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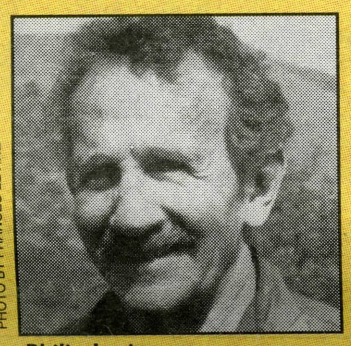
the Writer's CHRONICLE



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Interviews with

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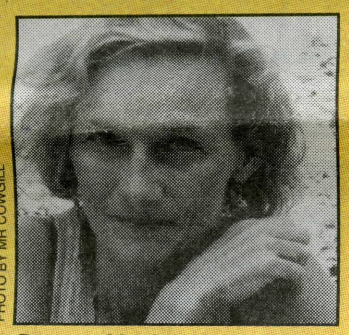
Patricia Henley & David Huddle



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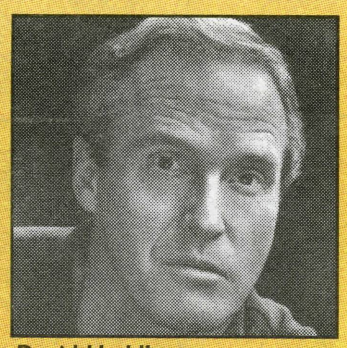

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Patricia Henley lives in West Lafayette, Indiana, where she has taught fiction writing at Purdue University since 1987. Her first novel, *Hummingbird House*—the story of Kate Banner, an American midwife amid the violence in Guatemala during the 1980s—was a finalist for the National Book Award and the New Yorker Best Fiction Book Award. She is also the author of two books of poetry and three story collections, including *Worship of the Common Heart: New and Selected Stories*. Her stories have been anthologized in *Best American Short Stories* and *The Pushcart Prize Anthology*.

Her latest novel, *In the River Sweet*—released last fall by Pantheon—tells the story of Ruth Anne Bond, a woman of deep Catholic faith with a secret dating back to the Vietnam War. Ruth Anne's husband, Johnny, confronts his own troubled past, and the couple must come to terms with their daughter's announcement that she is a lesbian.

Henley and I shared this dialogue during the summer of 2002.

Andrew Scott: *Hummingbird House* and *In the River Sweet* both marry two seemingly disparate notions: the domestic and the political. Kate Banner, through all the violence in Central America, just wants to get back home. *In the River Sweet*, even though it deals with hate crimes, sexuality issues, and Vietnam War tensions, seems most interested in the ways in which the past can affect a marriage and family. Are the domestic and the political at odds, or are they always intertwined?

Patricia Henley: We live in community with others and that creates politics, although many—maybe most—people try to ignore that. It feels good to drop out of the political world for a bit—to go on vacation and not watch the news, for instance. But the news is still out there. Congress is still passing legislation that will affect our lives. Wars are still being fought. So, yes, I think I'd say that our domestic lives and political realities are intertwined, whether we want to acknowledge that or not.

I'm particularly interested in the lives of people who, without meaning to necessarily, find themselves on the fringe of political moments. Like Ruth Anne happening upon the nun who set herself on fire to protest the war in Vietnam.

Scott: There's a lot of fiction about the experience of men during the Vietnam War, but few novels or stories about a woman's perspective during that troubled time.

Henley: I don't necessarily see Ruth Anne and Jill and Sue-Sue as representative of the women who were in Vietnam. One thing I learned while writing *In the River Sweet* is that among the people who lived and worked and served in Vietnam during the war, there are many, many perspectives. Having said that—a sort of disclaimer that I hope will keep people who were there from saying, It wasn't like that at all—I can tell you that I was moved and excited by the first-person accounts I read of American women in Vietnam. There were over 10,000 who served or worked there. Some of them worked for corporations, like Connie Mattingly. Others were part of the diplomatic corps. And of course, there were nurses and donut dollies and entertainers. I think more books and films are going to come from their experiences. There are many stories to be told.

Scott: You've published books of poems and stories, and two novels. You've also written a screenplay. How has each genre helped your development as a writer?

Henley: I started out writing poetry. I always say, half-kidding, that I wrote poems first because I couldn't sit still long enough to write fiction. That lasted until my late 20s when an illness required sitting still. I began a novel then, about life in a back-to-the-land community. I had lived in one—Tolstoy Anarchist Peace Farm in eastern Washington—in the mid-'70s. But I had no idea of structure. I was just writing. That material turned into the first stories, the stories published by Graywolf Press, *Friday Night at Silver Star*. I enjoyed writing stories and admired and learned from Alice Munro and Andre Dubus and William Trevor and Richard Ford. Writing stories felt like something I could do combined with the hard jobs I held back then. Still, my work was sometimes called "quiet." I took that to mean that not much happened.

I loved reading novels as a child. But I did not think writing one was possible for me. I saw myself as a short story writer who managed to incorporate poetic imagery in my work. I used the few poems I wrote as a way of seeing images

You have to be obsessed to simply finish a project. Its success depends on several other factors. The right editor getting her hands on it and loving it. Enough money getting behind it. People sharing it with friends, spreading the word. Booksellers enjoying it.

Taking the Soulful Journey: An Interview with Patricia Henley

by Andrew Scott

and distilling what was really important to me at any given time. I went to Guatemala in 1989, casting about for some story ideas, partly. And I had followed the repression of the '80s and wanted to see for myself what had happened there. I was there about a week when a doctor told me the story of Father Stan Rother, who had been killed during the 1980s. The Mayan villagers he served asked his family if they could have his heart to bury near the church where he had been the pastor. This story electrified me. I knew right at that moment that I needed to write about Guatemala and that it was a bigger story, a story that needed to be a novel. I had no idea what I'd taken on.

Scott: That's right—*Hummingbird House*, from the seed of an idea to publication, took 10 years. What did you learn about fiction writing, about yourself as a writer, during that decade?

Henley: Writing *Hummingbird House* changed my life. Or perhaps, since it took so long to write, my life inevitably changed and was influenced by the writing process. I didn't know a thing about writing a novel when I began. I threw out the first 200 pages—the voice wasn't right and those first 200 pages were in first person. I don't think I really knew, for sure, what I wanted to write about. Each new phase of researching would teach me that there was yet another layer required. Often that meant starting over or nearly starting over. I found out what it feels like to be obsessed with a project. I like that feeling.

I developed a profound respect for the men and women of the Catholic Church who have aligned their lives with the poor of Latin America. That led me back to the Church—I'd been raised Catholic but had left the Church at the age of 19 in favor of a more bohemian lifestyle and an eclectic spiritual search that included LSD and living in the back-to-the-land community. While working on *Hummingbird House*, I dropped in to the local Newman Center across from Purdue's campus and I just kept going back. Whatever its faults and warts—the Church is a good venue for peace and justice work.

Another thing I learned while writing *Hummingbird House*—I'm capable of writing for long hours. Coming down the homestretch, while on sabbatical in New Mexico, I was able to write for six to ten hours a day, go out for a long walk, sleep, and get up and do it again the next day. The most difficult period—except for being nervous sometimes in Guatemala—happened during the two years between finishing the book and having it accepted. It was pretty much rejected everywhere in New York. I felt like a fraud as a teacher. I was wounded and grieved over what I thought of as the book's failure. I felt fairly certain I wouldn't write another novel since that one had taken so much out of me. MacMurray & Beck accepted the manuscript two years after I'd finished it. Their belief in the book and its subsequent success charged me up to write another novel. I like solving the problems inherent in writing novels.

Scott: And now you're with a New York publisher, after experiences with Graywolf and MacMurray & Beck. What's the most important difference to you as a writer?

Henley: The most important difference, I suppose, is knowing Pantheon has the resources to publicize the book well. That was a difficulty with MacMurray & Beck. None of us were prepared for *Hummingbird House* being chosen as a finalist for the National Book Award. I don't feel it got the attention it deserved after that—the sort of attention *Plainsong* got, for instance—partly because a small press cannot respond to that kind of attention the way a large house can.

Scott: *In the River Sweet* showcases Ruth Anne's Catholic faith. Several characters are nuns, plus there's Father Dixie Ryan from *Hummingbird House*. Do you align yourself with the label "Catholic writer," or are you a Catholic who just happens to write?

Henley: I'm comfortable with being called a Catholic writer, but I'll bet there are some Catholics who'd rather I not be identified that way. Because I am always questioning the Church, challenging it. I am endlessly fascinated with the Church and suppose that it will always be there as a source of stories and characters. The new novel—the one I'm just beginning, set in Chicago—isn't concerned with spirituality or religion. So far. But I would say that much of my work springs from a concern with ethics and morality.

Scott: What most surprised you about *Hummingbird House*'s success?

Henley: The surprise came when the book was accepted. After that, I wasn't surprised. I think that's partly because I was at work on the next novel, *In the River Sweet*. And I have always tried to be at work on something new when a book comes out. So that I don't worry too much about how the published book is received.

Scott: Do you read reviews of your work?

Henley: Of course. Last night at a party, a woman said, "Why read reviews? Ignorance is bliss." But I think ignorance, in that case, would simply be denial. If I'm headed out giving readings, I want to know what my audience has read the night before in the newspaper.

It's unfortunate that much reviewing seems to be done by people who have little or no interest in the books assigned to them. Sometimes I'm convinced they don't really read the books. Or they refuse, because of some personal myopia, to meet the book on its own terms. And then there are the people whose buttons you push—they want to get you back.

But I have been lucky with reviews.

Scott: What do you like least about being a writer?

Henley: That's hard to answer. What I like least happens as a result of what I like the most. I love the feel of obsession. Totally submerged in a project. That often means I don't sleep well, get up at 2 a.m. to write, nap when other people are socializing, fear for myself and others when driving, and neglect my real life. All that obsession has its downside, and I find I can't go on too long like that. A good night's sleep is something I treasure.

Scott: Do you think a writer must be obsessed with a project for it to succeed?

Henley: You have to be obsessed to simply fin-

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Henley

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ish a project. Its success depends on several other factors. The right editor getting her hands on it and loving it. Enough money getting behind it. People sharing it with friends, spreading the word. Booksellers enjoying it.

Scott: You've taught fiction writing at Purdue for a long time. How has teaching affected your writing?

Henley: Teaching at the university level, especially the first five years or so, forced me to think through my own process and to study what others had written about process. You often hear the axiom, *You don't really learn something until you have to teach it to others. I think that was true and it was good for me.*

Scott: What's most difficult about teaching undergraduate and graduate students?

Henley: Well, let me say what's good about teaching undergraduates. They're malleable, curious, they make big leaps, when they make them. I could teach undergrads for the rest of my teaching career and be happy with that. What's hard is that so many of them have been imprinted with junk stories, just like eating too much junk food. It's given them a skewed sense of what's important about stories and telling stories, which, after all, is one of the most meaningful human activities.

Graduate students are more difficult to teach. They often have been big fish in little ponds, over-praised, before they come into an MFA program. They come to an MFA program not to work hard, but for more of that praise. They can be set in their ways. Even after teaching in an MFA program for 15 years, I'm still not convinced that the MFA program is the best way to become a writer.

Scott: Place is an important element in your fiction and classroom. What's being praised when a reader delights in a book or story's sense of place?

Henley: It's been interesting to watch my sense of place shift. I started writing fiction when my imagination got fired up by moving out west. Those mountains and the tough women and the close-to-the-bone life I led—all that made me want to tell stories and more often than not, I found that the stories were bound up with landscape and wilderness and weather and seasonal jobs, which are just a few of the differences I see between that place and, say, this one: the tamed heartland. I cried all summer before I moved to Indiana from Montana in 1987, even though I'd been born in southern Indiana. Maybe it was because I'd been born there. Seriously, I think I just didn't want to leave the mountains and the place that had given me my stories. For a variety of reasons, I've stayed in Indiana, and eventually I began writing about it. Kate, in *Hummingbird House*, is from Indiana, and it appears there in her ruminations. Much of *In the River Sweet* is set here, in a fictional Indiana town named for Booth Tarkington. *In the River Sweet* opens with a love scene at the round barns and several people have said to me, *You manage to make it sound romantic. As if the Midwest couldn't be.*

My sense of place, though, ranges more widely. I recently set a story in the Bahamas. And *In the River Sweet* is also set in Vietnam and Michigan and New Orleans. I hope I've authentically portrayed those places. They're places I love. There are probably some places I could never write about lovingly or authentically, places I can't feel a kinship with. That feeling is almost like falling in love, a chemical reaction. You are willing to overlook the place's flaws and unpleasantness because there's something in the air that appeals to you. Unless you're terribly cold-hearted as a writer, a technician, I think you need that feeling to portray a place in a way that will delight the reader. We take delight in differences. We want to feel, upon reading about a particular town or mountain or river or street, that we've been to a place we might never have known otherwise.



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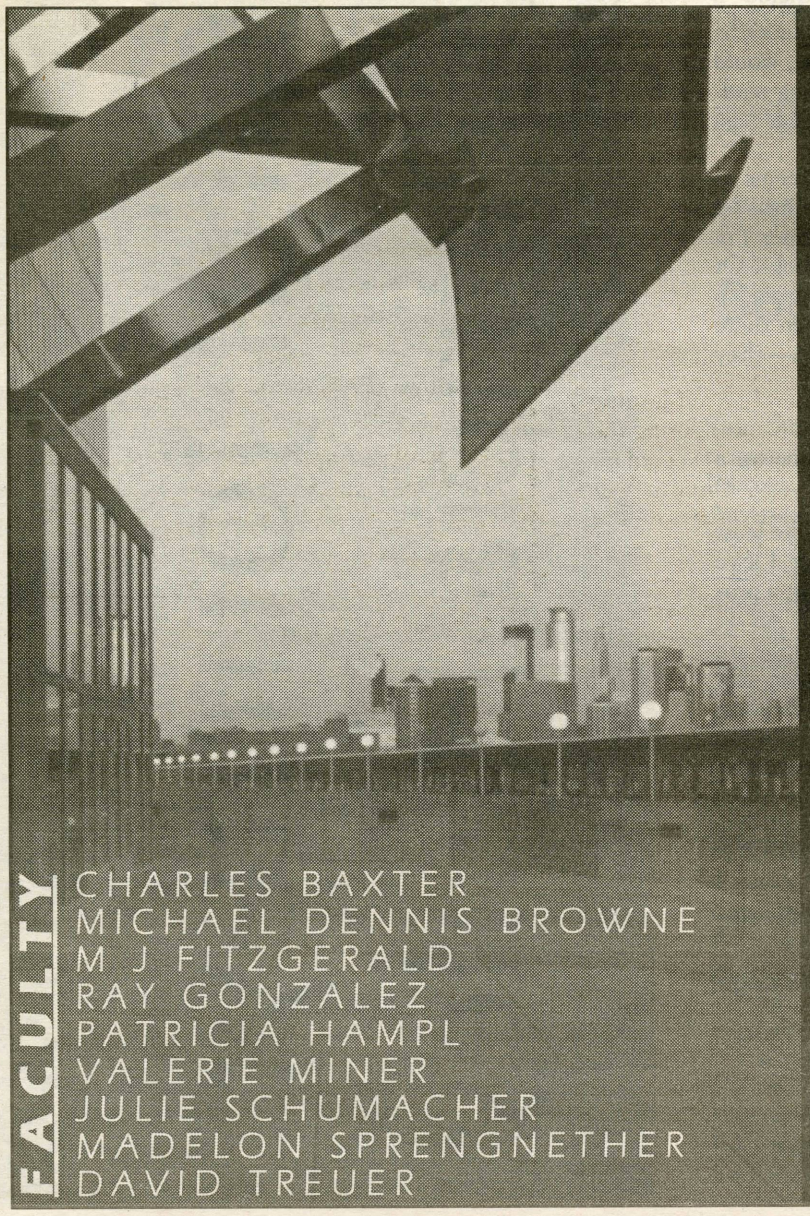
Patricia Henley



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I developed a profound respect for the men and women of the Catholic Church who have aligned their lives with the poor of Latin America. That led me back to the Church—I'd been raised Catholic but had left the Church at the age of 19 in favor of a more bohemian lifestyle and an eclectic spiritual search that included LSD and living in the back-to-the-land community.

