

1989

THE FLIGHT OF THE MIND



Sixth Annual Summer Writing Workshop for Women
August 13–20, 1989

Judith Barrington • Evelyn C. White • Ursula K. Le Guin • Theresa Clark • Carletta Wilson



Above, from left: Ruth Gundle, Judith Barrington, and Tee Corinne; on right: contact sheet of Evelyn C. White and Judith Barrington, photos by Tee Corinne, 1989

Explore and strengthen your writing skills in a community of women.

This workshop offers formal instruction, time for work in a room of your own, and the opportunity to exchange ideas with other writers. There will be a serious focus on writing, but you can also relax, take hikes, swim in the pool, go river rafting, soak in hot springs, and enjoy the surroundings.

You may choose one of four classes, each of which will have up to 16 women. The non-fiction, poetry and word/sound classes will be filled in the order of registrations received. Participants in the fiction class will be selected on the basis of work submitted. Evening programs will include readings and presentations by workshop leaders and participants.

In previous years the workshop has attracted women from many cultures and lifestyles, ranging in age from early twenties to over eighty. The workshop leaders bring a feminist philosophy to their work as writers and teachers, and encourage the creation of a group that is cohesive and supportive while at the same time celebrating diversity. If these concepts are unfamiliar to you, feel free to ask us questions.

Meals

We hire *Word of Mouth Catering Company* of Portland, Oregon, to plan the meals and do the cooking. They use only fresh produce, bake their own breads, and provide low-sugar desserts. They are highly acclaimed by past workshop participants for their attractive, delicious and healthy food. You can choose a regular or vegetarian diet and we will do our best to accommodate any special requirements.

Peer Critique Groups

Optional peer critique groups will meet every afternoon from 4:30 to 6. They will be organized by genre. You will be free to attend whichever group you wish, on any day. A workshop leader will help groups set up their process and will be available for consultation.



Accommodation

The workshop is held at the Dominican Order's rustic retreat center, St. Benedict's, on the scenic McKenzie River. It is located in the foothills of the Cascade Mountain range, about 50 miles east of Eugene, Oregon. The facilities overlook the river and pine forest, with an immense terrace by the water's edge. It is a camp-like setting, with hiking trails and a swimming pool.

You will have a room of your own with a single bed and desk. Bathrooms are shared. Each room has an electric outlet, so you can bring your typewriter if you wish. There are a few double rooms. You may request one if you wish to share with someone.

We have reserved a few cabins within walking distance of St. Benedict's which are available to participants as an alternative to the dormitory accommodation. If you're interested in information about the cabins, check the box on your registration form.

The facilities are wheelchair accessible. Ground-floor accommodation is available on a limited basis and can be guaranteed with advance notification only.

College Credit

You can get three hours of college credit for the workshop through Clackamas Community College. Their fee is \$69. If you want to enroll for credit, note it on the registration form. You will be given the appropriate forms at the workshop.



Scholarships

A few scholarships are available, in amounts varying from \$100 to \$350. One scholarship of \$200 has been donated specifically for a woman of color. The other scholarships are available to all applicants. To apply, fill out the registration form and send it along with a letter discussing the difference that being given a scholarship would make to you. Include one or two samples of your writing (include SASE if you want your writing returned) and information about your class and ethnic background if you wish. Do not send any money. Applications must be received no later than June 15. You will be notified by June 30, at which time those receiving scholarships must pay the balance of their registration fee. *It is quite likely that the workshop will be full by the time scholarship decisions are announced. Therefore, you may want to consider reserving a place in the event that you are not awarded a scholarship. To do so, send the \$75 deposit along with your application.*

FICTION

This class will address both general and experimental fiction, with a place for narrative prose that does not fit into any conventional genre. It will meet from 9 to 12 every morning. Participants will generate writing in class. *Selection for this class will be on the basis of writing submitted*—send up to 15 pages (include SASE if you want it returned). It must be received by June 15; notification by June 30.



Ursula K. Le Guin

is the author of fifteen novels, four collections of short stories, three volumes of poetry, five children's books and two collections of essays. Her books include: *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (1989); *Buffalo Gals & Other Animal Presences* (1987); *Wild Oats and Fireweed* (1987); *Always Coming Home* (1985); *The Dispossessed* (1974); *The Farthest Shore* (1972); *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968). She has received numerous literary honors and awards including the National Book Award, and the Hugo and Nebula Awards.

