

Hello and welcome. This is the graduate poetry workshop at UF, MFA@FLA. At the heart of it is something unknown to me, and in large part still perhaps to be thought of by you: the poems you will write and bring to class week after week. There will be no assignments from me, or not until further notice anyway. I want you to write the poems you've come here to write, that you perhaps always wanted to write, the poems you have in you to write, the poems that come to you to be written. These are what we will basically talk about in class.

As a fallback or supplement or safety net or scaffold or set of references – I still don't know to this day what figure is most appropriate, or most true – we will survey (and you will talk about and occasionally present) 5 books by Louis MacNeice, Robert Lowell, Karen Solie, Erin Belieu, and Sam Riviere. English, Irish, Canadian, American; men and women; old and new (75 years ago, and last year); probably largely successful, quite possibly glorious failures. The thing they have in common is the way they rise to an opportunity or challenge. Beyond that, they have and are all sorts: poems in mid-career and first books; public and personal; sequences of poems and so-called 'long poems' and the standard Noah's Ark of poetry books; hammering to get at a voice, and the effortless performance of one that exists already. They dramatize and exemplify persistence in the poet, that and the ability to come up with a prismatic analysis of the self, to make of one person or time or experience a whole rainbow of possibilities.

If you don't know the poets, I would hope at least some of you will come away with new favorite poets. (And if you do, I hope they're firm favorites already.) I hope – but won't insist – that they will occasionally play into what you write: a diary poem, pieces inspired by public events, the state of the world, a sequence of personal narrative.

Other things don't change: a paucity of narrowly drawn assignments and corresponding freedom for you to write the poems you want to write; illegible comments; expressive squiggles; sibylline remarks; an unhelpfully Luddite stance that insists all poems to be circulated on paper, one spare copy for me to keep. (It would give us a big boost if you would bring poems to our first class, so that we can begin prepared workshopping in the second...)

"I would have a poet able bodied, fond of talking, a reader of the newspapers, capable of pity and laughter, informed in economics, appreciative of women, involved in personal relationships, actively interested in politics, susceptible to physical impressions." Thus, famously, Louis MacNeice, the first of our poets. (No slight to anyone present, of course. Women hadn't been invented then, except as Muses.) Anyway, I look forward to a lively and fast-moving term.

Class will be in the Suite. My office hours are Monday, 2-4 p.m., Wednesday 4-5 p.m., and other mutually convenient times.

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Possible shape of the semester (the pace depends on how much we find to say on the books, which get 2-3 weeks each, on average):

August 26 First meeting, introductions, discussion of future modalities. MacNeice poems (photocopies).

September 2 Labor Day. Meet at 543 NE 6th Avenue, for a read through of *Autumn Journal*.

September 9 Beginning of regular (irregular?) workshops. MacNeice.

September 16 Workshop. MacNeice?

September 23 Workshop. Lowell?

September 30 Workshop. Lowell.

October 7 Workshop. Lowell?

October 14 Workshop. Solie?

October 21 Workshop. Solie.

October 28 Workshop. Solie/ Belieu?

November 4 Workshop. Belieu?

November 11 Holiday?

November 18 Workshop. Riviere.

November 25 Workshop. Riviere. (revised workshop poems to be delivered to me)

December 2 Last class. Reading revisions. Odds and sods. Impressions?

M.H.