Scott: The phrase "soulful journey" appears often in *In the River Sweet*. Your own soulful journey as a novelist is a long one, isn't it? You first came to attention as a short story writer.

Henley: I started my first novel in 1979, right after moving from Tolstoy Farm. That experience had been profound. I grew up there emotionally. Terrible things happened to me there—my first marriage broke up. But it was also a golden time. I lived outdoors, morning, noon, and night. I immediately wanted to write about it, and I began a novel with a cast of characters loosely based on people I knew at the farm. I don't remember how many pages I wrote—hundreds—but eventually I abandoned it as a novel. I had no sense of structure. That material eventually turned into the stories in *Friday Night at Silver Star*.

In 1984, I worked on another novel, set in Bozeman, Montana. A short one, about a lesbian woman who falls in love with a woman who has three children. It was a sweet story. My process was to write the scenes—it was cinematic. I can't recall why I put it away, but I did. Telling you about it makes me want to go back to it, but I think it would make a good short story. And perhaps that was its flaw—it was an extended short story without enough weight and complexity to carry a novel.

In 1988 I wrote a novel called *Gateway*, also set in Montana. I did quite a bit of research for that manuscript, interviewing a fireman friend in Montana who does river rescue and learning the names of the plants and rocks, learning the weather. It was set in 1963, so I spent time perusing the microfiche in the library, checking out the local newspapers from that time. All of this was a wonderful reason to spend time in Montana. *Gateway* had a beginning and an end, but no middle. It's that vast desert of the middle that can be so intimidating to the novelist. This brings me back to your question about how each genre affected my growth. I didn't discover that *Gateway* had no middle until years later—it must've been around 1997—when I turned that material into a screenplay called "Buttermilk Moon." Following the strict structure for a screenplay, I saw that I had no Act II. Some things about structure were slowly rising up out of the fog for me.

I started *Hummingbird House* in 1989 during a summer in Guatemala. Again, at first, for years, really, I was just taking notes, interviewing people, doing library research, and writing scenes. The novelist Charlie Smith said to me around that time, "Just write the islands," meaning, *Just write the scenes you can see and it will all come together eventually*. I wrote around 200 pages in Kate Banner's first person voice. But gradually I began to want to include a strong storyteller's voice who would range beyond Kate's point of view. I had to start over. That starting over was about voice. Once I got in the groove—once I found the voice the story required—the writing unfolded. But this was a process that took years. And five trips to Central America. I finally finished *Hummingbird House* in 1996 while on sabbatical in New Mexico. Then it was another three years before I held the book in hand.

In the River Sweet began as a short story about a family in which the father and husband had been a POW in Vietnam. It was about the life the mother led while the father was a POW. I love doing the research for writing fiction, so I found myself lugging home library books about POWs. This was during the summer of 1998. *Hummingbird House* was accepted for publication in August of that year. Once it was accepted, my mind turned to another novel. I thought, I'm doing an awful lot of research for a short story and I began to build the idea for *In the River Sweet*. I did the library research and planned a trip to Vietnam. I was writing scenes, but I knew something was missing. The strand of the story about the hate crime came late in the conceptualizing. I abandoned 150 pages and started over because the presence of the hate crime provided me with the first line and the stripped down, close to the consciousness of the character's voice. Once I received that first line—"Jesus would not say fag, she knew that much"—I wrote the manuscript in 10 months.

Scott: My students thought Kate Banner the perfect protagonist because she offered them a lens through which to see an American on foreign land. What makes an "American" novel?

Henley: Well, diversity. If I'm thinking only of novels written in recent times, look at the difference

(continued on next page)

Andrew Scott *earned an MFA from New Mexico State University, where he was as an editor for* Puerto del Sol. *He is an Assistant Professor of English at Ball State University.*

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Henley

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between *Ceremony* and *Independence Day*. We have the many voices clamoring to be heard. My favorite American novels put a strong lens to the individual in relation to society or the culture at large. I'm not a big fan of the smaller domestic novel, although I've read my share of them and know that there are good ones. There's an awe and exuberance to much of American writing. But to fully answer your question, I imagine I'd have to be much better versed in novels from other nations, and I'm not. I do have a fondness for fiction coming out of the British Isles. I love Hilary Mantel and William Trevor and Ian McEwan.

Scott: Have you moved away from the short story form? Was it merely a training ground for your work as a novelist?

Henley: I've been writing short stories this summer and enjoying the switch. I always like the short story lifestyle—it's more relaxed. I don't feel driven while writing short stories. There's not that feeling of total obsession. I am working on a new novel, but it's still in the conceptualization stages—lots of note-taking and interviewing people. What I like about writing novels is the problem-solving. There are many more problems—aesthetic and technical—to solve.

Scott: You've traveled the world for your novels. What is it about another place that inspires you to write?

Henley: You know, until I was 16 I had never been farther away from home than Indianapolis. But I knew from reading voraciously that there was a wide world out there. As soon as I was able, I started traveling. If I stay at home too long I fall victim to what I think of as a Midwestern complacency, but it might just be the complacency of the stay-at-home. I have to get out. I have to shake myself up. Have you heard about the novelty-seeking gene? I'm sure I have it. But about the particulars. The western United States—its people and climate and landscape—moved me to write my first two collections of stories. I went to Guatemala for the mountains and the indigenous cultures, never dreaming that that first trip would be the beginning of a 10-year journey that culminated in the publication of *Hummingbird House*. And I went to Vietnam after I'd developed the story line for *In the River Sweet*. I just knew I couldn't write about it without spending a little time there. I had to do that down-on-the-street research.

I'm not sure I'm really answering your question. Another way to answer is this: I've always been fascinated with cultures rubbing up against each other. Something about the life lived by the writer/explorer is exciting, too. As unfashionable as it might seem, I have a framed photo of Ernest Hemingway over my desk in my office on campus. And me, a vegetarian.

> I'm comfortable with being called a Catholic writer, but I'll bet there are some Catholics who'd rather I not be identified that way. Because I am always questioning the Church, challenging it. I am endlessly fascinated with the Church and suppose that it will always be there as a source of stories and characters.

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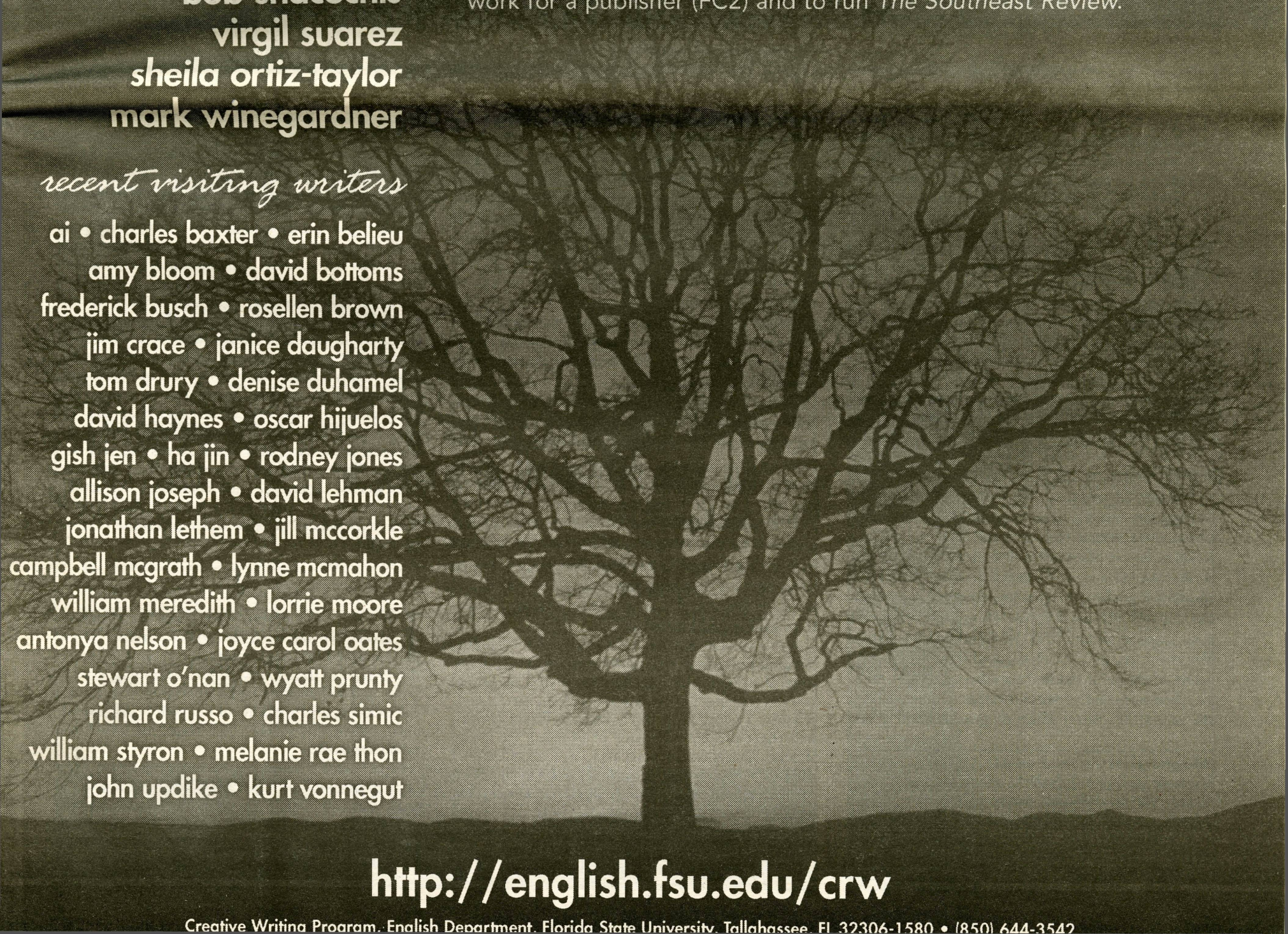

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Writing From the Body: What is That?

by Maggie Kast

Hands, do what you're bid
And bring the balloon of the mind,
That bellies and drags in the wind,
Into its narrow shed.

—W. B. Yeats

When I speak, my mouth and lungs and vocal chords work together to form words that represent my thoughts. When I write, my hand and arm move across the page, and many writers find the physical act of writing an important means of exploration. Yet my words can become detached from their bodily origins as I sit before a computer entering bits of data. The words in my head may dance on the screen, but my body has become stiff and numb, left out in the cold, and I am deprived of a source of sensory data.

As writers, we want to render sensory detail through language and, thus, construct an objective correlative for emotion. We know that images that awaken the reader's sense of smell, taste, and touch often evoke deeper feeling than those of sight and hearing, but we often fail to attend to the kinesthetic sense, the sensations of position, movement, and tension originating in muscles, tendons, and joints. For cultural reasons, I think, we are uncomfortable with these sensations and the emotions they evoke. We exercise, play baseball, and dance salsa, but rarely celebrate or mourn by means of gesture. We'd be quite surprised to see our heads of state leading the nation in solemn dance on great occasions, and when we pray we often check our bodies at the door.

Memories of physical action supply the writer with stored kinesthesia, which can be used not only to describe motion but also to imagine a character more fully. Kinesthetic responses can be evoked as well by seeing, reading, or hearing about such action. If you've ever held your breath while a dancer balances on *pointe*, wished you were the panther at the zoo, pacing with a perfect ratio of effort to motion, or responded to a bit of narrative by imitating the actions of a character, you've experienced kinesthetic response. We use this sense both as readers and as writers to get into the bodies of our characters, to allow those bodies to speak.

I came to writing from a lifetime career as dancer, choreographer, and director of a modern dance company. Reading and writing, I encountered the term "writing from the body" in process-oriented books by teachers such as Natalie Goldberg, Julia Cameron, and John Lee. They used it primarily to mean writing from a true, authentic self, an individuated source, and offered a vast array of exercises to help the writer link word to body. The exercises were helpful, but no substitute for climbing the mountain, eating the meal, or dancing the dance, then forging connections from stored kinesthesia.

As I explored further, I discovered the origins of "writing from the body" in the work of French feminists. Writing in the '70s, they celebrated the sexual body as a source for liberating text from logical constraints. Twenty years later, Patricia Foster continued their project as editor of *Minding the Body: Women Writers on Body and Soul*,[1] a group of essays. I sensed a relationship among body as subject, metaphor, and source for writing, and asked what specific contribution kinesthetic awareness could make to text. I noted how words could coalesce around the edges of bodies, defining identity and revealing the hard limits of mortality; or allow bodies to distort and flow, blending with the environment or each other. Turning to my own perception, I realized that my bodily awareness shifts constantly between these two poles.

If I focus on my body, as though from outside, I see myself as separate and individual, what Alan Watts called a "skin-encapsulated ego." I experience my body as source of identity and personal authenticity as well as limit factor, and exposure to illness and death often brings out this awareness. I may say I "have" a body. When my focus softens and I "listen" to my body, as though from inside, I can experience the body as source of transcendence, of erasure of boundaries between self and other, and this awareness is often brought out by love, sex, meditation, or engagement in any engrossing activity. I lose the sense of separation between self and body and feel that I "am" my body. Usually I am somewhere between these two poles of self-awareness, and neither exists in pure form. Everybody loves and dies. Most people experience their boundaries as fluctuating over time: now distinct, now fluid. And both of these experiences of body can inform one text, to great effect.

I

In 1931, before French feminists began talking about "writing from the body," Virginia Woolf identified two major obstacles to her life's work: the "Angel of the House," a pure, charming, conciliatory and self-denying figure who upset no one; and the taboo against speaking of her own bodily experience, specifically sexual.[2] The angel she killed; the taboo she battled.

French feminists took up Woolf's concerns: "The body must be heard," said poet Hélène Cixous. She made this command a part of her revolutionary project: to change the relationship between bodily experience and text in a way that would liberate language from the rules and regularities of conventional logic

Maggie Kast *received an MFA in Writing from Vermont College in July 2002 after a lifetime career in dance. She has published fiction in* The Sun, Carve Magazine, *and* Kaleidoscope *and has a story forthcoming in* Nimrod. *Her essays have appeared in the* Writer's Chronicle, Image: Journal of Religion and the Arts, *and others.*

and syntax. Western thought, the feminists believed, was based on the systematic repression of women's experience, and resistance would take the form of *jouissance* (sexual bliss, rapture), the direct expression of the physical pleasures of infancy and of later sexuality. The French term is used to mean a fluid, diffuse pleasure, a giving, dispensing, expanding of pleasure without concern about ends or closure. *Jouissance* is the means by which bodies transcend personal, political, and textual limits.

Absorbing Freud's understanding of infantile sexuality as polymorphous, the feminists found that women's experience fit the model and that the infant pleasure persisted in the adult. In "This Sex Which Is Not One," French psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray says:

> Woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. It is useless, then, to trap women in the exact definition of what they mean… [they] upset the linearity of a project, undermine the goal-object of a desire, diffuse the polarization toward a single pleasure, disconcert fidelity to a single discourse.

She explicitly eliminates the distinction between individuals, merging two bodies completely: "You? I? That's still saying too much. Dividing too sharply between us: all."[3]

Cixous celebrates the connection between polymorphous sexuality and language, saying:

> A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor—once by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction—will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language.

Listen to the gentle steps she takes to expand the ways that body images can carry meaning:

> I can adore a voice: I am a woman: the love of the voice: nothing is more powerful than the intimate touch of a veiled voice, profound but reserved coming to awaken my blood; the first ray of a voice that comes to meet the newly-born heart.

Cixous's body metaphors can be rough and powerful as well as intimate:

> I feel women writing in my writing, giving birth, giving milk, going to bed alone and sad getting up gay, my hands move forward now with footsteps of fire, now with white she-wolf footsteps, my hands clawing each other, the palms shedding milky tears.

Cixous's hands can walk or claw each other; palms can cry; and writing can give milk. Words and bodies have interpenetrated each other, and bodies are speaking through each other as well.

