

## Q&A with Mark Wunderlich

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Mark Wunderlich, the recently inaugurated Director of the Bennington Writing Seminars, took some time to answer questions about his long-term goals for the program, its literary legacy, and what he's reading.



**BWS:** Congratulations on your new appointment as Director of the Bennington Writing Seminars. Maybe you can tell us some of your plans for the Writing Seminars' future—what are you working on?

**MW:** Right now I'm busy learning the various program systems which may seem a bit dry, but which are essential—accounting, financial aid, managing admissions applications, etc. I have also been recruiting new faculty and making invitations to visitors for the January residency.

**BWS:** What are some of the longer-term goals you have for the program?

**MW:** First, I'm both honored and excited to be leading the Writing Seminars. I am firmly committed to the program's legacy of rigorous study combined with intensive tutorials with faculty; as I've said elsewhere, being a writer is an extension of being a careful and discerning reader. I believe in that model, and I'm interested in strengthening and supporting it. I am also committed to having our program embody the richness, complexity and diversity of American

literature today. Over the next year, I will be recruiting some new faculty to join our current roster with an eye to broadening the range of perspectives, voices and esthetics.

One of the great aspects of this program—something that has impressed me very much—is the degree to which our alumni remain committed to the program. I want our alumni to stay engaged, but I also want to help shape some of the forms that engagement will take. I am looking to create workshops, opportunities for continued mentorship, professional development, and retreats for our alumni. I am interested in having the program be not just a two-year MFA program, but one that provides meaningful support and enrichment for its graduates—a kind of creative home to which graduates can return to recharge and be reinvigorated.

**BWS:** A huge component of the Writing Seminars is reading, so we're curious to know what and whom you're reading these days.

**MW:** I am always reading too many things! This summer, I finished the two volume travelogue by Patrick Leigh Fermor. When he was 19, he walked from Holland to Istanbul. The books are classics of twentieth century travel writing, and great fun. I'm also re-reading a group of recent books of poems by poets who will be on campus this fall for the [Poetry at Bennington](#) series, and who all have new books out: Layli Longsoldier, Marie Howe, Gabrielle Calvocoressi, Mai Der Vang and Kaveh Akbar. I also just finished a very fun and funny novel by Andrew Sean Greer called *Less*, and a short novel by the German writer Jenny Erpenbeck. I won't name the books stacked next to my bed waiting for attention.