

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

2nd Session
January 15 - 18, 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 15

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

Barry Unsworth

“The Nature of Truth in Historical Fiction”

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

Friday, January 16

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

9:30 - 9:40 Introductions

Cynthia Crossen, 2009 Program Chair

9:40 - 10:00 John Burnham Schwartz

A reading and remarks from *The Commoner*.

10:00 - 10:20 Calvin Baker

A reading and remarks from *Dominion*.

10:20 - 11:00 David Nasaw

“The Historical Imagination: The Historian as Storyteller”

11:00 - 11:20 Break

11:20 - 11:50 William Kennedy

“Imagining a real-life place called Albany”

A reading from *Roscoe*.

11:50 - 12:30 The Fictional Imagination: Bending the Truth

“Historical Fiction: Noun or Adjective?”

How does a writer create literary or imaginative truth?

How does he or she achieve authenticity in voice, character, and setting?

What are the boundaries of historical fiction? Where would you not go?

With Calvin Baker, Andrea Barrett, Elizabeth Gaffney, and Samantha Hunt; moderated by Alan Cheuse

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

2:00 - 2:20 **Marilynne Robinson**
A reading from *Gilead*.

2:20 - 2:45 **Thomas Mallon**
“Thoughts on Fictionalizing Political History”
A reading from *Fellow Travelers*.

2:45 - 3:15 **Madison Smartt Bell**
“The Relation of Fiction to Fact in Historical Fiction:
Assimilating Historical Knowledge into an Engaging Fictional Form”

How does the weight of history inspire and alter the story?

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

3:35 - 3:50 **Valerie Martin**
A reading from *Property*.

3:50 - 4:30 **Entering the Lives of Others**
“Historical Empathy and the Conquest of the Imagination”

With Francisco Goldman, Valerie Martin, Marilynne Robinson, and John Burnham Schwartz; moderated by Mary Morris

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

Saturday, January 17

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

9:30 - 9:45 **Samantha Hunt**
A reading from *The Invention of Everything Else*.

9:45 - 10:00 **Andrea Barrett**
A reading from *Ship Fever*.

10:00 - 10:45 **Science and History**
“Uncanny Investigations in Human Curiosity”

A conversation between Andrea Barrett and Samantha Hunt; guided by Alan Cheuse.

10:45- 11:05 **Break**

- 11:05 - 11:45 Russell Banks, Thomas Mallon, and David Nasaw**
 “Dreaming Up America: Putting My Words into Their Mouths”
 A conversation on the uses and abuses of history, and the limits of invention.
 What do novelists owe to history? What does history owe to fiction?
- 11:45 - 12:30 Why the Past? What Do We Hope to Learn by Looking Back?**
 “Getting Beyond Genre Fiction: Constraint or Liberation?
 Social and Political Implications of Using the Past to Comment on the Present”
 Why choose historical fiction as a vehicle?
 A discussion with Calvin Baker, Elizabeth Gaffney, Valerie Martin, Joyce Carol Oates, and John Burnham Schwartz; moderated by Mary Morris.
- 12:30-2:00 p.m. Lunch**
- 2:00 - 2:15 Chantel Acevedo**
 A reading from *Love and Ghost Letters*.
- 2:15 - 2:30 Rachel Kushner**
 A reading from *Telex from Cuba*.
- 2:30 - 3:15 Recreating Cuba’s Past & The Politics of Historical Fiction**
 A conversation between Chantel Acevedo and Rachel Kushner.
- 3:15 - 3:35 Break**
- 3:35 - 4:05 Elizabeth Gaffney**
 A reading and remarks from *Metropolis*.
- 4:05 - 4:30 Barry Unsworth**
 A reading and remarks from *Sacred Hunger*
- 7:45 - 9:00 The John Malcolm Brinnin Memorial Event**
7:45 - 8:15 Anchee Min and Laryann Jiang
 A dramatic performance from “Empress Orchid” and “Women of Red Detachment”
8:15 - 9:00 Our Place in Historical Fiction
 A conversation with Russell Banks, William Kennedy, and Joyce Carol Oates
- 9:15 - 11:00 Champagne Reception, Custom House**

Sunday, January 18

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

9:30 - 9:45 **Madison Smartt Bell**
A reading from *All Souls' Rising*.

9:45- 10:00 **Russell Banks**
A reading from *Cloudsplitter*.

10:00 - 10:45 **Francisco Goldman**
"Jose Marti: *The Divine Husband*"

10:45 - 11:05 **Break**

11:05 - 11:45 **Joyce Carol Oates**
"*Wild Nights!*: Re-inventing American Literary Icons"

11:45 - 12:30 p.m **Humanizing History: The Return to the Personal Voice**
How do writers of historical fiction transform the past into a story which is alive in the present? What does the writer of historical fiction owe the past and/or the real-life characters she re-creates and re-presents in her fiction? Does it matter if we tell the truth?

With Madison Smartt Bell, Thomas Mallon, Valerie Martin, Rachel Kushner, and Barry Unsworth; moderated by David Nasaw

12:30 - 2:00 **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 **Barry Unsworth**
A reading from *Land of Marvels*.

2:15 - 2:30 **Marilynne Robinson**
A reading from *Home*.

2:30 - 3:00 **Anchee Min**
"Becoming Madam Mao: Life Merging with Art"

3:00 - 4:00 **The Voice of the Past: Getting It Right**
With Chantel Acevedo, Elizabeth Gaffney, Francisco Goldman, and John Burnham Schwartz; moderated by Madison Smartt Bell