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**2012 Barber Lecture Focuses on the Relationship Between Fiction and History**

*Summary: Jay Parini, Axinn professor of English and creative writing at Middlebury College, will be the featured speaker at this year's Barber Lecture, which will take place on Wednesday, September 19, at 7:30 p.m.*

(September 5, 2012)-Jay Parini, Axinn professor of English and creative writing at Middlebury College, will be the featured speaker at this year's Barber Lecture, which will take place on Wednesday, September 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the HFA Recital Hall.

Parini's lecture, entitled "The Imagination of Truth: How Fiction Shines a Light into the Dark Corners of History," will attempt to put forth a brief aesthetics of fiction by arguing that fiction enables people to look in places where conventional history and biography cannot possibly go. Parini will begin with an examination of the difference between fact and fiction, the various understandings of the term "fiction" in critical discourse throughout the centuries, and the ways in which early historians like Thucydides and Herodotus thought about the nature of their undertaking. He will also look at the term "narrative," as he sees storytelling to be the essence of historical work. The lecture will then move into modern times, beginning with the early modern versions of "fictionalized" history produced by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Parini will conclude the lecture by discussing his own experience as a novelist and his understanding of narrative, looking at work he has done on Leo Tolstoy in *The Last Station*, Walter Benjamin in *Benjamin's Crossing*, and Herman Melville in *The Passages of H.M.*

Jay Parini is a poet, novelist, biographer, and critic. He attended Lafayette College and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where he received his Ph.D. in 1975. Parini is currently the Axinn professor of English and creative writing at Middlebury College in Vermont, where he has taught for the last three decades. His novel, *The Last Station*, was made into an Academy Award-nominated film starring Helen Mirren, Christopher Plummer, Paul Giamatti, and James McAvoy.

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