Cixous also praises embodiment in writing by men, specifically in the gestural, rhythmic language of Joyce, Artaud, and Mallarmé. She praises the work of Jean Genet, where the idea of merging individuals is expanded to include disintegration and recomposition. Cixous describes Genet's

> …phantasmagorical mingling of men, of males, of messieurs, of monarchs, princes, orphans, flowers, mothers, breasts, gravitat[ing] around a marvelous 'sun of energy' love, which bombards and disintegrates those ephemeral amorous singularities so that they may recompose themselves in other bodies for new passions.[4]

Jean Genet's *Funeral Rites* (*Pompes Funèbres*) takes place in the context of French resistance to and collaboration with the Nazis. It interweaves gay sex, death, and politics in a fashion as nonlinear as Cixous's. Though his sex is bawdier and more literal than hers, he still allows bodies to merge with each other and with nature. Speaking of his dead lover, he says:

> At present I am horrified with myself for containing—having devoured him—the dearest and only lover who ever loved me. I am his tomb… A greengage plum swells his silence. The bees escape from his eyes, from his sockets where the liquid pupils have flowed from under the flaccid eyelids. To eat a youngster shot on the barricades, to devour a young hero, is no easy thing. We all love the sun. My mouth is bloody. So are my fingers. I tore the flesh to shreds with my teeth. Corpses do not usually bleed. His did.

In a slightly different transcendence of limits, he



PHOTO BY WILLIAM FREDERKING

Maggie Kast

turns body parts into objects, which are in turn personified:

> The smiles of both the woman and the soldier were so hard, perhaps because of the stiffness and immobility of the curl of the lips, that I suddenly felt as if I were caught in a trap and being watched by the smiles, which were as alarming as the inevitable jaw of a wolf-trap.

The watching smiles make our own jaw feel stiff, then clamp shut. Sometimes Genet's inanimate objects take on the characteristics of bodies:

> Amidst the debris of buildings being demolished, I sometimes step on ruins whose redness is toned down by the dust, and they are so delicate, discrete, and fragrant with humility that I have the impression I am placing the sole of my shoe on Jean's face.

(continued on next page)

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WRITERS @ WORK

Kast

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Our kinesthetic response to the image of stepping with a shoe on the face of one beloved is painful and repugnant, making us retract the foot. In most of these French texts, the body as transcendent looms larger than the body as limit factor, though the two rival each other in Genet. Even as one person becomes the tomb for another, sharing his identity, "corpses… bleed."[5]

African-American poet Audre Lorde echoes French feminists, saying, "…there is, for me, no difference between writing a good poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman I love." The erotic for her includes "Dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, or examining an idea."[6]

Today's explicit representations of sex in television, film, and advertising may make the French project seem obsolete. Yet consider how goal-directed, how linear such representations often are. They conceal, rather than reveal their infantile antecedents; repress, rather than express, a playful, creative experience of body. As William Gass observes, "A stroke by stroke story of a copulation is exactly as absurd as a chew by chew account of the consumption of a chicken's wing." Words can communicate love when we treat them with love, when we give them the density of bodies. Gass speaks of

> The use of language like a lover… not the language of love, but the love of language, not matter, but meaning, not what the tongue touches, but what it forms, not lips and nipples, but nouns and verbs… It's not the word made flesh we want, but the flesh made word.[7]

II

In preparation for *Minding the Body*, editor Patricia Foster asked a diverse group of women writers for essays on "reading" their bodies. White, black, Hispanic, Native American, and Arab women responded, all writing in English. The body is topic as well as source in these essays, which examine with close focus and psychological acuity the myths and cultural expectations that deform women's relationship to their bodies. Inevitably, with body as topic, there is greater separation between observing self and observed body than in the French texts, and the limited body comes to the fore.

In "A Weight That Women Carry," Sallie Tisdale says, "By fussing endlessly over my body, I've ceased to inhabit it. I'm trying to reverse this equation now, to trust my body and enter it again with whole heart."[8] Joyce Winer's essay on infertility expresses a related alienation of self from body: "I hate my body. I want to grab it and shake it into submission. I want to punish it by lashing myself upside down to the wall until the bleeding stops."[9] Nancy Mairs experiences the limitation of her multiple sclerosis as unwanted embodiment. "…it has rammed my 'self' straight back into the body I had been trained to believe it could, through high-minded acts and aspirations, rise above."[10] Other essays describe persecution or self-blame for being too old, too thin, unwilling to eat or simply wrong. Mirrors reflect negative images. Margaret Atwood satirizes the body as topic itself: "I get up in the morning. My topic feels like hell. I sprinkle it with water, brush parts of it, rub it with towels, powder it, add lubricant."[11]

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These essays continue the French political project of encouraging the body to speak and rebelling against the culture that silences it, but Foster locates oppression in the idea that "body equals self," that a woman is acceptable only insofar as her body meets cultural expectations. Her experiencing self is often limited by the culturally imprisoned body, and its speech is a cry. With their greater emphasis on sexuality, the French take pleasure in the body as self and treat it as means of liberation.

The transcendent pole emerges, however, in the conclusion to Tisdale's essay on weight, where she moves toward acceptance of her body. Reflecting heightened kinesthetic awareness, she says, "I see how muscles and skin shift with movement; I sense a cornucopia of flesh in the world. In the midst of it I am a little capacious and unruly." She accepts her reflected image as, "Myself." In Linda Hogan's essay, "Department of the Interior," she relates the body to earth: "For as we breathe, we are air. We are water. We are earth. We are what is missing from the equation of wholeness." Towards the end of Mairs's essay, she realizes that embodiment has provided her with a voice, which enables her to move beyond her boundaries: "I've 'found' my voice, then, just where it ought to have been, in the body-warmed breath escaping my lungs and throat." She uses a striking body metaphor for her discovery that disability and voice are connected, combining separated individuals and joined bodies in a single image: "You feel like a giant hand that, pulling two swimmers out of the water, two separate heads bobbling on the iridescent swells, finds the two bodies below, legs coiled around each other, in an ecstasy of copulation."

We know that images that awaken the reader's sense of smell, taste, and touch often evoke deeper feeling than those of sight and hearing, but we often fail to attend to the kinesthetic sense, the sensations of position, movement, and tension originating in muscles, tendons, and joints.

III

Melanie Rae Thon's story, "First, Body,"[12] illustrates the use of kinesthesia on every level, from language rhythms to images to narrative arc. The story juxtaposes the body as limited and as fluid in a striking, almost confrontational way. Street people in Seattle are living close to the edge of survival as the story begins:

> Two nurses with scissors could make a man naked in eleven seconds. Sid Elliott had been working Emergency eight months and it amazed him every time. Slicing through denim and leather, they peeled men open faster than Sid's father flayed rabbits.
>
> Roxanne said it would take her longer than eleven seconds to make him naked. 'But not that much longer.'

In these four sentences we get the narrator, his occupation, his father, and Roxanne in stark contrast, all superfluous detail stripped away. To use Thon's verbs, they are *sliced*, *peeled*, and *flayed*. In the story's Emergency-room setting, the body, living or dead, is stripped of its humanity. Thon explores the body as limit factor in rich and brutal detail.

The story's title comes from the "rules of Emergency: first, body, then brain—stop the blood, get the heart beating. No fine-tuning. Don't worry about a man's head till his guts are back in his belly." Here Thon views the body as skin-encapsulated, localized, limited. Later in the same story she views them as malleable, capable of shifting boundaries, meanings, and even identities. The former view makes her characters and their hard living conditions highly particular, while the latter enables them to play in dream worlds where the rules of linear logic do not apply. Throughout, Thon juxtaposes these two experiences of the body. The closer Thon gets us and her characters to what André Dubus calls "the meatness of us," the more she reveals to us and them of our shared and essential humanity.

> "What is it you do?" Sid's mother asks him near the beginning.
>
> "I clean up."
>
> "Like a janitor?"
>
> "*Up to our booties in blood all night*," Dr. Enos said.

This sentence graphically renders mortality. Dr. Enos is the ER physician who makes bets with the nurses on the number of motorcyclists who will be "stripped and pumped but not saved" each Saturday night. Sid wants to tell his mother about "men with holes in their skulls" and says, "But the wounds weren't bullet holes. Before the scanners, every drunk who hit the pavement got his head drilled. 'A precautionary measure,' Dr. Enos explained. 'In case of hemorrhage.'

'Did the patient have a choice?'

'Unconscious men don't make choices.'"

The language here is almost as stripped as the victims, and evokes a kinesthetic response through its rhy- thms. Listen: *up to our booties in blood all night.* The two dactyls at the beginning of the line suggest the rhythm of skipping—we could be up to our booties in daisies. Then the three beats at the end, twice as slow, remind us that we're in "blood all night." The slant rhyme and alliteration in this phrase of six one-syllable words: *stripped and pumped but not saved* creates a thudding sensation, like repeated blows.

The use of wounded body images pushes us close to the line between life and death, which makes us acutely aware of the way our bodies limit our existence. Together with the callous attitude of Dr. Enos and the down-and-out setting, the line between the living and the dead situates the story on a precarious edge.

In the following paragraph, Sid sits at his mother's

(continued on next page)

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Kast

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kitchen table and thinks about what he would like to tell her:

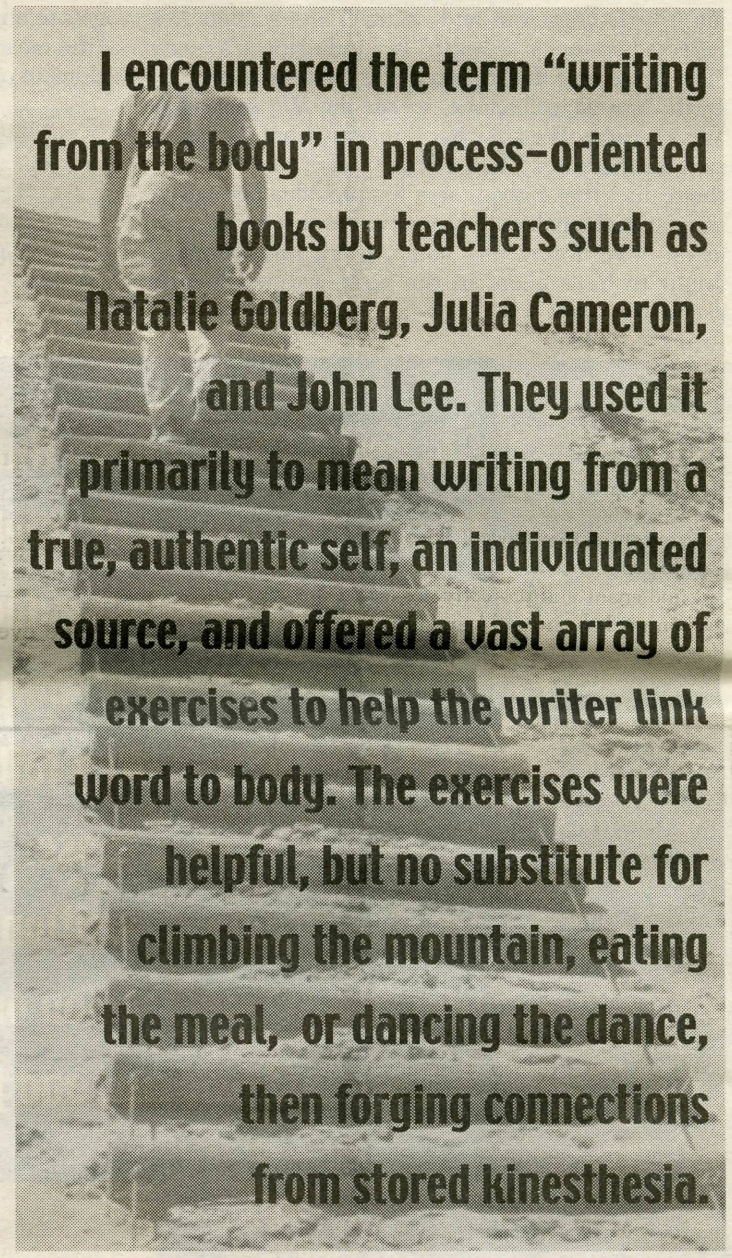
> Sid wanted to describe the ones who flew from their motorcycles and fell to earth, who offered themselves this way. *Like Jesus*. His mother wouldn't let him say that. *With such grace*. He wished he could make her see how beautiful it was, how ordinary the men who didn't live, whose parts were packed in plastic picnic coolers and rushed back to the choppers on the roof, whose organs and eyes were delivered to Portland or Spokane. He was stunned by it, the miracle of hearts in ice, corneas in milk. These exchanges became the sacrament, transubstantiated in the bodies of startled men and weary children. Sometimes the innocent died and the faithless lived. Sometimes the blind began to see. Enos said, "We save bodies, not souls."

Thon has used her stored kinesthesia to create for Sid the image of graceful flight from the observation (or imagination) of a motorcycle accident. We as readers share this response, perhaps recalling a roller coaster ride or small-plane flight. The wounded body, dying or dead, is seen by Sid as both "beautiful" and "ordinary." Even while he is "up to his booty in blood," he sees the motorcyclist's death as sacrificial, transformed into something holy. The packed parts are "ordinary," and their miraculous use makes them sacraments, pointers to something beyond themselves. Dead and living bodies connect and transcend their opposition. This is no cheap or easy transcendence, for the innocent still die and the faithless live. In the following sentence, something is gained: "Sometimes the blind begin to see." Thon holds us suspended between the literal, limited body of the ER and the human body capable of transcendence as well as sight. In contrast, Sid thinks later of his sister's three daughters:

> They were slim and quick, moving through trees, through dusk, those tiny bodies—disappearing, reassembling—those children's bodies long ago… Sometimes when he's chased them in the woods, their bodies had frightened him—the narrowness of them, the way they hid behind trees, the way they stepped in the river, turned clear and shapeless, flowed away. When they climbed out downstream, they were whole and hard but cold as water… He never knew where they might be, or what.

See how different these fluid, flowing changeable bodies are from the ones in the ER! They disappear and reassemble, reflecting a barely perceptible kinesthesia as well as an unpredictable, nonlinear progression of events. Thon has brought together limited, mortal bodies and fluid, flowing ones, achieving a narrative at once realistic and transcendent.

Rather than confronting each other, the transcendent body and the limited body intertwine like vines in a chapter of Abby Frucht's *Life Before Death*.[13] Like "First, Body," this novel deals with the line between life and death, but here the protagonist lives in a warm and welcoming milieu. The prose is as elaborately musical as Thon's is stark and strong, and the narrator plays her clauses and phrases with loving modulation, like harpstrings. Near the end of the novel, when the protagonist is dying of breast cancer, she collapses at work, while imagining herself to be dancing. Her friends rescue her, take her home and tuck her into bed. The following chapter begins:



> Pons would make another fine name for a sprite. Not a wood sprite, and not a water sprite, but a House Sprite, one content to crouch behind the throw pillows on couches or cling to the undersides of coffee tables or peer out from over the tops of lamp shades. If a picture frame was off-center, if the book mark you'd slipped between the pages of your book was ahead of where you'd finished reading, if the tack you dropped ended up in the toe of your slipper and the wine sometimes seemed to vanish from the glass more quickly than you were sipping it, that would mean Pons was restless that evening, insulted perhaps, by having come upon his name in the sketch of the brain in the reference book open on the kitchen counter, a name just to the right of *medulla oblongata* and to the left of *pituitary*. *Pons*, he might have read there, *a broad mass of nerve fibers enclosing irregular masses of gray matter*

serving as important relay stations in the path from the cerebral cortex to the cerebellum.

No blood and guts here, but the body's "meatness" all the same. Note the contrast between the language of the reference book and the almost basking love of language embodied in the cumulative length and rhythm of the first three sentences, cresting in the rapid pileup of conditional clauses in the third. Such a structure might be found in a phrase of music or dance. Pons is introduced by the narrator as self-conscious, capable of impulse and action, before the reference book identifies the sprite as a part of the brain. Thus Pons is a personification of a body part, an interesting variation on personification of an inanimate object. It's ironic that the personified object is actually a part of the brain. Frucht has transformed a center of feeling into a mischievous sprite to whom feeling is attributed! The use of a fanciful house sprite augments the nonlinear, nonlogical quality of the novel's central plot, which includes alternate life trajectories.

Pons is offended by the objective description of itself, and the narrator concurs, saying: "the encyclopedia entry lacks compassion for the rest of the body, not to mention respect for the mysteries of the flesh itself, the yearning of the bones. The private will of whatever the body touches." Her kinesthetic awareness starts with her bones and moves outward to objects outside the body.

