



## *The Writer's Garret*

### LYCEUM SERIES

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#### **Writing Past Lives: Description at the Threshold**

##### **Course Information:**

**Course Date:** Saturday, March 16, 2024

**Course Meeting Time:** 10am-noon

**Instructor:** Daniel DeVaughn

##### **Course Description:**

*What does it mean to say that a poem "marks time"? We might write a poem as a way to pass the time, to fill it with something other than boredom, or to record a moment we don't want to forget. We can also write poems to figure out where we stand in the flow of time – where we've come from and where we might be going. Such poems act as stations, waiting rooms, even vistas, from there to here. And one of the best ways to show this movement to our readers and ourselves is through sensory description.*

*In this course, we will study poems in which the poet, or speaker, looks back in memory to who they were and how this informs who they are in the "now" of the poem. In this way, the page becomes a still point but also a passage from one way of being and seeing in the world to another that is often more expansive, inclusive, or generous. Students will learn how to use concrete descriptive language, how to play with time and tense to create narrative movement, as well as some common poetic structures that can be useful in shaping our own lived experience. True endings and beginnings—what we might call "rites of passage"—are less and less common in the world today, but we don't have to abandon them to the ceaseless stream of information that is our "always on" cultural moment. We can craft thresholds for ourselves.*

### **Course Takeaways:**

- ❖ *Learn how to use description and figurative language to create a living, breathing persona on the page.*
- ❖ *Study the simple but subtle art of verb tenses to create narrative movement and lyric effects in your poems.*
- ❖ *Learn about the Description – Meditation – Redescription poetic structure and how it can help you to organize personal experience and memory.*
- ❖ *Engage the poem as a vehicle for time travel and the exploration of different personae.*

### **\*Course Materials:**

"Salvage" by Adam Limón

"In That Other Fantasy Where Live Forever" by Wanda Coleman

"Ode" by Jane Huffman

"Tracks" by Tomas Tranströmer

"Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout" by Gary Snyder

"In the Waiting Room" by Elizabeth Bishop

\*Reading list subject to change.

### **Instructor Bio:**

*Daniel DeVaughn is a writer and teacher from Birmingham, Alabama. His poems appear or are forthcoming in Tupelo Quarterly, Poets.org, The Adroit Journal, Southern Humanities Review, The Nashville Review, Texas University Press's Southern Poetry Anthology, Vol. X: Alabama, and elsewhere. He is Reviews and Interviews Editor at the American Literary Review, as well as a Voertman-Ardoin Teaching Fellow at the University of North Texas where he is pursuing a PhD in creative writing.*