NON-FICTION

This class will take a feminist approach to non-fiction writing, emphasizing the validity of all women's real and imaginary life experiences. Participants will complete daily assignments and longer writing projects. The class is for women interested in essays, book reviews, newspaper features and magazine articles, and for women who want to develop general non-fiction writing skills. It will meet from 9 until 12 every morning.



Evelyn C. White

has been a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* since 1986. She has also worked for the New York bureau of *The Wall Street Journal*. She has contributed feature articles, book reviews and essays to many publications around the country and is currently writing regularly for *Smithsonian Magazine*. She is the author of *Chain Chain Change—For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse* (1985), and editor of the forthcoming *There is a Balm: The Black Women's Health Anthology*.

POETRY

In this class, different aspects of poetry will be discussed each day and participants will read poems relating to these themes by a variety of women poets. Participants will generate poems in class and will also address questions relating to the process of writing. It will meet from 9 to 12 every morning.



Judith Barrington

is a poet whose work has appeared in many publications in the U.S. and Britain. She is the author of *History and Geography* (1989) and *Trying to be an Honest Woman* (1985). Among the anthologies in which her poems are included are *Naming the Waves* (1989), *The World Between Women* (1986) and *Beautiful Barbarians* (1986). She has taught creative writing and women's studies at Portland State University and Lewis and Clark College. She makes her living as a freelance writer and teacher in the Arts in Education program.

WORD/SOUND

COLLABORATION & PERFORMANCE

This class is about collaboration. Your purpose may be to create word/sound performance pieces, to develop reading skills, or simply to broaden your range of writing skills. Participants will generate work in class, sometimes in pairs or in small groups. You are encouraged to use the class as a creative tool, whether or not you have any previous experience of this kind. The class will meet every afternoon from 1 to 4.



Theresa Clark & Carletta Wilson

have been exploring poetic and musical language together since 1983. Carletta's poems have appeared in numerous publications and in *Gathering Ground: New Writing and Art by Northwest Women of Color* (1983). Theresa's compositions have been performed nationally and her work has been featured at jazz festivals in the Northwest. *In Here By Turns*, a cassette of their collaborative work, was released in 1988.



Ursula K. Le Guin's Class, 1989



Left: class scene; right: Judith Barrington and Evelyn C. White, 1989



Top left: Tee Corinne taking photo of Ruth Gundle with Judith Barrington lookin on

Top right: Ruth Gundle, photo by Tee Corinne

Bottom left: Contact sheet of Ruth from photo shoot above

Bottom right: Contact Sheet of Judith Barrington by Tee Corinne with photo of Tee



Staff, 1989: *from left*, Ruth Gundle, Susanne Kredentser, Elissa Goldberg, Mary Scott, KE Edmisten



Above, clockwise: KE Edmisten at the pool; Evelyn C. White on hike; Ursula K. Le Guin at the pool; Mary Scott and Elissa Goldberg at the pool, 1989



Red-leaf lettuce, iceberg lettuce, spinach, shredded carrots like sunrise in the bowl, damp chopped tomatoes, squeaky chunks of celery. I can name the salad, and this pleases me. I move through the lunch line at a women writers' workshop in MacKenzie Bridge, thinking the name of each thing to myself as I pile it on my plate. Scallions, mushrooms, magenta beans sliced thick as the heels of shoes.

It is like magic: these ingredients, chopped and divided, neat in their bowls. But I know magic did not put them there. Two hours earlier, when I went to the dining room for water, I heard the thwop of knives on cutting boards. Someone — no, not someone, a woman with a name and, probably, sore forearms, chopped these tomatoes, sliced this celery. Behind the table with the food one of the cooks is standing in her apron, smiling. I thank her for the lunch, tell her everything looks great. I feel happy that I have remembered the cooks, that I have not taken my shredded carrots for granted.

I sit down with three other women from my class. We talk about non-fiction and what makes it non. We talk about violence against women and the manufacture of semiconductors in the Philippines. I talk, too, but I'm thinking about carrots. Maybe they were shredded in the kitchen, but they did not grow there. Once again, I have missed something. Once again, I have forgotten.