The next quotation from the encyclopedia identifies brain as "the site of emotions, memory, self-awareness, thought." The narrator is indignant:

> Self-awareness indeed. The idea of the brain bearing sole responsibility for such a thing makes me indignant and protective of how I used to stand on my balcony and lean against the railing, waiting for the evening to make itself known to me, seeming to pull me forward by the hips... the evening gave itself to me, my legs scissored along, my body offered me into the dusk the way rock gives itself to the surrounding air.
>
> My brain had precious little to do with it.

If I focus on my body, as though from outside, I see myself as separate and individual, what Alan Watts called a "skin-encapsulated ego." I experience my body as source of identity and personal authenticity as well as limit factor, and exposure to illness and death often brings out this awareness.

The evening is not initially personified—it only *seems* to pull the narrator forward, but when it "g[i]ve[s] itself to me," it becomes as animate as Pons. In an unusually sharp separation of body from experiencing self, "*my* body offered *me*," and then, more conventionally, "*my* legs scissored along." The evening is personified while the body is almost

(continued on next page)



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Kast

continued from page 15

depersonalized. In this chapter and later, the narrator makes use of shifts in her kinesthetic sense to prefigure her blending with the external world at her death. At the end of the quoted passage, even as hard an object as "rock" can "offer" itself, while the brain becomes an objective body part, excluded from the experience.

Near the end of the chapter, she tells what happens when she takes pain pills:

> ...the sheets tangle around my ankles like eddies of wind upon which I'm being lifted into space which is itself a kind of self-awareness.

In this final image, the drugged body blends into the environment, which becomes itself self-aware.

The doctor enters the room; the reflection ends, and Pons resumes his role as a house sprite, tangling the sheets and making the narrator blurt confessions about her alternate life trajectory. At the end of the chapter the doctor puts a thermometer in the narrator's mouth, and Pons makes her bite down hard on his fingers.

The tone here is humorous, playful, and elegant, despite the extremity of the situation. The narrator's semidelusional state is rendered not only by the fantasy of Pons, but by the interplay and shifting boundaries between self and other, where other is her own body. Faced with her mortality, she uses her kinesthetic memories to transform the world into experiencing subject. The brain of the encyclopedia has been transformed into the house sprite Pons by a gradual dissolving of boundaries and a series of acts of giving: the evening to me, my body into the dusk, rock to air. Although the pathway is very different from Thon's, the outcome is a related transcendence. As "parts packed in plastic picnic coolers" become sacraments (because of the way they are used by living people), so "whatever the body touches" acquires a "private will" and shares in human experience. Frucht achieves this transcendence through lovingly rendered shifts in the narrator's kinesthetic sense. Frucht's narrator hates the scientific description of Pons, but easily transforms him into her house sprite. Thon enters fully into the description of the limited body and finds transcendence in its literal depths.

IV

How can we, men and women, learn to hear our sleeping, waking, moving, dreaming bodies: bodies that "turn clear and shapeless, then float away" or hold the imprints of ghosts; hips that are "pulled forward by the evening?" How can we wake up our dormant kinesthetic sense? Any kind of deliberate movement practice can get us out of the chair. Many run; others practice yoga, Tai Chi, Karate, or other martial arts. So-called somatic disciplines combine awareness, biology and environment understood as a synergistic whole. These include Feldenkreis technique, Alexander technique, Body-Mind Centering, Authentic Movement and others. Any of these can help, but it is important not to practice with an eye on the clock, or with health benefits in mind, or to win a competition, but to let kinesthetic awareness be its own end. In motion we may discover that words acquire a new depth of resonance, that, in fact, our bodies are learning to speak.

As the name implies, Contact Improvisation is a form in which two people improvise together while maintaining some form of physical contact. Developed by Steve Paxton, it is practiced at centers all over the country and the world. Each person improvises freely with the aim of working along the easiest pathways available to the mutually moving mass of the pair. People practicing Contact learn to trust each other and overcome the fear of falling, gaining new understanding of the place of the body in the world. Contact holds up the ideal of active, reflexive, harmonic, spontaneous, mutual forms, and explores cooperation from the ground up and from the body outwards. Attentive to the needs and abilities of each participant, it develops awareness through interaction and response. Because it's improvisational, unlike the set forms of a dance technique or martial art, it develops the ability to "think movement," to initiate and respond without the intervention of words.

Movement improvisation is taught in ways that include words as well. Interplay, developed on the West Coast by Cynthia Winton-Henry and Phil Porter, integrates body and spirit in a series of incremental forms that lead participants to movement and stories, silence and song.

I danced for two years with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, in the Washington, D.C. area, and experienced "blind lead," a structure that dates back to the trust exercises of the human potential movement. A person with eyes open leads a person with eyes closed around the room. Anyone with eyes open is a leader, and anyone with eyes closed must remain still or be led. Two rules: no wandering alone with your eyes closed; no being led with your eyes open. You choose.

I'm blind, and at first I move hesitantly, gaining trust, discovering that my partner protects me from expected bumps into other people and walls. At first she leads me by the hand, shoulder or waist, walking. Her touch becomes a map, replaces light. Shuffling steps and murmurs buoy me up until I could be exploring a high-roofed barn with bats. Her hand slips up my arm and vanishes, replaced by the round bone of her skull propelling me at the waist. A breeze on my cheek; we're running. The head disappears and I stagger; then a warm breath on my hand sends it upward. The darkness behind my eyes expands. I accelerate into it, my skin ballooning until my body fills the room, my partner's weight the engine that drives me through the cave behind my eyes. I roll against its velvet lining, plunge into its warmth; I'm moving object, object moved; then suddenly I'm still and all alone. Eyes open, light too bright. My skin shrink-wraps my body, while room falls away and clunks in place. I look for someone with eyes closed, prepare to plan, initiate, guide and guard.

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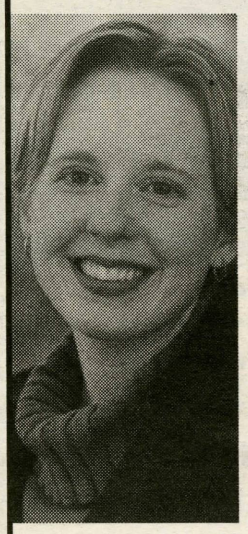

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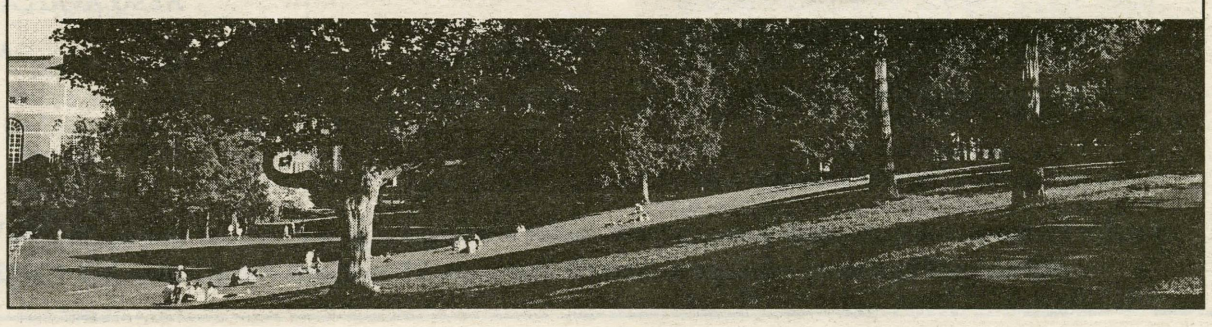

V

"Writing from the body" is widely used to mean writing from an authentic, individual self and sometimes refers to body as subject or metaphor. The French feminists, who invented the expression, saw it as part of a rebellion against patriarchy, freeing language from the domination of logical linearity. The essays in *Minding the Body* continued the French project of "reading" the body, but focused more on myths that deform and false cultural expectations.

Kinesthetic awareness can be developed and harnessed by the writer as a source for sensory detail. This awareness can contribute to text specifically in rendering the experience of having or being a body, of the body as limit factor or as means of transcendence, as bounded or as fluid, as source of identity or as means of merging. The French feminists' contemplation of *jouissance* brings them to an edge where the difference between "I" and "you" disappears, though the mortal body plays a central role in Genet. The close focus of the essays in *Minding the Body* makes their physical boundaries usually firm. They view "body as self" as reductive, a means of oppression. Transcendence in these essays takes the form of self-acceptance. Despite differences, all these understandings of "writing from the body" share a preference for body over mind, and each seeks a kind of freedom. The interplay between the body as bounded and as fluid is exploited to great effect in two very different works of fiction, both of which use the body's limitations as source for transcendent experience.

Many kinds of dance improvisation and other physical disciplines can help writers to escape from their chairs, wake up their kinesthetic sense, and let their bodies speak. As Joyce Carol Oates commands: "To invigorate literary mind, start moving literary feet."

AWP

Notes

1. Patricia Foster, ed., *Minding the Body: Women Writers on Body and Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

2. Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," in *Women and Writing*, ed. Michele Barrett (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979).

3 Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," trans. Claudia Reeder, *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle Courtivron (New York: Shocken Books, 1981).

4. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle Courtivron (New York, New York: Shocken Books, 1981).

5. Jean Genet, *Funeral Rites*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press, 1969).

6. Audre Lorde, "The Erotic as Power," *Chrysalis*, no. 9 (Fall, 1975).

7. William Gass, *On Being Blue* (Boston: Godine, 1985).

8. Sallie Tisdale, "A Weight That Women Carry," in Foster, op. cit.

9. Joyce Winer, "The Floating Lightbulb," op. cit.

10. Nancy Mairs, "Carnal Acts" op. cit.

11. Margaret Atwood, "The Female Body," op. cit.

12. Melanie Rae Thon, *First, Body: Stories* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

13. Abby Frucht, *Life Before Death* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

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—Alicia Ostriker

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But we don't disappear:
Not into the breeze: it brushes
against the pale sides of our arms
(rustle of dry leaf against wood, quick suckle
of an inhale, cool shearing of cracks)—

Granted, this is not a world that keeps us.

Granted, there are some sadnesses
in which I do not long for God.



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The Writer's News

NEA Takes Shakespeare on the Road

Betty Adcock and Carolyn Kizer Win 2003 Poets' Prize. Betty Adcock and Carolyn Kizer have been named co-winners of the 2003 Poets' Prize, judged by a committee of 20 poets from across the nation. They will share the $3,000 prize and give a reading at the Nicholas Roerich Museum in Manhattan, New York. The winning books were Adcock's *Intervale: New and Selected Poems* (Louisiana State University Press) and Kizer's *Cool, Calm & Collected: Poems* (Copper Canyon Press). Adcock is Writer-in-Residence at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina, and also teaches at the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers. Kizer is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize. There was a tie for runner-up between Michael McFee for *Earthly* and Greg Williamson for *Errors in the Script*. The Poets' Prize is given annually for the best book of poetry by an American citizen published in the previous year. The prize is jointly funded by the 20 poets who constitute the committee of judges and by the Nicholas Roerich Museum. Previous winners include Adrienne Rich, Maxine Kumin, Philip Booth, and Wendell Berry. Poets or publishers interested in submitting books of poetry published in 2002 to one or more judges for next year's prize may obtain information from Daniel Entin at the Nicholas Roerich Museum, phone: (212) 864-7752; fax: (212) 864-7704. Deadline: Aug. 15, 2003.



Carolyn Kizer

NEA to Take Shakespeare on the Road. Poet Dana Gioia, who was appointed chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts in January, 2003, proposed to launch "the largest theatrical tour of Shakespeare in American history." He made this proposal during the National Endowment for the Arts budget address on March 13. Of the $117.4 million budget, $17 million would be directed to the agency's Challenge America Program. The "Shakespeare in American Communities" initiative would be implemented in partnership with Arts Midwest, a regional nonprofit organization in Minneapolis and would reach high-school students in local communities, which would be visited by the touring companies.

Winners of 2003 Iowa Short Fiction Awards Announced. Ryan Harty is the winner of the 2003 John Simmons Short Fiction Award for his debut collection *Bring Me Your Saddest Arizona*. Beth Helms's *American Wives* is the winner of the 2003 Iowa Short Fiction Award. The recipients were selected by Jayne Anne Phillips. Ryan Harty, a graduate of UC Berkeley, received an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford. Harty's stories have been published in numerous literary magazines, including the *Missouri Review* and *Tin House*, and have received the Henfield-Transatlantic Review Award. He currently lives in San Francisco and teaches fiction at Stanford University. Beth Helms graduated from the University of Maryland and has recently received an MFA from Vermont College. She grew up in the Middle East and Europe and currently lives in New York. The short fiction awards are given annually to a first collection of fiction in English and are administered through the Iowa Writers' Workshop. The honors are national in scope and have been given since 1969. The John Simmons Short Fiction Award (named for the first director of the University of Iowa Press) was created in 1988 to complement the existing Iowa Short Fiction Award. The short fiction award winners will be published by the University of Iowa Press in October 2003. For more information, visit the Web site <http://www.uiowapress.org>.

Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition Winner Announced. This year's winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets competition is Loren Goodman's *Famous Americans*. Poet W.S. Merwin chose the manuscript from among more than 600 submissions. This was Merwin's last selection as judge. Goodman graduated from Columbia University with an AB in philosophy in 1991, and went on to study at the University of Arizona (MFA, poetry) and SUNY Buffalo (MA, English literature). He is currently pursuing PhD degrees at SUNY Buffalo (English literature) and Kobe University (sociology). The Yale Series of Younger Poets competition is the oldest annual literary award in the U.S. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.yale.edu/yup/subjects/poetry.html#comp>.

Shenandoah Awards Annual Prizes. *Shenandoah, The Washington and Lee University Review*, announced the winners of its 2002 fiction, essay, and poetry prizes. Latha Viswanathan of Houston, Texas, was awarded the $1,000 Goodheart Prize for Fiction for her story, "Cool Wedding," which appeared in *Shenandoah* Volume 52/2. Her stories have appeared previously in *Shenandoah*, *Story Quarterly*, and *Other Voices*. The judge for the prize was Alyson Hagy. Rebecca McClanahan of New York was the winner of the $500 Thomas H. Carter Prize for the Essay for "The Van Angels," which appeared in *Shenandoah* Volume 52/4. The judge was Judith Yarnall. Her work has appeared in *The Best American Essays* and *The Best American Poetry* anthologies. Aimee Nezhukumatathil of Fredonia, New York, is the recipient of the $1,000 James Boatwright III Prize for Poetry for her poem "Small Murders" published in *Shenandoah*, volume 52/1. The judge was Alice Friman. Nezhukumatathil's work has appeared in the *Southern Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Prairie Schooner*.

Michael Palma Receives the 2002 Raiziss/de Palchi Fellowship. The Academy of American Poets announced that Michael Palma has been selected as the recipient of the 2002 Raiziss/de Palchi Fellowship. This $20,000 prize, which is awarded every other year for a translation of modern Italian poetry, is given to enable an American translator to travel, study, or otherwise advance a significant work-in-progress. The award will allow Palma to complete his translation of the selected poems of Giovanni Raboni. He also receives a six-week residency at the American Academy in Rome. The judges for the award were Alfredo de Palchi, Dana Gioia, and Rosanna Warren. Michael Palma has published one full-length collection of poems, *A Fortune in Gold* (Gradiva, 2000), and two poetry chapbooks, *Antibodies* (Somers Rocks, 1997), and *The Egg Shape* (Archival, 1972). He has published translations of more than 150 Italian poems in a number of journals and anthologies. He has published translations of nine modern and contemporary Italian poets. In January 2002, his fully rhymed translation of Dante's *Inferno* was published by W.W. Norton & Co. The Raiziss/de Palchi Translation Awards Fund was established by a bequest of $400,000 to the New York Community Trust by Sonia Raiziss Giop, a poet, translator, and long-time editor of the literary magazine *Chelsea*. The Trust has selected the Academy to administer the awards. In addition to the fellowship, the awards include a $5,000 book prize, given in odd-numbered years for the translation into English of a significant work of modern Italian poetry. Publishers may submit books published anytime in the past (not necessarily in the last year), but only books by living translators are eligible. Self-published books are not accepted. The deadline for submissions to the 2003 Raiziss/de Palchi Book Prize is November 1, 2003. To receive the guidelines, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Academy, or visit the Web site at: <http://www.poets.org>. The competition for the next fellowship will take place in 2004. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.poets.org>.

