

Boyds Mills Retreat Center

Summer Residency 2026

July 28, 2026–August 2, 2026



	8:00	9:30-11:30	12:00-1:00	1:30-3:30	4:00-5:00	5:30	7:30-9:00
Tues, July 28	Check-in at Boyds Mills begins at 2:00 PM			2:00-5:00 Mentor Meetings		Dinner	Welcome Reception Faculty Flash Readings
Wed, July 29	Breakfast	Nina St. Pierre	Lunch	Melanie Brooks	New Student Orientation	Dinner	Nina St. Pierre
Thurs, July 30	Breakfast	Stephanie Wytovich & Lindy Ryan	Lunch	Joan Kwon Glass	Free/Oracle Card Character Study	Dinner	Melanie Brooks & Joan Kwon Glass
Fri, July 31	Breakfast	Caroline Harper New	Lunch	Thesis Readings	Enrichment Projects	Dinner Celebrating Anne Westrick	Caroline Harper New
Sat, Aug 1	Breakfast	Lindy Ryan 8:30 – 10:00	Balancing a Creative and Professional Life 10:30 – 11:45 Lunch Poor Yorick Info. Session	Thesis Readings	Enrichment Projects	Dinner	Talent Show & Karaoke
Sun, Aug 2	Breakfast	Stephanie Wytovich	Lunch Dublin Info. Session	Departures			

*Open Mics are scheduled for each night after the faculty readings.



2026 Summer Residency
July 28, 2026 – August 2, 2026
[Boyd's Mills Retreat Center](#)

Welcome to our 2026 Summer Residency! We're delighted to spend another fun and productive week at Boyd's Mills (formerly Highlights Retreat Center). A few notes/reminders to help you prepare:

- To receive credit for attending residency, students must attend all events, including the evening readings. Please arrive on time.
- While the internet at Boyd's Mills works fine, there is very little cell reception on the drive to the retreat center. Be sure to download/print directions before your trip.
- Students may use the mornings and free blocks for writing/informal gatherings.
- Students are welcome to meet with their mentors during the designated Mentor Meeting block or any of the other free/meal times.
- Boyd's Mills is happy to accommodate all dietary requests. If you did not communicate your needs to them when you registered, please contact support@boydsmills.org

Tuesday, July 28

2:00 PM – Check-in at Boyds Mills (see confirmation email for full details).

2:00 – 5:30 PM – Mentor Meetings

Students may use this time to schedule in-person or virtual meetings with their fall mentors to begin planning their syllabi. Students are also welcome to meet with their mentors during meal times or other free time blocks.

5:30 PM – Appetizers and Drinks

Join us in the main barn and back patio for light appetizers and drinks before dinner.

6:00 PM – Dinner

Dinner is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

7:30 – 9:00 PM – Welcome Reception and Faculty Flash Reading

MFA Coordinator Anthony D'Aries will kick off our summer residency with opening remarks. Short readings by MFA faculty to follow.

Wednesday, July 29

8:00 AM – Breakfast

Breakfast begins each morning at 8:00 AM in the main barn.

9:30-11:30 AM – Curiouser and Curiouser: Integrating Research Rabbit Holes into Your Work – Nina St. Pierre (2025 Housatonic Book Award Winner in Nonfiction)

We writers love a good rabbit hole. That late-night search that leaves you bleary-eyed with two dozen open tabs, inspiration fired but direction murky. With all this new, exciting information, it's hard to remember what your original question was. After the high of the spiral, now what?

Whether searching online, diving deep into a physical archive or library, or gathering information through interviews or travel, research is essential to many writing projects. We have all chased that one perfectly resonant fact, image, or tidbit that will fill the hole in our manuscript or dissolve a mental block. But when does following our curiosity become procrastination? How do we know when to stop? How do we discern what is important for our project versus interesting trivia? And how do we integrate what we've found?

This cross-genre workshop will explore how to integrate research in your work. Using four principles—spiral, stop, sort, synthesize—we will explore techniques for doing research, when and why to stop, how to determine what is useful, and finally, how to patch information into your project in a way that serves the story narratively and thematically.

