

**The 27th annual Key West Literary Seminar**  
*Historical Fiction and The Search for Truth*

**1st Session**  
**January 8 - 11, 2009**

All events take place at the San Carlos Institute, 516 Duval Street, Key West, or within walking distance, as noted. Schedule and participants are subject to change.

**Thursday, January 8**

**7:45-8:00 p.m. Introductions**

Lynn Kaufelt, President, Key West Literary Seminar  
Rafael Peñalver, President, San Carlos Institute

**8:00 - 9:15      John Hersey Memorial Address**

**Geraldine Brooks**

“Historical Fiction and The Search for Truth”

**9:30 -11:00      Reception at Audubon House & Gardens**

**Friday, January 9**

**8:45-9:30 a.m. Coffee, tea, pastries**

**9:30 - 9:45      Introductions**

Cynthia Crossen, 2009 Program Chair

**9:45 - 10:05      Ursula Hegi**

A reading from *Stones from the River*.

**10:05 - 10:25      John Wray**

A reading from *The Right Hand of Sleep*.

**10:25 - 11:10      Allan Gurganus**

“A Still Small Voice Under the Cannonade: Field Notes toward Fiction’s Pact with History”

**11:10 - 11:30      Break**

**11:30 - 12:15      The Uses of History in Literature: Is the Past Really Past?**

Why turn to the past as a literary device?  
How does a writer create “imaginative truth,” and what might that be?  
Why invent history? What are the limits?  
How does a writer achieve authenticity in voice, character, and setting?

With Peter Ho Davies, Allan Gurganus, Ursula Hegi, Jane Kamensky,  
and John Wray. Moderated by Alan Cheuse

**12:15-2:00 p.m. Lunch**

**2:00 - 2:30 Megan Marshall**  
“Why Not Say What Happened?”

**2:30 - 3:05 David Levering Lewis**  
“W.E.B. Du Bois as Historian and Writer of Historical Fiction: The Tireless Explorer”

**3:05 - 3:20 Break**

**3:20 - 3:35 Geraldine Brooks**  
A reading from *March*.

**3:35 - 4:50 Sena Jeter Naslund**  
A reading from *Ahab's Wife*.

**4:50 - 5:30 Literature as a Point of Departure: Telling the Other Story**  
A conversation between Geraldine Brooks and Sena Jeter Naslund;  
guided by Alan Cheuse

**7:00 - 10:00 Dinner at the Lighthouse Gardens**

### **Saturday, January 10**

**8:45-9:30 a.m. Coffee, tea, pastries**

**9:30 - 10:15 Jane Kamensky and Jill Lepore**  
“Taking Liberty—Fiction and the Archives”; with readings from *Blindspot*

**10:15 -11:00 Eric Foner**  
“Who Owns History? Rethinking and Re-imagining the Past in a Changing World”  
  
*“History,” writes James Baldwin, an unusually astute observer of twentieth-century American life, “does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.”*  
—Eric Foner, from the preface to *Who Owns History?*

**11:00 - 11:20 Break**

**11:20 - 11:40 Alan Cheuse**  
A reading and reflections from *To Catch the Lightning*.

**11:40- 12:30 How Can We Know (and Tell) What Happened in the Past?**

Where do historians find truth? Whose truth is it? What do historians make of “subjective truth”? How do writers of history make history read as literature? What are the politics of history? What do historians make of history?

A discussion with Jill Lepore, David Levering Lewis, Megan Marshall, and Patricia O’Toole; moderated by Eric Foner.

**12:30-2:00 p.m. Lunch**

**2:00 - 2:20 Barry Unsworth**

A reading from *Land of Marvels*.

**2:20 - 3:15 Historians and Novelists: What’s Your Take?**

“The Boundaries of History, Historical Fiction and the Limits of Invention.”

What do novelists learn from history? What do historians learn from literature? Is it ever o.k. to invent history? Can fiction contaminate our understanding of history? Enhance it?

With Peter Ho Davies, Megan Marshall, Sena Jeter Naslund, Patricia O’Toole, and Barry Unsworth; moderated by Michael Meeropol

**3:15 - 3:35 Break**

**3:35 - 4:30 A Pack of Lies: The Search for Truth in History and Art**

“A Real Life Story: Life Imitating Art. Art Imitating Life.”

A Conversation Between Ivy Meeropol and Michael Meeropol; moderated by David L. Lewis.

**7:45 - 9:00 The John Malcolm Brinnin Memorial Event**

**Gore Vidal**

A conversation with the audience.

*But I was born a writer, and a writer must always tell the truth (unless he’s a journalist), while the politician must never give the game away. In the end, it is better to have had some influence as a writer than to have bought—or have let someone buy for you—a title.*

—Gore Vidal, *High Noon*

**9:15 - 11:00 Champagne Reception, Custom House**

**Sunday, January 11**

**8:45-9:30 a.m. Coffee, tea, pastries**

**9:30 - 9:50 Peter Ho Davies**

A reading from *The Welsh Girl*.

**9:50 - 10:30 Barry Unsworth**  
“Why Bother With the Past? The Uses of History as a Path to Truth”

**10:30 - 10:50 Break**

**10:50 - 11:30 Peter Matthiessen**  
A reading and exploration of *Shadow Country*.

**11:30 - 12:30 Historical Fiction: Noun or Adjective?**  
“The Use and Meaning of Literature”

How do novelists transform the past into a story that is alive in the present? What is so compelling about the past? Why use history as a way to shape the story? Do we need be more faithful to the needs of the story or to history? Does it matter if we tell the truth?

With Geraldine Brooks, Peter Ho Davies, Allan Gurganus, Ursula Hegi, and Sena Jeter Naslund; moderated by Hilma Wolitzer.

**12:30-2:00 p.m. Conch Chowder Library Lunch**

### **Sunday Afternoon:**

*Note:* The afternoon session is free and open to the public. Seating is first-come, first-served. This session is not included in registration fee.

**2:00 - 2:15 Sena Jeter Naslund**  
A reading from *Abundance*.

**2:15 - 3:00 The Voice of the Past: Getting It Right**  
With Allan Gurganus, Ursula Hegi, Sena Jeter Naslund, Patricia O’Toole, and John Wray; moderated by Alan Cheuse.

**3:00 - 3:20 Geraldine Brooks**  
A reading from *People of the Book*.

**3:30 - 4:00 Barry Unsworth**  
A reading from *Land of Marvels*.