Texas Institute of Letters Awards. The Texas Institute of Letters announced 14 awards, including the $6,000 Jesse H. Jones Award for Fiction, which was given to Rick Bass for *Hermit's Story* (Houghton Mifflin); the $1,000 Steven Turner Award for Best First Work of Fiction won by Lisa Schamess for *Borrowed Light* (SMU Press); the $5,000 Carr P. Collins Award for Best Book of Nonfiction given to Ray Gonzalez for *The Underground Heart: A Return to a Hidden Landscape* (University of Arizona Press); the $5,000 Best Book of Poetry Award that went to Reginald Gibbons for *It's Time* (LSU Press); the $1,000 Natalie Ornish Poetry Award for Best First Book of Poetry won by Dan Rifenburgh for *Advent* (Waywiser Press).

Crystal Bacon Awarded 2003 A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. Crystal Bacon is the 2003 A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize winner for her first collection of poems, *My(th)op(eo)ia*. Bacon will receive a $1,500 honorarium and book publication by BOA Editions, Ltd. in the A. Poulin, Jr. New Poets of America Series. The prize was judged by Stephen Dunn. Bacon's poetry has been published by the *Ontario Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Marlboro Review*, and *Antigonish Review*. The prize is annually open to poets who haven't published a full-length book collection of poetry yet. The finalists were *Love Songs for the Unparticular* by G.C. Waldrep and *The 45th Parallel* by Geri Doran. BOA Editions will be accepting manuscripts for the third annual A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize between August 1 and November 30, 2003. Guidelines will be announced on <http://www.boaeditions.org> later this year.

Suzanne Greenberg 23rd Winner of Drue Heinz Prize. West Coast author Suzanne

Greenberg has won the 2003 Drue Heinz Literature Prize, which honors collections of short stories. The prize carries a cash award of $15,000. Greenberg's manuscript *Speed-Walk and Other Stories* was selected from nearly 300 entries and will be published this fall by the University of Pittsburgh Press, which administers the award. The judge for this year's award was Rick Moody. Greenberg, associate professor of English at California State University in Long Beach, teaches creative writing. She is co-author of *Everyday Creative Writing: Planning for Gold in the Kitchen Sink*. Her fiction, essays, and poetry have appeared in numerous publications, including *Mississippi Review*, the *Washington Post Magazine*, and *West Branch*. She earned an MFA in creative writing from the University of Maryland. Established in 1980 and endowed by the Drue Heinz Trust since 1995, the Drue Heinz Literature Prize recognizes and supports writers of short fiction. Authors who have published a book-length collection of fiction or at least three short stories or novellas are eligible. Manuscripts are judged anonymously by nationally known writers. For more information, contact Maria Sticco, at (412) 383-2493; e-mail: <mes5@pitt.edu>.



Suzanne Greenberg

AWP

2003 Prague Summer Program Winners

Congratulations to the 2003 AWP/Prague Summer Program's Fiction, Poetry, and Creative Nonfiction Winners. The winners were selected from 436 entries (187 in fiction, 197 in Poetry, and 52 in Creative Nonfiction). The Summer Program Fellowships include support for tuition and accommodations (which normally cost $2,795). The winners were selected by the AWP Board of Directors.

Fiction Winner

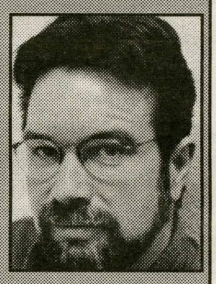


Scott Kaukonen

Scott Kaukonen is presently a student in the PhD program in creative writing at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has an undergraduate degree for Hope College and an MFA from the University of Arizona. He is finishing a collection of short stories and is at work on a novel.

Poetry Winner

John O'Connor's poetry has appeared in *DoubleTake*, *Columbia*, *Sycamore Review*, *Poet Lore*, *MARGIE*, and others. He was a finalist in this year's Nation/Discovery contest. Also a performing songwriter and folksinger, he has recorded on the Flying Fish, Collector, and Chroma labels. He works as a union organizer for the New York State Nurses Association in New York City.

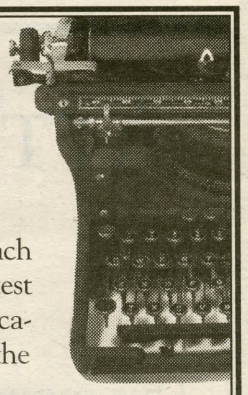


John O'Connor

Nonfiction

The nonfiction winner will be announced shortly on our Web site. Please go to <awpwriter.org> and click on contests.

AWP Helps Writers!



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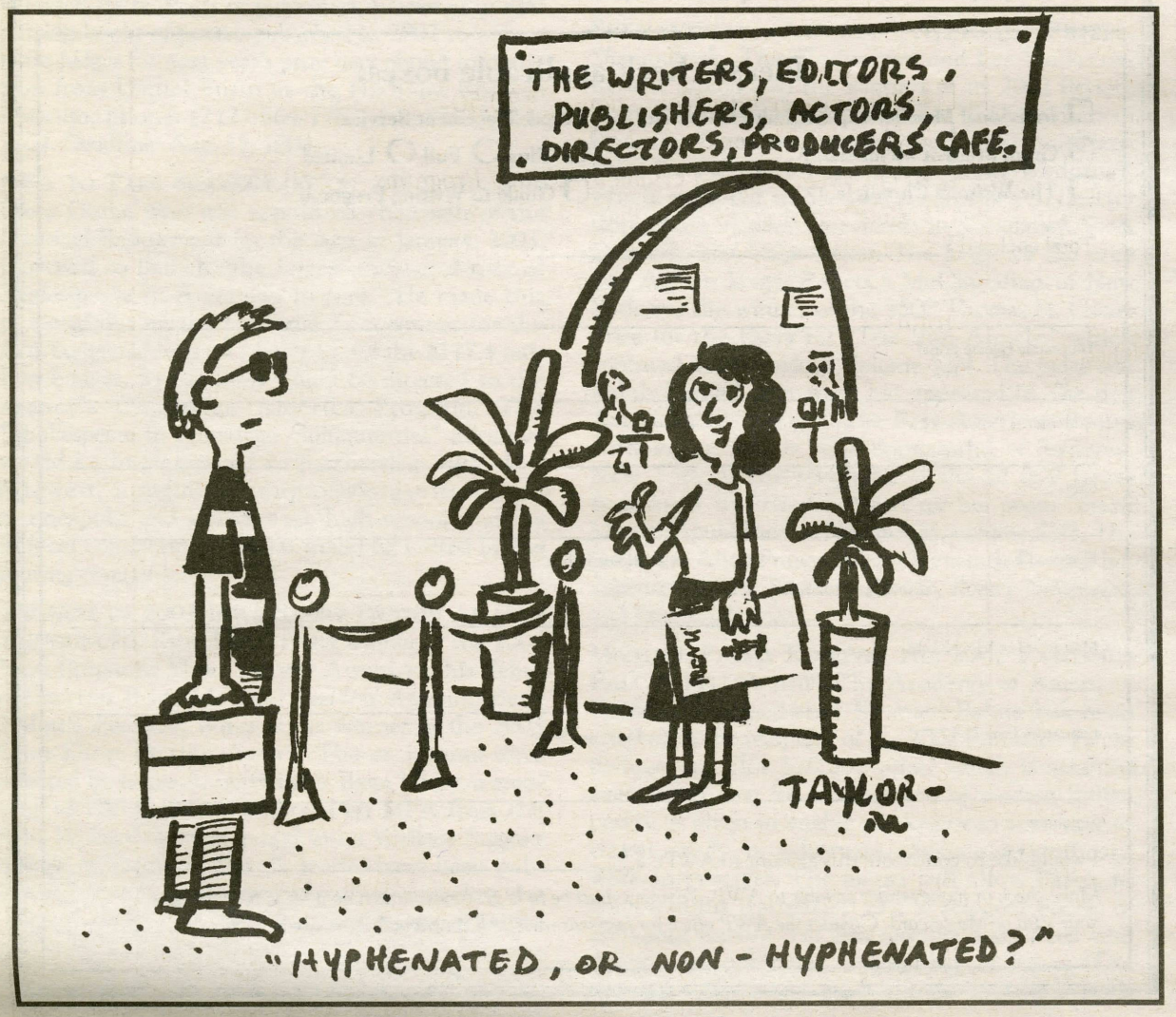

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If we can revive poetry this way, we can surely do it for all the arts."

—*from "Dana Gioia Making Arts His Business" an interview by Frank Rizzo,* The Hartford Courant, *April 6, 2003.*

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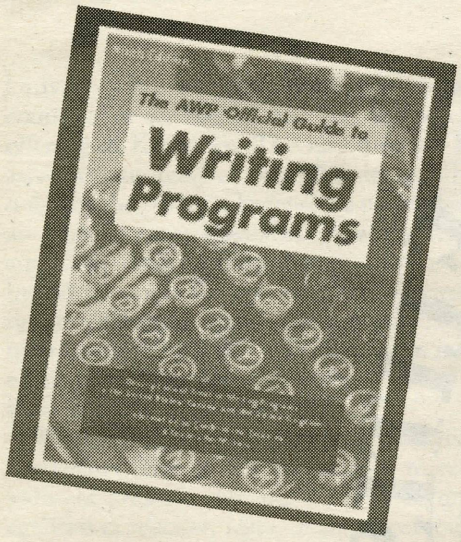

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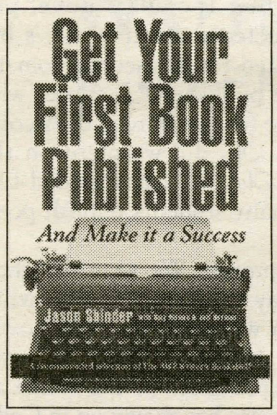

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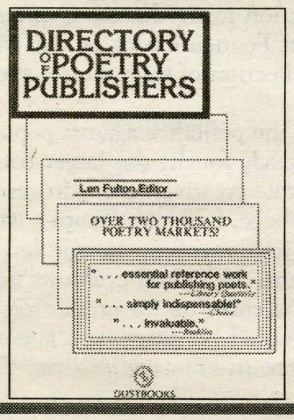

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Of Blockheads and Elitists



by Hal Blythe & Charlie Sweet

For years we have led secret lives, been afraid to face our fellow professors, and hidden our bibliographies deep within the ivy-covered halls of academia, but now it's time to come out of our towers. It's time to confess.

We write popular fiction for the mass market. We're proud of it. And we are not alone. Hasn't Joyce Carol Oates admitted to writing mysteries as Rosamond Smith? Didn't Kingsley Amis supplement his *Lucky Jim* royalties as the worthy successor to Ian Fleming as James Bond's chronicler? Edgar Allan Poe wrote brilliantly insightful psychological studies, but pandered to the Gothic crowd nurtured on *Blackwood's* magazine. Faulkner and Fitzgerald added to their credits by screenwriting. Maya Angelou pens sentiments for Hallmark. Even Shakespeare delighted the pit at The Globe.

Over our doorway bold letters proclaim BIG BOOKS BRING BIG BUCKS, and a sign on our door reminds students that Dr. Samuel Johnson once admonished, "Sir, no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money." And to compound matters (and the interest on our savings accounts), in our creative writing courses we not only allow students to write popfic, but we actually show them how as well as the distinction between popular and so-called "serious" or "literary fiction."

We've never understood why in a great society that advocates diversity and a smaller university culture that preaches academic freedom such a prejudice exists against popular writing and its teaching. D.W. Fenza, the Executive Director of the AWP, perhaps best formulates this bias when he decries magazines such as *The Writer* and *Writer's Digest* "that cater to those for whom writing is a fashion accessory or hobby" and expresses a preference for "fine writing" or "Serious literature… one of the great refuges away from the vanity of celebrity culture, the shallowness of the entertainment industry, and the unbearable marketable crassness of being."[1] Have you checked out some of the most heavily used creative writing handbooks in college courses? In *Writing Fiction* Janet Burroway condescendingly assumes that "it's understood that college workshops are for people who want to learn to write literary fiction."[2]

Not at our college, Janet.

Maybe it's time to rethink what students are taught under the umbrella of creative writing. Maybe the theories that underpin the aforementioned elitist stance against popular writing need to be reexamined. Maybe we need to ask why we have creative writing in the first place.

Like a lot of schools in America today, Eastern Kentucky University (where we teach) is a regional university whose students are not necessarily the brightest and the best. Although the sign at the gate does not say EKU Tech or EKU Trade School, the truth is we are not a liberal arts institution, and most of our students come to college for one reason, to help them get a good job. We find it entirely consistent with this goal and our University's mission statement that perhaps as teachers we can show them how to write, enjoy it, and make a little money on the side. We never pretend to our students that they are going to become bestselling authors; in fact, we explain in the first class they have a greater chance of winning the Kentucky Lottery, that the average "salary" of a writer in America is under $5,000, and that most screenwriters are unemployed. Nonetheless, we tell them, you might be able to learn something about writing, get something published, and make a little money on the side if you get through this class (we also explain that students may wish to become serious writers, and this class will work just as well for them). Regardless of their reason for being in the class, our purpose remains the same: to provide a nurturing atmosphere and to guide them to the most effective use of their talent.

Over the years we have been successful. This spring one of our summer creative writing conference students is having her first (popular) novel published. Last year we directed a creative thesis by a woman who has contracted for her second romance novel. Another graduate publishes P.I. stories when he's not working full time for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Oh, did we mention that Silas House, who wrote *Clay's Quilt*, attended EKU and that we have had many students publish poetry in literary magazines?

We practice what we preach. We were the ghostwriters for Brett Halliday in the early '80s, which meant that every month we wrote the lead novella for *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*. Over 50 how-to articles of ours have been published by *The Writer* and *Writer's Digest*. But our poetry has shown up in *College English* and our short fiction in the *Kansas Quarterly*. Last fall the Jesse Stuart Foundation came out with our *Bloody Ground*, a collection of short stories about the Kentucky area.

One reason we detest the prejudice against popular writing is that we've already fought the larger battle against those who denigrate creative writing in general. When we were in college, finding a creative writing class was difficult, and enrolling in one led to smirks from fellow students and raised eyebrows from professors. When Charlie came up for promotion in the mid-'70s, he was denied because—you guessed it—his publications were in creative writing. Our

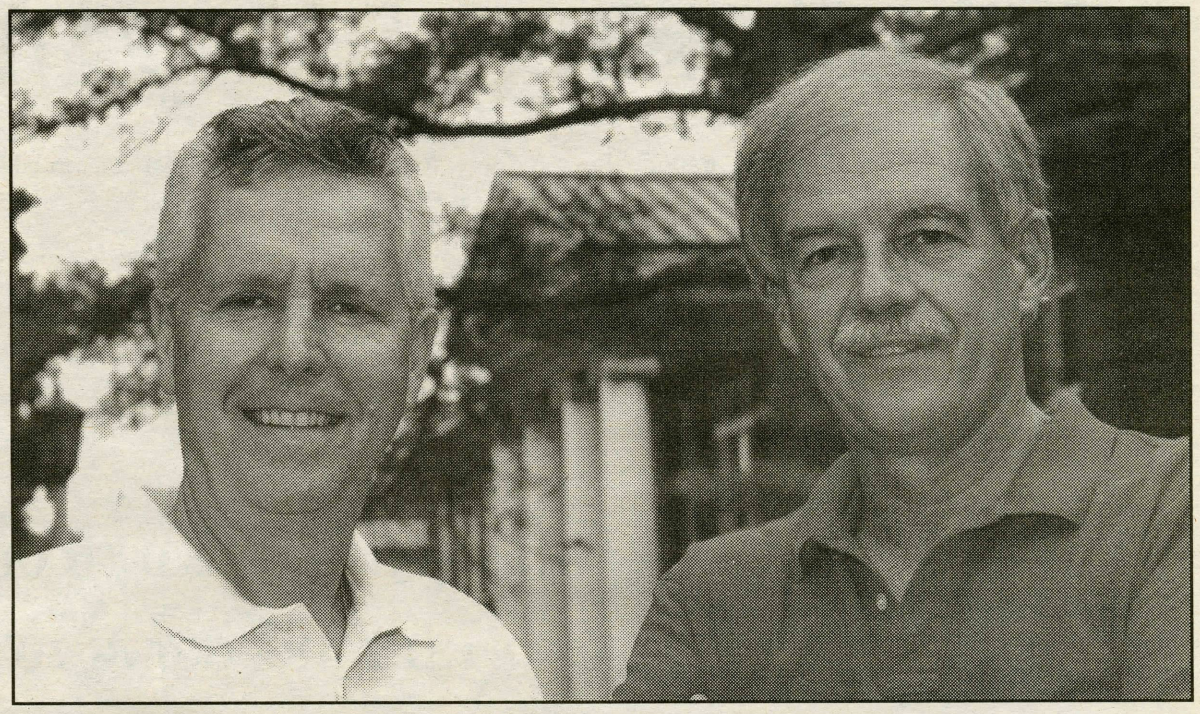
---

Hal Blythe *and* ***Charlie Sweet*** *are Foundation Professors of English at Eastern Kentucky University, where they have been teaching and writing for a combined 64 years. Creative writing instructors, they have published some 650 items (both creative and critical), including six books running the gamut from pedagogy to* Bloody Ground, *a collection of Kentucky-based short stories.*

University has the same number of creative writing courses that we had in the '70s, the second smallest offering in Kentucky. The last time we hired a creative writing teacher was 30 years ago, Hal, and he only got the position because he positioned himself as an 18th Century specialist. Now, as we expand our curriculum and open up to new creative writing hires (small victories for our side), from where does the negative pressure come? The academy itself and organizations such as AWP that often seem more interested in promoting jobs for authors of serious writing than in creative writing itself.