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch

Lunch is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

1:30 – 3:30 PM – Asking Questions That Make People Open Up: The Art of the Interview – Melanie Brooks

Great stories can start with great interviews. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, mastering the interview is a powerful tool for your craft. But how do you earn a stranger's trust and show them that their story is safe in your hands? In this workshop, you will move beyond standard Q&As and explore how intentional preparation, active listening, and conversational flexibility can elicit unforgettable insights from your subjects. We will dedicate time during the session to practice some of these techniques, giving you hands-on experience in guiding dynamic, comfortable conversations. Together, we'll discuss how the evocative material captured from interview conversations can be transformed into compelling narrative prose.

4:00 – 5:00 PM – New Student Orientation

All incoming students and their peer mentors are required to attend this session. We'll review program requirements, residency expectations, preparing your syllabi, and more!

5:30 PM – Appetizers and Drinks

Join us in the main barn and back patio for light appetizers and drinks before dinner.

6:00 PM – Dinner

Dinner is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

7:30-9:00 PM – Visiting Writer: Nina St. Pierre

Our 2025 Housatonic Book Award winner in nonfiction, Nina St. Pierre, will read and answer questions from the audience.

9:00 PM - ? – Open Mic

Faculty and students are welcome to join our nightly open mic session on the back patio after the readings.

Thursday, July 30

8:00 AM – Breakfast

Breakfast begins each morning at 8:00 AM in the main barn.

9:30 – 11:30 AM – Are YOU Afraid of (Writing in) the Dark? – Lindy Ryan & Stephanie M. Wytovich

From penning short stories, novels, and poetry to building an author platform and promoting your work, there's something for everyone in the horror genre—if you're brave enough to write in the dark. Horror is not one-size-fits-all but all-inclusive; from splatterpunk to comedy to Gothic, genre writers have the unique opportunity to explore themes and emotions and bare their all on the page, and there are myriad markets to publish your work.

In this informal, in-depth seminar, we'll discuss all-things horror, including voice, style, and other craft mechanics, while placing a strong emphasis on marketing and book promotion. We'll cover building your author brand, connecting with readers, leveraging social media and community spaces, navigating publicity opportunities, and sustaining visibility in a crowded market. We'll also touch on finding inspiration, facing fears and misconceptions, and networking within the writing community to support long-term success.

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch

Lunch is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

1:30 – 3:30 PM – They Contain Multitudes: Writing New Poems Inspired by Remarkable Poetic Lines – Joan Kwon Glass

Have you ever read a line in a poem and it felt transformational? How might we use these poetic lines to inspire new writing? In this generative workshop, we will write expansively, using memorable, powerful poetic lines as a wellspring. Bring your favorites or write based on prompts developed by the facilitator.

4:00 – 5:00 PM – Free Time

Students are welcome to relax in their rooms, explore the campus and hiking trails, or enjoy some reading/writing time.

5:30 PM – Appetizers and Drinks

Join us in the main barn and back patio for light appetizers, drinks, and conversation before dinner.

6:00 PM – Dinner

Dinner is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

7:30-9:00 PM – Reading: Melanie Brooks and Joan Kwon Glass

MFA mentor Melanie Brooks and visiting writer Joan Kwon Glass will read their work and answer questions from the audience.

9:00 PM - ? – Open Mic

Faculty and students are welcome to join our nightly open mic session on the back patio after the readings.

Friday, July 31**8:00 AM – Breakfast**

Breakfast begins each morning at 8:00 AM in the main barn.

9:30 – 11:30 AM – The Art of Monstrosity – Caroline Harper New (2025 Housatonic Book Award Winner in Poetry)

In this generative poetry workshop, we will examine monstrosity as myth, metaphor, and mirror, reckoning with the beings that haunt our past and our present. We will ask what monstrous bodies make possible on the page, how poetry can enter the uncanny, and when we might want to humanize the monstrous—or monsterize the human. Through poetry prompts, we will experiment with making the monstrous familiar and the familiar monstrous as we write toward childhood monsters, misunderstood monsters, ecological monsters, and the frightening possibility of our own monstrosity. Along the way, we will consider the ethics of this endeavor: What do we demonize? What do we redeem? What kinds of monsters inhabit our modern world? And what happens when the monster begins to look back?

