information that characterize published writing. By using a sentence model that is both pedagogically useful and stylistically sophisticated, this workshop will introduce participants to powerful editing practices that will produce both correct and powerful writing. **Hunziker Wing, Room 128**

Alice H. Deakins is a Professor of English at WPU. Her areas of teaching and research are gender and language, mothers and daughters in literature, and pedagogical grammar.

◆ **Poetry, with Timothy Liu.** In his *Letters to a Young Poet*, Rainer Maria Rilke famously remarks, "Even in prison, you would have a childhood." What does this sentence mean and how can it help us in writing poems? Does Rilke mean to suggest an actual prison and/or a metaphorical one? What does it mean to "have a childhood" as an adult? What might the relation be between incarceration and imagination? These questions (and more) will be explored. **Hunziker Wing, Room 111**

Timothy Liu is the author of six books of poems. His most recent book is *Bending the Mind Around the Dream's Blown Fuse*.

◆ **Coming of Age Fiction, with Marina Budhos.** This workshop will explore how we mine the coming of age experience to create vivid fiction. How do we move from our own experience, with its particulars, to imagine a fictional creation? How do we evoke and stay true to the experience of childhood and adolescence? What is the role of the adult, reflective voice? We will be discussing coming of age fiction in adult works and in young adult works. Participants should come with 5 pages of material, if possible; we will also perform in-class writing exercises. **Hunziker Wing, Room 130**

Marina Budhos is an author of award-winning fiction and nonfiction. She has published the novels *Ask Me No Questions* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), *The Professor of Light* (Putnam, 1999), and *House of Waiting* (Global City Press, 1995), as well as a nonfiction book, *Remix: Conversations with Immigrant Teenagers* (Henry Holt, 1999).