

Hello and welcome. This is the graduate poetry workshop at UF. At the unlegislateable heart of it is something unknown to me, and possibly still to be thought of by you: the poems you will write and bring to class week after week. I do not intend to set you many assignments; I am fortunate in having colleagues who like to do that, and are much better at it than I am. If you need the security and imperative of a prompt, I will see what I can do. But broadly, the philosophy of this class (from your never-MFA'd professor) is the scriptural (and responsibly libertarian) 'do as thou wouldst be done unto'. In other words, I want you to write the poems you want to write, that you perhaps always wanted to write, the poems you have it in you to write, the poems that come to you to be written. These are what we will talk about in class.

I've never been quite sure of the relation between reading and writing, except that reading is pleasant anyway, and sooner or later useful. Read and walk and turn off your gadgetry are 3 things I would recommend to anyone wanting to write. This term we will read *Learning Human*, an early selected poems from the man who for my money is the best poet alive in English, the Australian, Les Murray. You will see from his example that very great poetry can come from someone with a difficult upbringing, who never took his degree, who has autism in his family, who has written for a living in a country that broadly does not read and is nuts about sport, who, suffered or suffers from depression (the black dog), who dedicates his books to the glory of God, or sometimes, the greater glory of God.

I'm thinking we might in the last month of classes read a second book, Karen Solie's *The Road In Is Not the Same Road Out*. Solie is Canadian, and thirty years younger. She lives, to my understanding, here and there, taking short-term jobs. *The Road In* is her fifth book of poems. How to summarize her? A blend of intellect and vigour.

I hope you'll help me present and talk about these 2 poets; I hope you come to love them as I do.

Like poems, these things (syllabuses) are best when less than 1 page. (Well, not always.)

Michael Hofmann

Office Hours, Tuesday 1-4 pm, and by appointment.