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch

Lunch is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

1:30 – 3:30 PM – Thesis Readings

Graduating students will read from their final manuscripts.

4:00 – 5:00 PM – Enrichment Project Presentations

Enrichment Projects are designed to give MFA students an opportunity to explore an avenue of learning outside of their coursework. A student might, for example, choose to learn a foreign language, start a new online publication, volunteer for a non-profit organization, or try another appropriately challenging activity. The Enrichment Project is not a writing project, but a project that will enrich the student as a professional writer.

Come hear students share their Enrichment Project experience and maybe get some inspiration for your own!

5:30 PM – Appetizers and Drinks

Join us in the main barn and back patio for light appetizers, drinks, and conversation before dinner. **We will be celebrating the work of MFA mentor Anne Westrick, who is retiring in the fall.**

6:00 PM – Dinner

Dinner is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

7:30-9:00 PM – Visiting Writer Reading: Caroline Harper New

Our 2025 Housatonic Book Award winner in poetry, Caroline Harper New, will read her work and answer questions from the audience.

9:00 PM - ? – Open Mic

Faculty and students are welcome to join our nightly open mic session on the back patio after the readings.

Saturday, August 1

8:00 AM – Breakfast

Breakfast begins each morning at 8:00 AM in the main barn.

8:30 – 10:00 AM – Disguised Narratives: The Hermit Crab Essay as Container and Catalyst – Lindy Ryan

In this generative workshop, we'll explore the hermit crab essay—stories hidden inside borrowed forms like recipes, dating profiles, lists of instructions, a set of HOA rules—and examine how form can disguise, distort, and ultimately expose the story beneath. After a brief discussion on structure and subtext, students will draft a flash-length piece that uses constraint to unlock voice, tension, and unexpected emotional impact.

10:30 – 11:45 AM – Balancing a Creative and Professional Life

In this candid panel discussion, writers working in a variety of genres and fields will discuss their creative and professional paths. How did they publish that first book while balancing careers, families, and additional obligations? How has that schedule and process evolved over the years? What are some of the considerations, challenges, decisions, and unexpected opportunities that have shaped their creative and professional lives? Panelists will share brief introductions before we allow plenty of time for questions from the audience.

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch

Lunch is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas. If you're interested in learning more about our literary journal, [*Poor Yorick*](#), please join us on the back patio.

1:30 – 3:30 PM – Thesis Readings

Graduating students will read from their final manuscripts.

4:00 – 5:30 PM – Enrichment Projects

Enrichment Projects are designed to give MFA students an opportunity to explore an avenue of learning outside of their coursework. A student might, for example, choose to learn a foreign language, start a new online publication, volunteer for a non-profit

organization, or try another appropriately challenging activity. The Enrichment Project is not a writing project, but a project that will enrich the student as a professional writer.

Come hear students share their Enrichment Project experience and maybe get some inspiration for your own!

5:30 PM – Appetizers and Drinks

Join us in the main barn and back patio for light appetizers, drinks, and conversation before dinner.

6:00 PM – Dinner

Dinner is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas.

7:30-? – Talent Show and Karaoke

Join us for the annual WestConn MFA Talent Show! No judges, no competition, just pure, unfiltered, Grade-A talent on display. Can ya juggle? Hula-hoop? Play an instrument? Neither can we! Surprise your writer friends with a secret talent (or learn one by July ☺). Stick around for some world-famous karaoke.

Sunday, August 2

8:00 AM – Breakfast

Breakfast begins each morning at 8:00 AM in the main barn.

9:30 – 11:30 – The Price of Coming Back: Resurrection Across Genres – Stephanie M. Wytovich

Cycles are everywhere in nature and humankind, and as writers, it's important to acknowledge and understand them when creating three-dimensional characters. Regardless of genre, resurrection – literally or metaphorically – is a powerful tool we can use to create depth, evoke empathy, and integrate lore into our narratives. This lecture will explore myth, philosophy, and the psychology of *awakening* to help students mine the raw and the vulnerable in their art.

