

## **Crossing Genres / Hybrid Poetry: An Immersive Poetry Workshop**

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Dates: March 10,11,17,18, and April 1

Time 9:00-5:00

### Course Description

In the book-length poem *One Big Self*, C.D. Wright documents—by incorporating interviews and conversations, tattoos slogans, tests, overheard talk, signage, and other “stuff”—her visits to the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, the East Carroll Parish Prison Farm, and the Louisiana State Penitentiary. In *Nox*, a book-in-a-box collage journal, Anne Carson creates an elegy object for her brother while translating a Catullus poem. Border works, such as these, iconoclastic books that cross thresholds by crossing genres—that appropriate elements from a variety of sources such as of memoir, theory, and history—have formed a genre of their own, sometimes referred to as hybrid poetry. How are these protean constructions conceived and built? This workshop is a laboratory intended to answer just these questions. Through reading works and through practice, we will write chapbook-length poems that incorporate a diverse range of genres.

### **Texts:**

*Nox* by Anne Carson (New York: New Directions)

*This That* by Susan Howe (New York: New Directions)

*A Handmade Museum* by Brenda Coultas (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press)

*One Big Self* by C.D. Wright (Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press)

*Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004. The Joy of Cooking*

*[AIRPORT NOVEL MUSICAL POEM PAINTING FILM PHOTO HALLUCINATION LANDSCAPE]* by Tan Lin (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press)

*The Age of Glass* by Cole Swensen (Farmington: Alice James Books)

*As a Friend* by Forrest Gander (New York: New Directions)

*The Decent of Alette* by Alice Notely (New York: Penguin)

*At Element* by Leonard Schwartz (Greenfield: Talisman House)

### **Course Requirements:**

An oral presentation (described below)

Reading nine books of poetry

Critiquing of students' work and participation in class discussion

Students are required to write a project proposal before the course begins and new work for each class and write a 20-page cross-genre poem chapbook to be handed in at the end of the course.

**Oral presentations:** prepare a 15-minute oral presentation on one aspect of one of the books that you're assigned. Oral presentations will include information on the author's background and information about the tradition (author's influences/intentions) of the

work, and you'll be asked to read an interview, or two, to better understand the author's practice. Author's writing techniques will be analyzed and the poem(s) will be unpacked. You will be expected to do a close reading of the text in oral presentations. We will discuss how the author addresses form and content. Prepare one or two discussion questions for the class. Books will be brought to class for discussion.

**Attendance policy:** Since class lasts for only five days, no absences are permitted.

**Final Project** will be a full-length chapbook, which will consist of 20 pages of writing.

**Grades** will be based on attendance and participation, final project and oral presentation.

Before the course begins, decide on and write a description of a full-length poetry project that you want to work on that is due the first day of class. You will work on your 20-page poem throughout the class and portions of it will be critiqued in class.

### **Course Outline**

#### **Day 1—March 10**

Oral presentations of *Nox* and *This That* and discussion of the poems.

How is story relayed?

We will discuss how story can be told through various genres in an extended book-length poem. We will discuss the use of fragmentation to create a narrative. We will address the nature of the autobiographical narrative and how weaving nonbiographical material into it can add dimension. We will look at how meditations and digressions can enrich narrative.

We will go over writing proposals.

#### **Day 2—March 11**

Oral presentations of *One Big Self* and *A Handmade Museum* and discussion of poems.

We will look at the documentary poem.

What live research might a writer involve himself/herself in and how can that research be brought into the poem?

We will discuss methods of first-hand research. We will investigate how the interview, personal experience, letters, memories, and all kinds of documentation can be used in poems.

Your poetry will be critiqued.

#### **Day 3—March 17**

Oral presentations of *Seven Controlled Vocabularies* and *Obituary 2004. The Joy of Cooking* and *The Glass Age* discussion of the poems.

We will look at how art can be incorporated in a literary work (both with photographic reproduction and incorporating writings about art—ekphrastic poetry) and how various materials used in a project are synthesized. We will look at how history writing can be incorporated into poetry.

Your poetry will be critiqued.

**Day 4—March 18**

Oral presentations of *As a Friend* and *The Descent of Alette* and discussions of the works. We will discuss how to blend orality with the written word. We will investigate different ways to work with the materiality of language while maintaining the intimacy of spoken language.

Your poetry will be critiqued.

**Day 5—April 1**

Oral presentation of *At Element* and discussion of the poem.

We will look at how poetry can be an essay. The essay substantiates propositions while poetry most often does not. How can these two very different forms blend, find a meeting place?

Your poetry will be critiqued.