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GET **LIT** ON LITERATURE

Sixth annual event celebrates fiction and those who love it

By **BRENNA VISSER**

Author Molly Gloss says that much of her writing is inspired by what does not exist.

In her case, the story she seeks to tell is one of pioneer women of the American West, a genre best known for cowboys, gun fights and the eternal romance of riding off into the sunset.

“I have had a lifetime passion of reading Western fiction,” Gloss said. “But what I couldn’t find was the great Western novel with a woman at the center of it.”

The fourth-generation Oregonian will be sharing her experience about those stories and how she arrived at them with four other bestselling authors at the sixth annual Get Lit on the Beach, May 19 through 21 in Cannon Beach.

Organized by the Tolovana Arts Colony, Get Lit will include a series of presentations and networking opportunities from Lev Grossman, Karl Marlantes, James Owen and, the ‘Master of Ceremonies,’ Terry Brooks — authors whose genres cover history, Western, fantasy and speculative fiction, Tolovana Arts Colony Chair Watt Childress said.

“People will have the opportunity to have a close relationship with these authors. It’s different than going to just a book signing,” Childress said. “You also have an opportunity to get those folks personally.”

TAKING THE PLUNGE

This will be Gloss’ first time at Get Lit. She is best known for her novels “The Jump-Off Creek,” “The Dazzle of Day,” “Wild Life,” “The Hearts of Horses” and “Falling From Horses.” Her work has earned several awards, including an Oregon Book Award and a Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award.

Gloss always knew she wanted to be a writer, but didn’t take the serious plunge until she was in her 30s, after her son was born.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS
Author Molly Gloss



Terry Brooks, an American author of epic fantasy novels who lives in Cannon Beach, will return as the “Master of Ceremonies” at Get Lit at the Beach.



Author Karl Marlantes



Author Lev Grossman



Author James Owen



“Writing became the one place I could just be Molly instead of a mother and a wife,” Gloss said.

A lot of Gloss’ inspiration comes from

digging into the past, whether that means reading memoirs of people in the West during the First World War, manuals on how to break horses from that era, or

even living on a ranch in Idaho by herself to fully understand the lifestyle.

The old Western cowboy trope is often considered a relic of a bygone era. But Gloss said it is a theme that is becoming more and more culturally relevant.

“The American cowboy hero has a lot of good qualities: He’s self-reliant and brave,” Gloss said. “But he also has a dark side, one fascinated with violence and guns, gangs and deadbeat fathers. The mythology of the West continues to shape American culture.”

It’s a culture, she said, that is still shaping the United States’ current political climate, even the president himself.

“(President Donald Trump) is not really trying to be a cowboy hero, but his role can be demonstrated as the swaggering sheriff who runs the town,” she said.

In Gloss’ work, toughness and resiliency is not gendered, and the romance of open fields unfettered by fences is an all but universal love. By sharing more narratives about the women behind the scenes — women breaking in horses and keeping the lives of pioneers afloat — she said she hopes to nudge the narrative in a different direction.

TRUTH IN FICTION

Widening that narrative is particularly significant in a time that some call a “post-truth era,” dominated by the discussion of alternative facts and fake news, Gloss said.

“Fiction is where we can point to the truth,” she said. “Fiction is more significant than it ever has been. It’s where you get your sources of empathy, where you discover you have more in common with a character than you realize. It’s not about the facts then, it’s about how people live their lives, and discovering truth within that.”

Full pass tickets are \$85; the Friday evening reception is \$30; and the Saturday night dinner and keynote speaker presentation is \$70. Tickets may still be available on-site or at www.getlitatthebeach.com.