When Charlie was a grad student at Florida State University, one of the institutions to recognize the value of creative writing, he learned under a truly egalitarian teacher, Mike Shaara, and four of us from that class have made significant money over our careers from creative writing (e.g. Jean Lorrah, Mickey Friedman). But even FSU suffered a divide between serious and popular pursuits. One day in the late '60s Charlie walked into the Mecca, a campus hangout, and sat down with Dr. Harry Morris, who at that time was bragging about having an article accepted by *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Finally, unable to stand the braggadocio any longer, Charlie announced to the group he had a piece accepted on Shakespeare by *TV Guide* that would be read by more people than saw all of Shakespeare's plays during the Bard's lifetime.

We're certainly not pushing a popular fiction agenda. Far from it! Much of our critical as well as creative energy is directed at serious/mainstream/sophisticated literature. Our critical bibliography includes pieces on Coleridge, Browning, Ibsen, Hemingway, Eliot, and Mason, and we have 15 articles/notes on John Cheever alone. Our 60-plus combined years of teaching writing about serious literature not only gives us an appreciation for the art, but also allows us the freedom to appreciate the road not taken by most in our discipline.



Hal Blythe & Charlie Sweet

What we object to is the attitude espoused by Fenza in his section entitled "We Happy Few," as he claims proudly (and with the elitist wink in his pen) after noting that 63 of the top-selling books of the '90s were by six authors, "Chances are neither you or I have read more than one or two books by these brand name authors,"[3] as if that distinction constitutes some type badge of literary honor. A writer, popular or serious, could learn much from such bestsellers, as one could from the likes of John D. MacDonald, James Lee Burke, or Clive Cussler.

We begin every creative writing course or workshop with one cardinal rule: popular and serious are not (or should not be) evaluative terms. In his "The Art of Fiction," Henry James insisted that "We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnee."[4] In the context of our discussion, we could translate this

(continued on next page)

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Blythe & Sweet

continued from page 23

"advice" into an admonition to judge individual works on their merits rather than discussing them out of hand solely because they were written by one of those damnable "brand name authors." We might go so far as to say that Fenza still has 61 books left to read before rushing to judgement.

Years ago we received a letter from John D. MacDonald (yes, he had much to teach us) in which he called for all writers to band together in support of each other: "Every writer who has any sense will help people who are serious about it and who know how much work it will be. The reason, of course, is that when there is enough good writing, then there will be more reading. And that will help everybody." We want to second that emotion. Rather than snipping at each other from opposite sides of the fence ("Those so-called 'serious writers' bore me with that angst upon angst struggle fiction" or "Those genre people sell their souls for fleeting fame and filthy lucre"), we need to see value in all writing. Face it—those who honor creative writing are already in the minority without beating up on one another.

After all, why do we suffer the pains of writing in the first place? For some, the act is doubtless therapeutic; they learn about themselves and their place in the world—and that is enough. For others, writing is a calling; they commit themselves to teach valuable lessons about life through their work. And for still others, writing is an act of the ego; they feel they have something to say from which others will gain enjoyment or benefit. Regardless, most writers want others to read their work, and our job as teachers and critics is to encourage these voices and to help them find proper avenues for their talent whether in serious or popular publications, whether the *Atlantic Monthly* or *Ellery Queen's Mystery* magazine.

As for us, we will continue to write and teach both serious and popular writing with no shame or second thoughts.

But just as obviously, the battle against Dr. Morris and the elitists isn't over.

AWP

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2. Burroway, Janet. *Writing Fiction*. 5th ed. New York: Longman, 2000.

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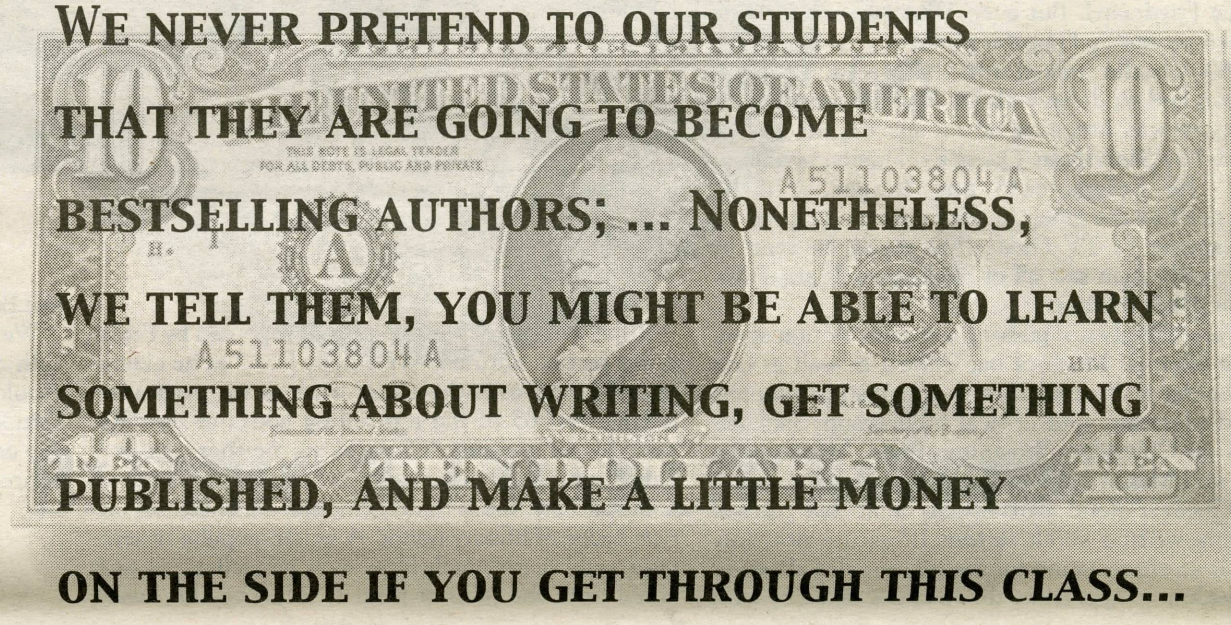
4. James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction." *Anthology of American Literature II*. 7th ed. Ed. George McMichael. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000. 642-56.



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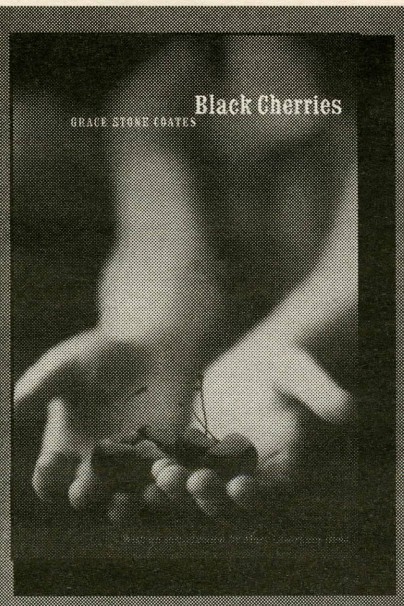

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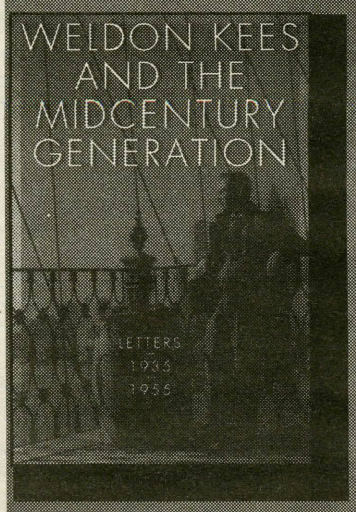

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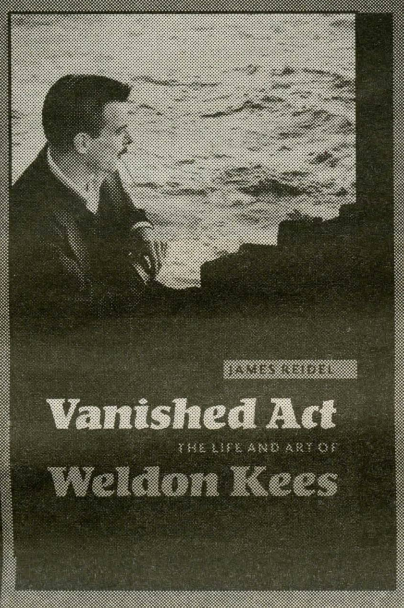

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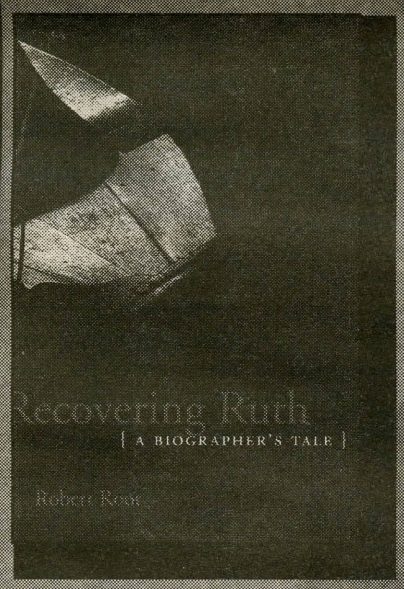

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An Interview with

by Tom DeMarchi

Philip Levine was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1928. After attending Wayne State University, he worked various factory jobs and traveled before attending the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Levine settled in Fresno, California where he taught on and off at California State University, Fresno until his retirement. Since his first collection, *On The Edge* (1963), Levine has published 17 books of poetry, an autobiography (*The Bread of Time*, 1994), a collection of interviews (*Don't Ask*, 1981), and edited *The Essential Keats* (1987). He also co-translated and edited *Off the Map: Selected Poems of Gloria Fuertes* (with Ada Long, 1984) and *Tarumba: Selected Poems of Jaime Sabines* (with Ernesto Trejo, 1979). Over the years, Levine has received the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize from Poetry, the Frank O'Hara Prize, and two Guggenheim Foundation fellowships. In 2000 he was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. His poetry collections include *The Simple Truth* (1994), which won the Pulitzer Prize; *What Work Is* (1991), which won the National Book Award; *Ashes: Poems New and Old* (1979), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Book Award; *7 Years From Somewhere* (1979), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *The Names of the Lost* (1975), which won the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. His latest collection, *The Mercy*, was published in 1999 by Alfred A. Knopf. Philip Levine lives in both Fresno and New York City with his wife Frannie.

Tom DeMarchi: It's my understanding that you began with aspirations of wanting to write fiction, then you moved on to writing poetry. Is this accurate?

Philip Levine: No. I began with poetry. Poetry was always there, even before fiction, although there was a time when fiction was dominant.

DeMarchi: Did you write short stories? A novel?

Levine: Yes to both. I wrote I don't know how many short stories. There were several that I liked, but I threw many away just as I do with poems.

DeMarchi: Did you publish any?

Levine: Yes, at Wayne University. And then when I was 24 or 25, I started to write a novel. I don't know how much of it I wrote, but my sense is I wrote close to half of it. I was working full time from four in the afternoon until midnight. I'd come home, sleep for six or seven hours, and have two or three hours a day to write. Sometimes more. I'd been going about my life this way for about a year when my first marriage came apart. I gave up my apartment, quit my job, bought a good used car—a '48 Pontiac—and hit the road. I was living in Cambridge when I got a letter from another Detroit poet, Paul Petrie, who was getting out of the army and planned to go to Iowa. Robert Lowell was scheduled to teach there, and I decided to go. When I arrived in beginning September there was no money for me—they'd awarded me a grant in fiction the year before, but I hadn't showed up—and now I was on my own. The fiction workshop did not impress me—it did not have the talent of the poetry workshop or anyone like Lowell at the helm—so I gradually stopped going.

DeMarchi: So you were a member of the program but weren't officially enrolled in classes because you couldn't afford to pay for them?

Levine: I was officially nothing.

DeMarchi: That actually jumps ahead to one of my questions because there are two myths about Phil Levine and Iowa. You attending without being enrolled is one of them. So it's not a myth; it's a reality.

Levine: I know that first semester I was enrolled in Lowell's workshop. I paid for that course in a number of ways. I had a library card, which I believed I needed and certainly used. The second semester I know I did not enroll in anything and attended both of Berryman's classes religiously. I paid for nothing and got everything. The library card was good for the academic year, and I had what I needed. That second semester I stopped writing fiction, and by and large I haven't looked back. In the early '60s, maybe '63 or '64, when we were ratcheting up things in Vietnam, but before it escalated into the nightmare it became, I got the idea for a book about draft dodgers during the Korean War, so I started writing another novel. The Korean War was the war of my early manhood. I probably wrote half of it. At about page one hundred and eighty I got a terrific idea for a poem. I stopped writing the novel and I never went back.

DeMarchi: Do you still have those pages?

Levine: I doubt it.

DeMarchi: And that was it for fiction.

Levine: I've written some short stories since.

DeMarchi: Have they been published?

Levine: Yeah.

DeMarchi: I'm primarily familiar with your poetry and your autobiography [*The Bread of Time*]. I happen to think that you're a terrific nonfiction writer, a great storyteller.

Levine: Thank you.

DeMarchi: This shows up in your poetry as well. One of things that draws me, and I'm sure draws many people, to your poetry is its narrative quality. It's obviously a decision on your part to be a narrative writer, but I think you have a gift for it, too. Am I correct in assuming that you're drawn to narrative because it comes naturally to you?

Levine: I grew up in a storytelling house. My grandfather was a great storyteller. My father died before I could remember hearing the stories he probably told. My mother, too, was a fine storyteller. But my grandfather was better, less restrained by facts. My first poems are not narrative, and they're just terrible like everyone's first poems.

DeMarchi: Are these the first poems you ever wrote or your first published poems?

Levine: The first poems I wrote. The first published poems are pretty bad, too. Some of my favorite poets are storytellers. And I think a lot of the impulse toward fiction wound up in poetry. What attracted me to poetry when I began reading it a lot was not just the language but also the imagery. That's such a

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Tom DeMarchi *earned his MFA from Florida International University. He currently lives and works in Cortland, NY.*



Philip Levine

part of fiction too. You know, you characterize people through their possessions, their looks, their dress, everything. In a poem you have much less room to go about this, but still you want crucial details to be there. I'd say some poets like Whitman or Gerald Stern or Allen Ginsberg are maximal poets. They get as much as they can in there, and when it works the poem's fabulous. I'm much more of a minimalist in this regard. I want to create the illusion that there is *more there than there actually is.* In writers like Katherine Ann Porter—who was one of my early models—and Fitzgerald I found dialogue that was both speech and art, and both could paraphrase speech and avoid all the excesses of actual talk and still give you the quality of voice that defined the character. I remember Lowell prompting the class to read good prose—he mentioned Edmund Wilson by name—and telling us we could learn a great deal about narrative and characterization. I suppose he was also telling us there was a lot we needed to learn.

