

1/19/17 An evening (afternoon California time) with T. C. Boyle

Kris Deane

In "Greasy Lake," the characters want to be bad guys. Is that a reflection of your teenage years?

Boyle's answer -- Very similar. The characters in "G.L." are invented, but we all had our experiences there.

I've noticed that you use many similes in your writing. Any particular reason why?

Boyle's answer -- There's no formula, but similes and metaphors can be beautiful in themselves, as well as giving you a sharper picture

Caleb Werner

How did you develop your particular writing style – dark, cynical but somewhat humorous?

Boyle's answer -- Aw, shucks, Caleb, I'm just doing what comes natural. Grew up in NY amongst wise guys. We were always outdoing each other with wit.

Javier Acevedo (but was not present tonight due to soccer)

When you wrote "Greasy Lake," did you know the story would end that way before you began writing?

Kyle McCurley

Do you just start writing? What's your typical writing process?

Boyle's answer -- Not at all. I never know the end (or the middle) of any story or novel. That is the beauty of it: it's a journey of discovery.

Will Rukuba

What was your inspiration for writing "Love of My Life"?

Boyle's answer -- A newspaper article about a similar scenario. I wrote the story to find out what lay behind the naked facts.

Keane Emmans-McGill

Have you ever been in a writing slump similar to the slump in "56-0"?

Boyle's answer -- No. I won't allow it, just as I won't allow myself to have nightmares. Being blocked is the way to Suicidesville.

Jaden Frazier

Were you inspired by any of your high school teachers to write?

Alex Dillard

What was the turning point in your life when you realized you wanted to make a living as a writer?

Boyle's answer -- My eighth-grade English teacher, Donald Grant, was an amateur actor & would read short stories aloud to us. That took my head right off.

Logan Marshall

In the story "56-0," is the number 56 random? You could have picked any score. Why 56?

Boyle's answer -- Read a newspaper story about a college team being whopped by that very score & wondered what you learn from that. P.S. What you learn is that life is shit and defeat.

Logan Hayes

How long did it take you to write "Greasy Lake" from start to finish?

Boyle's answer -- Actually, folks, I would say that "Greasy Lake," like most of my stories, takes perhaps three weeks to a month from conception to completion

David Ayriyants

Have you ever felt pressure from your fans or editors to write only novels or only short stories?

Boyle's answer – I don't really like to feel pressure from anyone, and so I don't. From the outset I have written only what I want, when I want. Isn't that what an artist is supposed to do? (In an ideal world, that is.)

Myles Ham

Do you count any other published writers among your good friends? Do you give one another advice?

Boyle's answer – no, and no

Dan Dunsmore

Your short story "Beat" has a wonderful rhythm to it. Did you listen to music while writing that story?

Boyle's answer -- Jazz

Christian Guttilla (was present, but I didn't have a chance to ask his question)

Which do you like better, writing novels or short stories?

Adam Maisano (was present, but I didn't have a chance to ask his question)

When growing up, who were the writers you admired? Did any of them inspire your odd but intriguing topics for stories?

Other Comments From Boyle

His hello: Dunsmoreans: I am listening to Bowie's last heartbreaking album while chatting with you.

His music: Rock and roll is my love, but I listen to classical and jazz while working so as not to be distracted by lyrics.

His place to be: Mostly I am on foot in my village and walking along the beach.

His sport: Baseball, hands down. But I love pro football too.

His home: It's all windows and all light. Which is nice for gazing up from the page now and again.

His response to the compliment "Savage!": You want savage, check out Brian Moore's novel, "Blackrobe." And the superb movie made from it.

His response to thank you: You are very welcome, Dan. Have fun, students. Don't work too hard and make sure to get out on the town once in a while.