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Lunch

Lunch is served in the main barn. Guests are welcome to eat inside, on the back patio, or any of the other outside dining areas. If you're interested in learning more about our [Dublin Residency](#), please join us on the back patio.

***Depart Boyds Mills after lunch**

Residency Faculty Bios

Melanie Brooks is the author of the memoir *A Hard Silence: One Daughter Remaps Family, Grief, and Faith When HIV/AIDS Changes It All* (Vine Leaves Press, 2023) and *Writing Hard Stories: Celebrated Memoirists Who Shaped Art from Trauma* (Beacon Press, 2017). She teaches creative nonfiction in the M.F.A. programs at Bay Path University and Western Connecticut State University and professional writing at Northeastern University. She holds an M.F.A. in creative nonfiction from the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast Writing Program and a Certificate in Narrative Medicine from Columbia University. She has had numerous interviews and essays on topics ranging from illness and grief to parenting and aging published in *The Boston Globe*, *HuffPost*, *Yankee*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Psychology Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and other notable publications. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband, two children (when they are home from life elsewhere), and two Labs.

Anthony D'Aries is the author of *The Language of Men: A Memoir* (Hudson Whitman Press, 2012), which received the PEN/New England Discovery Prize and an INDIES Gold Medal. His work has appeared in *McSweeney's*, *Boston Magazine*, *The Literary Review*, and elsewhere. He has served on the board of PEN's Freedom-to-Write Committee, leading writing workshops in prisons, shelters, hospitals, and residential care facilities. His essay, "No Man's Land," was listed as a Notable Essay in Best American Essays 2021. In 2022, his collection of short stories was selected as a finalist for Black Lawrence Press's Hudson Book Prize. He serves on the board of the Arthur Miller Writing Studio, a nonprofit dedicated to restoring Miller's writing studio and transforming it into an experiential learning space. Anthony currently directs the low-residency MFA in Creative and Professional Writing at Western Connecticut State University.

Joan Kwon Glass is a diasporic, mixed race, Korean American poet, author of the poetry collection *Daughter of Three Gone Kingdoms* (Perugia Press, 2024)– winner of the Paterson Poetry Prize & the Eric Hoffer Book Award for Poetry & finalist for the Balcones Poetry Prize. Her first full-length poetry collection, *Night Swim*, won the 2021 Diode Book Prize. She has also published two chapbooks–*How to Make Pancakes for a Dead Boy* (Small Harbor Publishing) & *If Rust Can Grow on the Moon* (Milk & Cake Press). Joan has been a finalist for the Subnivean Award, Frontier Poetry's "(Not) In Love" Haiku Contest, the Helena Whitehill Award & Poetry Northwest's Possession Sound Series. Her work is forthcoming in *Shenandoah* & *The Offing* & has been featured on *NPR* & *The Slowdown* & in *Poetry*, *Passages North*, *Poetry Daily*, *Split Lip*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Korea Quarterly*, *Terrain*, *Best American Poetry (online)*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Asian American Writers' Workshop*, *Prairie Schooner* & elsewhere.

She has been awarded residencies at Vermont Studio Center, SWWIM & Prospect Street Writers House & has been a visiting writer at Amherst College, Wesleyan University, the New School & elsewhere. Joan has been a featured reader at poetry festivals including Brooklyn Poets, the Boston Book Festival, Westchester, Manhattanville College, Sarah Lawrence University, & the Emily Dickinson Museum. She has served as a judge for various book awards & prizes & teaches writing workshops at several writing centers online. She lives in Connecticut & is founder of the Substack *They Say Poetry is Dead!* which offers themed writing prompts every Friday. Follow her on IG at joan_kwon_glass.

Caroline Harper New is the author of *A History of Half-Birds* (Milkweed Editions, 2024) winner of the Ballard Spahr Prize for Poetry and the Housatonic Book Award. Her work is rooted in the precarious landscape of the Gulf Coast, where she reckons with human-nonhuman entanglements and love's potential for violence. As a poet, artist, and anthropologist, her practice spans poetry, sculpture, painting, film, translation, and the strange tendons in between. She earned her M.F.A. in Poetry at the University of Michigan, where she is currently a Ph.D. student in Anthropology. Her chapbook, *If I Call This Cave a Garden* is forthcoming with YesYes Books in 2026.