DeMarchi: This economy of language that Fitzgerald and Porter used... can you tell me about other fiction writers who influenced your language and imagery. And can you tell me how they've influenced you? Because the 20th century writing style, at least in America, is very much a product of Hemingway and the minimalist school, and then there's Fitzgerald. But there's also Faulkner, who I would call a maximalist. You say you lean more toward the minimalists. Why?

Levine: I don't feel our best fiction leans heavily either way. I'm a great lover of Faulkner and a great lover of Hemingway. I recently reread *A Farewell to Arms* and was thunderstruck by how beautiful the prose was, at times how full, and how much more humor there was that did not call attention to itself. I haven't reread Faulkner lately, and the last time I did—maybe 10 years ago—I was disappointed. I found a paperback of *Pylon*, not the first published version but the version Faulkner had sent to his editor.

DeMarchi: You're disappointed in the newer one, the original submission, the one Faulkner intended?

Levine: Yeah. I probably would have been disappointed in the other one. The version he intended was more racist than my recollection of the other. Maybe that's why the editors changed it. In the end the book was just as silly. It was never a great book so forget it. I have the belief that if I were to go back and read *The Hamlet* again I'd be just as wowed as I was the first time. Chekhov is a writer I have loved, and I have always admired him because he could write such terrible stories, some of the worst. A year ago I was at a place where I ran out of books, and there was a huge English edition of his stories. I read it all. Every second story was genius and the others were crap. I was amazed. He reminded me of Hardy in this way, whose poems are by turns ordinary and brilliant. What they probably had in common was an absence of the need or the ability to revise; they just published all of it and being marvels, half the work is superb.

I got the idea for a book about draft dodgers during the Korean War, so I started writing another novel. The Korean War was the war of my early manhood. I probably wrote half of it. At about page one hundred and eighty I got a terrific idea for a poem. I stopped writing the novel and I never went back.

DeMarchi: I once heard that Chekhov wrote a story a day for a while.

Levine: Another writer who made a huge impression on me was John Dos Passos. *U.S.A.*—I probably read the whole thing three times. But back then my favorite writer was Tolstoy—*War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* and the novellas. I don't know how I'd feel about them now. A couple of years ago the National Book Foundation wanted me to give some kind of a talk on the books that influenced me. We chose the short novels of Tolstoy. Rereading them I discovered they'd rewritten themselves. There were actually scenes that weren't there and that I'd carried as touchstones for 50 years. I read "The Cossacks" twice looking for scenes he never wrote. I don't know how it happened.

DeMarchi: That's a mark of minimalism, isn't it? The reader filling in the white spaces?

Levine: The books had improved with age.

DeMarchi: Maybe he needed you around instead of Mrs. Tolstoy to fill in those spaces, to add those scenes.

Levine: She had the patience with him that I wouldn't.

DeMarchi: Are there any contemporary writers—fiction or poetry—who are... I don't know how to phrase this because I'd hate to think that you're beyond the point of influence, but I think that you have so solidly found your own voice at this point in your life that you're not as impressionable as you once were. Are there any writers today who strike you as particularly powerful or talented or

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Levine

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people who are going to have the same type of impact as the writers of your youth?

Levine: Certainly on the young, but probably not for me. I think there's a period in your life when you stumble upon books and for the next six or seven years can't get enough of them. Although later, when I was in my late 30s I found Garcia Marquez—the stories and the great novel—and thought, "My God, this is a whole new world," and he led me back to Juan Rulfo and forward to a host of others, to this amazing invention—Latin American fiction. Who else can I think of? The best book that I've read in the last two or three years was *Our Mutual Friend* by Dickens, a book I'd never read before. The other day I was at some lunch thing sitting next to Jamaica Kincaid, and we were talking about writers we loved, and I said exactly that about Dickens' book. She jumped up; she was so pleased with me because *Dombey and Son* was the best book she'd read in a year. We promised to read each other's favorite. There are living authors. Philip Roth is a writer whose work I loved and then got impatient with. For me he's come back better than ever. I really think it's just astonishing that a guy his age could do what he's done with those three books, each one defining an American decade.

...and there was a huge English edition of his [Chekhov's] stories. I read it all. Every second story was genius, and the others were crap. I was just amazed. He reminded me of Hardy in this way, whose poems are by turns ordinary and brilliant. What they probably had in common was an absence of the need or the ability to revise; they just published all of it and being marvels, half the work is superb.

DeMarchi: There's *American Pastoral* that came out recently, and then there was *I Married a Communist*...

Levine: *I Married A Communist.*

DeMarchi: He just released a new book, *The Dying Animal.*

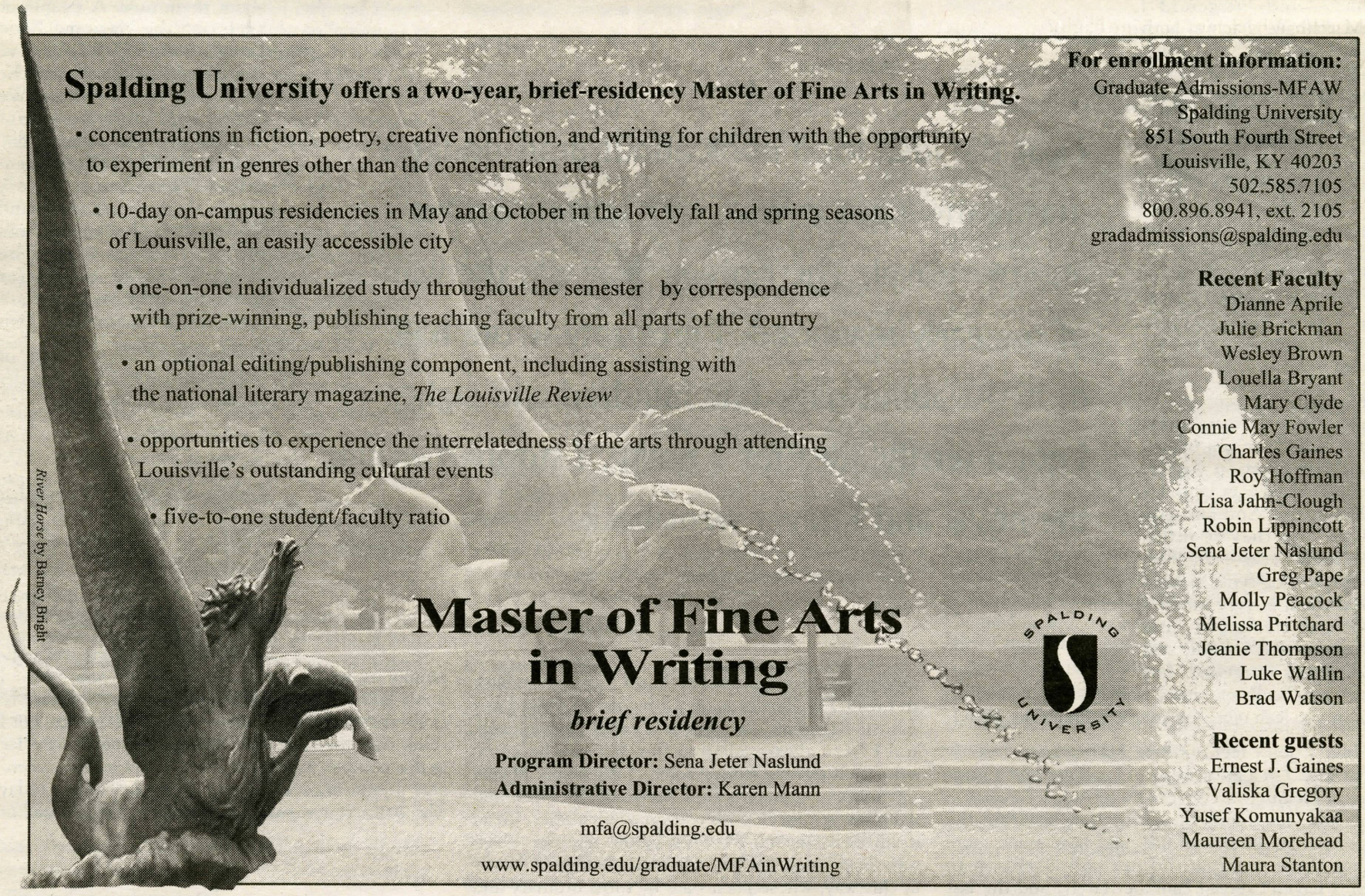
Levine: I have not read this new one. I'm thinking of the two you named and *The Human Stain*, which is the closest to the present and deals with various idiocies—like political correctness and racism—in American life. All three books are so rich, painful, and at times funny. I can't think of anyone else on the American scene writing that well now. For airplanes, trains, you name it I love Elmore Leonard. When he is at his best he is a writer. His dialogue has influenced the way we hear.

DeMarchi: Unbelievable dialogue. So quick paced. Reading his books is like lightning.

Levine: Yeah.

DeMarchi: Do you also read a lot of poetry? I wonder because I talk to fiction writers who say that for inspiration, before they sit down to write, they read poetry to get in the mood of writing visually and getting images, and then their stories often emerge from the images. I'm wondering if you as a poet do the opposite and read fiction, get the stories and then the images spring from the stories? Do you read other poets?

Levine: I read a lot of poetry, and I certainly have favorites. I don't want to get



into that. I'll forget somebody.

DeMarchi: You can talk about dead poets. Only dead poets.

Levine: William Carlos Williams and Whitman. I read them all the time. And Hardy. The Italian Cesare Pavese—a wonderful new translation by Geoffrey Brock. Garcia Lorca's *Poet in New York*. Sterling Brown, who isn't nearly as well known as he should be. I'm always diving into Edward Thomas. These are poets I'm reading now. Let me mention some younger poets whom I've discovered, some are poets I should have known because they've been there for a long while, Michael Palmer and Michael Waters; I loved their most recent books. Bruce Smith has been around. I've met him but I'd not read him as seriously as he deserved. His last book is beautiful. And some first books; one by a woman named Natasha Trethewey. I'd never heard of her; her book wowed me. Nick Flynn and Anne Marie Macari; I knew both of them but didn't know what mature poets they were.

DeMarchi: What is it that impresses you about these people?

Levine: The daring. The control. The power. The intensity with which they express their emotions without losing control of the poetry. It's different with each poet. Bruce Smith just possesses a huge, original voice. Trethewey introduced me to a world that I barely knew, Macari did also—because I don't really *know* how a woman sees the world. Another poet I should have been paying more attention to is W.S. DiPiero. I just read his newest. The voice is very powerful and original.

DeMarchi: Do they send them to you for blurbs?

Levine: A lot of them come for blurbs. But I don't write blurbs. I read the poems anyway. If I like them I let the author know.

DeMarchi: Why don't your write blurbs?

Levine: Well, it started quite simply. When I was in my 30s a man whose work I didn't care for wrote and asked for a blurb. I didn't want to turn him down. I didn't want to say, I really don't like your poems. I should have. But I didn't. What I said was, I don't write blurbs. I was about 36 or so. Well, once I hit upon it, it just seemed wonderful. A lot of the people who have asked for blurbs are people I like but whose poems I don't like. It was so much easier than saying, I really don't like your book, or, I think your work is okay. But you can't say, Mr. X is okay and some of his poems are better than others. Those are your true feelings, but you can't put that in a blurb. You have to say... well look at the blurbs they put on books: "Finally we understand the nature of courage and divinity."

DeMarchi: You get pretty nice blurbs, though, don't you?

Levine: Actually, if you look at my books you'll find only one blurb. The rest of the propoganda is snippets culled from reviews. I should not have used the one, but it was so ridiculously over the top I couldn't resist it. My editor said it would help the book sell, *The Simple Truth*.

DeMarchi: It did quite well. It got the Pulitzer.

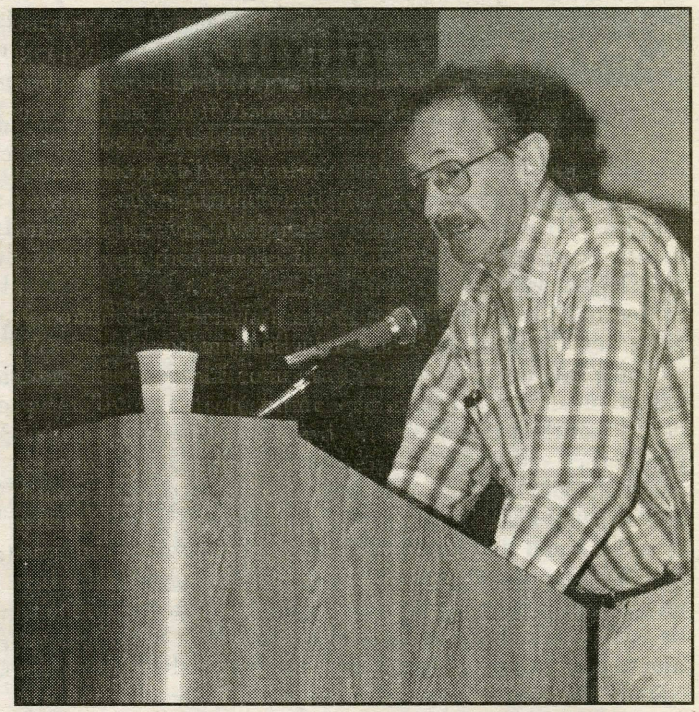
Levine: It got the Pulitzer, so who cares if it sells well.

DeMarchi: I think that helps sales. Plus, they only give the Pulitzer to people who deserve it, right?

Levine: It's about fifty-fifty. In my case they were right on target.

DeMarchi: I want to get back to something you said about Bruce Smith and Natasha Trethewey. You said the thing that impressed you about them was their emotional daring. I see two things happening in a lot of your poems, very often in the same poem. First there's an anger or frustration either with yourself or with others. Then there's a genuine attempt to empathize with others, to understand them. Would you say that's accurate? If so, is that conscious on your part?