For nearly an hour, our talk ranges and valleys, a huge landscape of conversation. But we do not talk about the salad, how it got here, where it will go if we leave any on our plates. For that matter, we don't talk about the plates, or the silverware, or the napkins. I concentrate, trying to think where the plates must come from. I could turn mine over and look for a trademark, but it is still piled with salad.

Maybe the silverware is made of aluminum. Maybe it is made by ALCOA, the world's largest aluminum producer. I wonder how the air around the ALCOA factory smells on the day they mold the aluminum forks?

Recently I have been thinking a lot about where things come from. At this workshop, women I have not met say to me in the line at lunch: "Where are you from?" Without thinking, I answer, "Portland." Then I think — not really. Really, I'm from Philadelphia. Before that? You mean my great-grandparents? Well, Russia. Romania. Way, way before that? The sea, I guess. We all come from the sea.

Once I get started thinking about sources, it seems like I can't stop. I can't get back far enough. Not just with my salad and my plate, but the painted wood of my blue front porch in Portland, the

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Consider the Source

BY ANNDEE HOCHMAN

rayon in my shorts, the cork on the sides of my Birkenstocks. Where do these things come from? I don't know the answers. I don't even know what rayon is. Who can I ask? Who knows the

source? We see a bowl of shredded carrots and maybe, if we are especially aware and appreciative that day, we think about the woman in the kitchen trying not to bloody her knuckles on the grater. No. That isn't far enough. Concentrate. Go back farther.

The carrots grew somewhere, in a field, pointing into the earth. Someone took them from the field and someone else carried them to us, maybe on a highway built specifically to transport carrots from fields to kitchens, where they can be shredded and offered to hungry women writers.

My point is, those carrots are not incidental. To any of us. For the farmer, they're livelihood. For the trucker, cargo. For the kitchen staff, work. For us, sustenance and beauty, a dash of orange in the layers of green salad.

I put down my fork. What if all this thinking makes me lose my appetite for carrots, and I scrape them into the garbage sack along with two bleached white paper napkins? I know the answer to this one. They will be scooped up in a truck, where the chemicals that make the napkins very white and very thin will begin to leach out into the disintegrating carrots.

How can we sit here and have pleasant conversation while our napkins are heading off to contaminate a truckload of garbage? How can we sit here at all, eating a salad whose source eludes us? Why

are we all not banging our aluminum forks against our mystery plates, demanding to know where everything comes from, and where it's all going, and at what price?

I don't know the answer to that question, either, but I've been worried about it long enough to lose my appetite for a few things. Not carrots — not yet, anyway. But steak and, more recently, paper towels. I've come to equate them with an almost criminal waste and excess. What this means, today, is that rather than pull the lever that dispenses paper towels in seeming infinite supply, I wipe my hands on my T-shirt. Does this save a tree? If I could persuade all my friends to boycott paper towel dispensers in public bathrooms, would that help? How many of us does it take to do some good?

Well, I have finished my salad, and the conversation at the table has shifted to Sappho. I remember and recite one of my favorite Sappho fragments, still hilarious after all these centuries: "If you are squeamish, don't prod the beach rubble." I think about what this has to do with my salad, with our severed connections between the source and the use of objects, with my unanswered questions. We don't know where things come from. We can only guess at where they go. We're told not to ask. Don't prod the beach rubble. The squeamish obey.

Suddenly I imagine that Sappho is talking directly to me, talking about my salad. If I am squeamish, I had better not ask questions about the source of my carrots or the destination of my napkin. Because what I learn may not be neutral. Once I know the answer, I may have to do something about it — get angry, circulate a petition, raise a banner, boycott paper napkins, grow my own carrots, ask some more questions.

Once you start nudging around in the beach rubble, who knows what will surface? Pretty things, maybe, such as agates and conch shells. Ugly things, such as used hypodermic needles. Once I ask, once I begin to look and prod, I cannot pretend ignorance. I cannot say, "Well, I didn't know. I never even walked on that beach."

No, what Sappho is telling me, has been patiently trying to explain all these centuries, is that I have a responsibility for my carrots that appear like a moist gift, for my paper napkin crumpled in my lap, for my questions and the answers they unearth.

ANNDEE HOCHMAN is a Portland free-lance writer and a frequent contributor to Northwest Magazine. MARIE NEUFIELD is a Portland free-lance artist.