Nina St. Pierre is the author of the Kirkus-starred memoir, *Love is a Burning Thing*, a story of fire, family, and what it means to believe. Named one of *Esquire's* Best Memoirs of 2024, *Love is a Burning Thing* was featured in *People Magazine* and the *LA Times*. Nina's essays and features on culture and spirituality can be read in *GQ*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mother Tongue*, *The Cut*, *Gossamer*, *Outside*, and more. She was a 2023 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Nonfiction Literature, a Religion and Environment Story Project fellow, and a BANFF Centre for the Arts Literary Journalism resident. Nina holds an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Rutgers University and lives in Brooklyn.

Lindy Ryan is a *USA TODAY* bestselling and award-winning author, anthologist, and short-film director whose books and anthologies have earned starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, and *Library Journal*. She also writes sweet, magical romance under the pseudonym Lindy Miller, and several of her projects have been adapted for the screen. A "champion for women's voices in horror" (*Shelf Awareness*) and a 2020 *Publishers Weekly* Star Watch Honoree, Ryan is widely recognized for her work in contemporary horror and was named one of horror's most masterful anthology curators. She serves as the current author-in-residence at *Rue Morgue*, is a columnist at *BookTrib*, and sits on the Board of Directors for the Brothers Grimm Society of North America. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA). Ryan is an award-winning professor at Rutgers University and a guest faculty mentor in the Creative Writing MFA program at Western Connecticut State University. Before entering academia, she co-founded Radiant Advisors, a business intelligence research firm, where she led data strategy initiatives for clients including 21st Century Fox Films, Warner Bros., and Disney.

Stephanie M. Wytovich is an American poet, novelist, and essayist. Her work has been featured in magazines and anthologies, such as *Weird Tales*, *Nightmare*

Magazine, *Southwest Review*, *Year's Best Hardcore Horror: Volume 2*, and *The Best Horror of the Year: Volumes 8 & 15*.

Wytovich is the Poetry Editor for Raw Dog Screaming Press and an adjunct at Western Connecticut State University, Southern New Hampshire University, and Point Park University. She has received the Elizabeth Matchett Stover Memorial Award, the 2021 Ladies of Horror Fiction Writers Grant, and the Rocky Wood Memorial Scholarship for nonfiction writing.

Wytovich is a member of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association, an active member of the Horror Writers Association, and a graduate of Seton Hill University's MFA program for Writing Popular Fiction. She is a two-time Bram Stoker Award-winning poet, and her nonfiction craft book for speculative poetry, *Writing Poetry in the Dark*, is available from Raw Dog Screaming Press. Readers can pick up her latest project, *Howl: An Anthology of Werewolves from Women in Horror*, co-edited with Lindy Ryan, now from Black Spot Books.

Follow Wytovich at <https://www.stephaniemwytovich.com/> and on Threads and Instagram @SWytovich and @thehauntedbookshelf. You can also sign up for her newsletter at <https://stephaniemwytovich.substack.com/>.

A. B. (Anne Bryan) Westrick grew up in Pennsylvania and later moved with her husband to Virginia where she spent hours walking Richmond's brick streets, wondering how her Southern ancestors had fared during and after the Civil War. Her debut novel *Brotherhood* (Viking/Penguin Young Readers 2013) grew from those wonderings. *Brotherhood* received the Virginia Library Association's 2014 Jefferson Cup Award, won the Housatonic Book Award for Writing for Middle Grades and YA, and was named an American Library Association 2014 Best Book for Young Adults, a National Council for the Social Studies 2014 Notable Trade Book, a Jane Addams Children's Book Award 2014 honor book for older readers, and a Junior Library Guild selection. Westrick has been a teacher, paralegal, literacy volunteer, administrator, and coach for teams from Odyssey of the Mind to the Reading Olympics. A graduate of Stanford University and Yale Divinity School, she received an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and for many years taught in Western Connecticut State University's low-residency MFA program in Creative and Professional Writing. She and her family live near Richmond, VA.