Attention is a question of entirety, of being wholly present. The poet who fully comes to his senses brings all his words, all of his cadences when he comes…And so a poem has nothing to do with picking and choosing, with the mot juste and reflection in tranquility. It is a plain record of one’s entire presence.

Donald Revell

At no other time, it seems to me, does the earth let itself be inhaled in one smell, the ripe earth; in a smell that is in no way inferior to the smell of the sea, bitter where it borders on taste, and more than honeysweet where you feel it is close to touching the first sounds. Containing depth within itself, darkness, something of the grave almost, and yet again wind; tar and turpentine and Ceylon tea…

Rainer Maria Rilke

OVERVIEW
In this course we will examine topics in the history of poetics related to description. What is an image? What is an “exactly perceived” detail? How can a phrase carry sensory information? What kind of authority do writers draw from accurate descriptive language? What is the relationship between description and ritual action in a poem, description and narrative in a story or essay? The class will explore the power of description in capturing physical perceptions and making pictures of the world more felt, more real.

To better understand the range of expressive possibilities and technical strategies involved in description, we will devote the semester to reading and imitating the acute sensory visions of Basho, Issa, Li Po, Tu Fu, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Rainer Maria Rilke, William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, William Maxwell, Pascale Monnier, and various contemporary poets.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Robert Hass, The Essential Haiku
Robert Hass, Twentieth Century Pleasures
Pascale Monnier, Bayart
Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters on Cézanne
+xeroxed materials
OFFICE HOURS
LA 231
Thursdays 11:30 am-12:30 pm
& always moreso by appointment
joanna.klink@umontana.edu

PROCEDURES
Follow instructions on the assignment sheets handed out weekly in class. Writing
assignments will always be due by Monday at noon in my mailbox in the English
Department Office. If you miss the deadline, hold on to your work until the following
week. Please don't xerox copies and bring them to class. Put your name on every
assignment.

DISCUSSION
The quality of our classes depends on your care in reading as well as your willingness to write
down comments in advance, to take each other seriously, to approach radically different
styles with an open mind, to contribute thoughtfully to discussions, and to sustain a
generous manner with one another throughout. I promise to bring the same kind of
attention to the class.

GRADING
Your grade will reflect your participation: participation in class is essential. For every three
classes you miss, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. You are required to
produce a final portfolio of work, made up of weekly exercises.

Collaboration on assignments is not allowed.
You are responsible for all work whether or not you are in class.

All the sentences in Madame Bovary could be examined with wonder but there is one
in particular that always stops me in admiration. Flaubert has just shown us Emma
at the piano with Charles watching her. He says, “She struck the notes with aplomb
and ran from top to bottom of the keyboard without a break. Thus shaken up, the
old instrument, whose strings buzzed, could be heard at the other end of the village
when the window was open, and often the bailiff’s clerk, passing along the highroad,
bareheaded and in list slippers, stopped to listen, his sheet of paper in his hand.” […]
It’s always necessary to remember that the fiction writer is much less immediately
concerned with grand ideas and bristling emotions than he is with putting list
slippers on clerks.

Flannery O'Connor
**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Tuesday, August 26</td>
<td>Introduction to the Senses&lt;br&gt;Sense-Perception &amp; the Argument with Generality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 2</td>
<td>The “Objective” Register&lt;br&gt;Translations of haiku by Basho, Buson, Issa&lt;br&gt;Robert Hass, <em>The Essential Haiku</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 9</td>
<td>Introduction of the First Person&lt;br&gt;Translations of poems by Li Po, Tu Fu</td>
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<td>Tuesday, September 16</td>
<td>Objective Detail&lt;br&gt;from Gerard Manley Hopkins’ <em>Journals</em>, 1866-1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 23</td>
<td>Subjective vs. Objective Detail&lt;br&gt;Synesthesia &amp; Color&lt;br&gt;Translation of Rainer Maria Rilke’s <em>Letters on Cézanne</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 30</td>
<td>Figurative Language&lt;br&gt;What is an Image?&lt;br&gt;Robert Hass, “Images”&lt;br&gt;Marianne Moore &amp; Elizabeth Bishop: Examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 7</td>
<td>Description as Initiation: The Trespass Inside&lt;br&gt;Navajo Indian Chant, “Songs in the Garden of the House God”&lt;br&gt;Translation of Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo”</td>
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<td>Tuesday, October 14</td>
<td>Description &amp; the Modulation of Tone&lt;br&gt;Elizabeth Bishop’s “At the Fishhouses”</td>
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<td>Tuesday, October 21</td>
<td>Description &amp; Apostrophe&lt;br&gt;William Carlos Williams, from <em>Spring &amp; All</em></td>
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<td>Tuesday, October 28</td>
<td>Composition &amp; the Painted Field&lt;br&gt;Translation of Pascalle Monnier’s <em>Bayart</em></td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 4</td>
<td>NO CLASS&lt;br&gt;Election Day</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 11</td>
<td>NO CLASS&lt;br&gt;Veteran’s Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, November 18</td>
<td>Description as Event&lt;br&gt;A.R. Ammons’ “The Poem as a Walk”</td>
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Tuesday, November 25  Description as Event
William Maxwell, “The Thistles in Sweden”

PORTFOLIOS DUE

Tuesday, December 2  Last class
Students read from their work

There is not a phase of our experience that is meaningless, not a phrase or communication that is meaningless. We do not make things meaningful, but in our making we work towards an awareness of meaning…Becoming conscious, becoming aware of the order of what is happening is the full responsibility of the poet.

Robert Duncan