Levine: I can't say if it's accurate or not. I know if I looked at my early poems I'd see a lot of anger. I don't know how much is still there in my later poems. I rarely write about people I don't like; the people in my poems are usually those I care for or admire. When I'm angry it's usually because I see these people I love at the mercy of powers without mercy. Sometimes I actually see poetry as a means of giving a small portion of life back to those who've lost their lives. William Maxwell, the great American writer and editor, made me see I was trying to do that. After my friend Larry Levis died, I wrote an article for *The American Poet* to accompany six or seven of his poems. Maxwell read them—he hadn't heard of Levis—and was knocked out by the work and wanted to know how to get Larry's books. Bill was 90 at the time, but



Philip Levine

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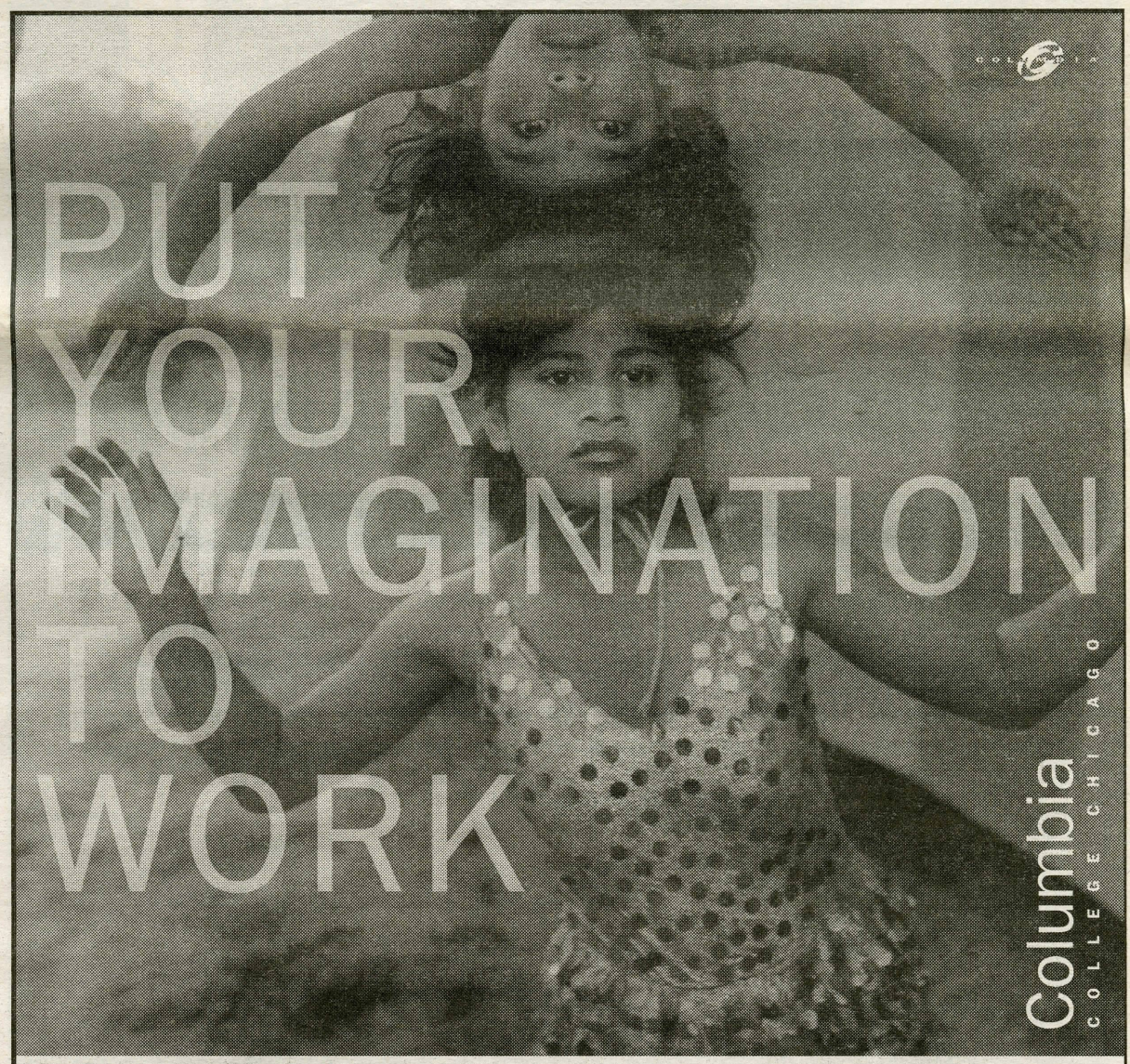

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Levine

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he still read with the enthusiasm of a youngster. A year or so later I was talking with him, and I told him how I'd been given Larry's old fountain pen a month or so before. It had sat around unused and was clogged with ink and wouldn't write, so I took it to my fried Geoff Berliner, the Einstein of fountain pens, and Geoff made it write perfectly. The next morning I sat down on this very chair and decided to launch myself into a Larry poem. Well, it didn't happen. I launched myself all right but into something that turned out to be a Levine poem although the material could have found its way into a Larry poem, and at one point I quoted him. I saw Maxwell a day or so later and told him what happened. He said to me, "Do you see what you're doing, Philip?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm trying to write a poem." "No, no," he said. "You're keeping Larry alive. You don't want him to die." Bill read *Elegy*, Larry's last book, which I edited. "See, you're keeping him in print, you're talking about him and writing about him. It's a way of fighting the fact he's gone." I think he was right.

DeMarchi: What was the name of that poem?

Levine: "Call It Music." It appeared in *Poetry* magazine.

DeMarchi: Will that be in your next book?

Levine: Oh yeah.

DeMarchi: Do you have a book ready to go?

Levine: No. I'm in no hurry.

DeMarchi: I saw Larry Levis read in Fresno in '94 or '95. It was on campus, a small turnout. At Fresno State. The only people who were there were from the creative writing program. And then I heard that within a few months he'd died. He was a student of yours at one point.

Levine: Yes. When he was very young.

DeMarchi: Then he became a friend.

Levine: Yes.

DeMarchi: Are there any other students who became poets whom you admired? Or who became your friends?

Levine: Oh sure. David St. John who lives in LA; we're close friends. Bruce Boston, Greg Pape, Herb Scott, Glover Davis. I'm still close to them although they don't live in Fresno and I don't see that much of them. Kathy Fagan, who teaches at Ohio State but visits Fresno often. Fortunately a number of them stayed in Fresno—Jon Veinberg, Dixie Salazar, Roberta Spear, Jean Janzen, Luis Salinas. Along with Peter Everwine and Chuck Hanzlicek and Connie Hales, we make up a sort of Fresno poetry circle and get together often. Gary Soto and I never really became close, but I admire what he's done with his writing and his life. He's a very generous man. If Lawson Inada lived in Fresno we'd have remained good friends because we share a love of jazz and he has a hell of a collection. I'm really proud of what these people have done, of their dedication to poetry, of their decency as people. I'm sorry to say some of my favorites have died, Larry, Sherley Williams, an amazingly creative woman who wrote terrific poems, stories, novels, and never got to 60; she was so vital and smart. Michael McGuire, who came back to Fresno to die of cancer. Ernesto Trejo—he and I translated Sabines and Neruda together. He was one of the most beautiful people I've ever known, and he wrote such startling poems. I never thought I would outlive these people. Chuck Moulton, who was on the poetry scene forever and organized a terrific reading series that brought poets from everywhere; he died. Recently a youngster, Andreas Montoya; he couldn't have been over 30, a big, adventurous man. I can't believe he's gone. That part has been very tough.

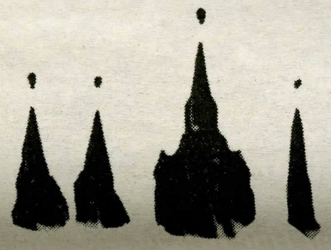
DeMarchi: Do you miss teaching at Fresno State?

Levine: No.

DeMarchi: You teach at NYU now.

Levine: Yeah. Not that much. I'm going to teach this fall at NYU again. The best students I ever had were unquestionably at Fresno.

The way to become a good teacher is to just watch your best teachers. My best teachers... see I'm sort of a bullshitter and flamboyant and unrestrained. Berryman was perfect for me. Lowell was hopeless. A guy named John McGalliard who taught medieval literature at Iowa was fabulous. Leo Kirschbaum at Wayne University was great.



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Vera Dunham, was amazing. An amazing teacher. And I took little things from all of them, or tried to. Sometimes it works, sometimes not. It's how you learn to master anything. You look to the people who inspire you, and out of those gifts that they've given, you build your own particular presence in the classroom. There are no set rules.

DeMarchi: Then why did you not like teaching there?

Levine: Well, I was required to teach too much. I went off to Tufts for seven years because they paid me enough so I could teach two courses a year and survive on it. I just taught in the fall semester and lived on that. At Fresno State I didn't make that much money and I had to teach three courses a semester; when I first started there, I taught four. And then there was the politics of a department. It's just such a big waste of time. Whereas, just moonlighting here at NYU, I avoid that. At Tufts, I wasn't tenured because I only taught half-time. So I had no vote on anything. And I didn't have to go to meetings. At NYU I have nothing to do with the politics of the place. The same was true at Columbia, Vanderbilt.

DeMarchi: And the rest of the time you dedicated to writing poetry?

Levine: Yes. Or prose.

DeMarchi: Could you say whether time spent teaching helped or hindered your poetry? Did it have any effect at all?

Levine: I think it helped. It would have helped more if I had taught fewer courses. If I had only taught, say a literature course in poetry or fiction and a course in poetry writing. My wife once said to me, "You know, you always talk about your classes the same way. For the first couple of weeks you say, 'What a bunch of fucking idiots,' and then about six weeks in you say, 'Some of these kids can really write.' And by the end of the semester you think they're all geniuses. But the truth is, you're your best student." While I'm trying to bring poetry to these students, trying to motivate them, I'm also doing the same for myself. After seven years at Fresno State I went on sabbatical for a year and I wrote much, much more than I had been writing... and so two years later I took off on my own and again wrote a ton. I could see that teaching had been cutting into my time. I've met other gifted—such modesty—and dedicated poets who've told me they hardly write at all during the school year. I stole the time. I didn't want to cheat the students. On the other hand, I didn't want to give them my writing life.

DeMarchi: Somehow you achieved some balance. I remember Steve Yarbrough [who teaches at Fresno State] coming into our fiction class one day and saying, "You have to find time to write everyday, even if it's only for five minutes." He said, "This morning I had office hours for an hour and a half. No one showed up, so I spent that whole time writing, and it's the only time I have all day. I have to go home; I have to see my daughters; I have to see my wife; I have to read stories for class; I have to prepare for class, so I take it where I can get it. Everyday." It sounds as if you did the same thing.

Levine: Pretty much. When I was Steve's age, I did exactly the same thing. After some years at Fresno, I taught only afternoons and nights, and wrote each morning. If I were teaching *Sister Carrie* and I hadn't read it in ten years, I'd tell myself, I'll read it in the car on the way to class. I remember going into a class once and saying—and it was *Sister Carrie*—how does this book start? Students started telling me, summarizing the first one hundred pages. I mean I'd read the book ten times; it was a book I loved. I learned at a certain time in my life that I had to reread the books because my memory was no longer reliable.

DeMarchi: I remember another teacher of mine, Les Standiford from Florida, saying that teaching kept reminding him of the importance of what he was doing. He wanted to practice what he was preaching. He said, "What better job could I have? I come into work and I talk to a group of people who are enthusiastic about what I'm trying to do and what they're trying to do, and I get paid to talk about art. And I get ideas from the students, and they get ideas from me. How much more gratifying can it be?"

Levine: I totally agree. I don't know how many ideas I get from students, but I get their energy. I suppose

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Levine

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they steal my something or other—my smarts or my *experience*. It's not really stealing; it's a sort of a swap.

DeMarchi: Let's go to the classroom. How would a young writer avoid some of the problems young writers encounter? What if a writer is being too verbose or not specific enough? What advice would you give to an aspiring writer who's teaching as well?

Levine: I can talk about what I've seen in my own Fresno State experience. That's where I really was part of a department. Department politics are the biggest trap of all. They waste so much time and in the long run change nothing. You're dealing with people, quite often, who are dedicated to these petty considerations, and can be so Machiavellian that in the long run they win. As far as teaching, being in the classroom itself, how you behave, everyone has to find an ultimate self. Some people are immensely witty, others concise. Some are verbose and they inspire people. There are many kinds of teachers. There's the architect of the poem, and then there's the Bardic voice who excites everyone about poetry. I think by the time someone gets to the role of teaching they have encountered people in classrooms who were their teachers who've given them, by example, notions of what good teaching looks like and what it does. The way to become a good teacher is to just watch your best teachers. My best teachers... see I'm sort of a bullshitter and flamboyant and unrestrained. Berryman was perfect for me. Lowell was hopeless. A guy named John McGalliard who taught medieval literature at Iowa was fabulous. Leo Kirschbaum at Wayne University was great. And a Russian woman who taught Russian literature at Wayne, Vera Dunham, was amazing. An amazing teacher. And I took little things from all of them, or tried to. Sometimes it works, sometimes not. It's how you learn to master anything. You look to the people who inspire you, and out of those gifts that they've given, you build your own particular presence in the classroom. There are no set rules. I've visited classes where professors have conducted meeting in ways I never would have, but their classes were immensely successful.

DeMarchi: How about on a craft level for an aspiring poet? What'll save the would-be poet time? Let's say hypothetically that I feel I have a pretty sophisticated ear for language, and I read the people who are considered important poets, beautiful poets, and I want to write? What advice would you give me?

Levine: Go ahead.

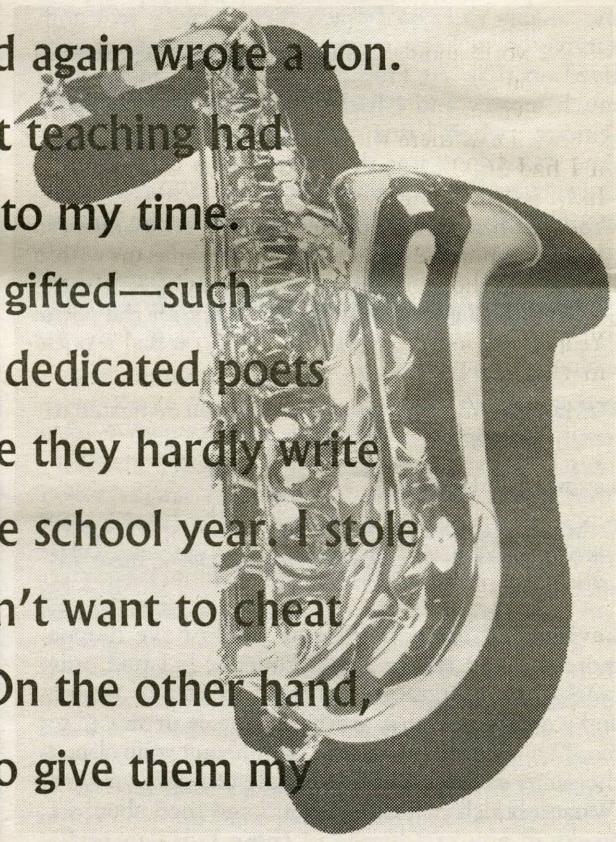
DeMarchi: Just try it?

Levine: What else? Until you bring me something that you've written, I have nothing to say to you. Then when you bring me something and you read it to me and I can hear it, I can say, well you're wrong, you don't have the gift you thought you had. But here are some tips on how you might develop it. Or you might be gifted but you're fucking around so badly that it doesn't show. Until there's something to look at there's no point in making generalities. But once the poem comes at me and it says, "When I awaken the truth of experience dives in the window like a Japanese fighter plane..." I can say, you know, this is horseshit. Once you have something to work with, though, you can talk about the use of the concrete and the use of generalities and what have you.

DeMarchi: In your essay about John Berryman, "Mine Own John Berryman" you describe how he had such a powerful impact on you as a young writer, which makes sense since you said that around the age of 25 or 26 you turned your back on fiction and devoted yourself to poetry. That was when you first encountered Berryman. He as a teacher brought his energy and passion and intelligence to you, and that inspired you. When referring to a sonnet written by Donald Justice, Berryman said it was a "true poem." Earlier in the essay you wrote about how at the time you did not yet know how to trust your imagination. Could you define what a "true poem" is, and could you tell me when a person *knows* to trust his imagination? Because everyone uses his imagination on the first draft, and the first draft can be horseshit. Or am I wrong?

Levine: You're wrong. A lot of times they aren't

...and so two years later I took off on my own and again wrote a ton. I could see that teaching had been cutting into my time. I've met other gifted—such modesty—and dedicated poets who've told me they hardly write at all during the school year. I stole the time. I didn't want to cheat the students. On the other hand, I didn't want to give them my writing life.



using their imagination.

DeMarchi: What are they using?

Levine: Their fancy, as Coleridge would say. *How* do you learn to trust your imagination? I have no idea. I know that *I* do, but I don't know how to tell someone. It isn't like assembling a table made in Sweden—this goes here and that goes there. It's something that comes with experience. You can urge people; you can say: "Let the poem go. Follow it. Don't dictate to it." But anybody who hasn't been writing doesn't know what you're talking about. The only way you can really do that, unless you're a genius, a Rilke or an Emily Dickinson, is to keep sharp and wait for inspiration. That's how poets prepare. They keep their minds and their hearts open and hone their craft by writing. And they wait, as Jarrell says, out in the rain to be hit by lightning. You don't have control over it.

DeMarchi: What to you is a "true poem"? Bob Dylan has said, "This is a true song," but he hasn't been able to say that about *all* of his songs for whatever reason, maybe because he was hired to write them or something. It's something I've asked myself: Am I writing truthfully? How do you know when something you've read is "true"?

Levine: I don't think the motive has much to do with it. The motive may be, I want to help people who are suffering. That may produce the exquisite poem or it may produce a bunch of platitudes and horseshit. You can start out with the purest motives in the world and it doesn't have anything to do with what you get. I remember writing a poem for money. I was living in Spain in '65 and I didn't have much money. I was there with my wife and kids. I thought if I had $600 or $700, my wife and I could go to Italy. So I sat down and wrote a poem for *The New Yorker*. I had published poems in *The New Yorker*, so I knew what they would go for. I came up with a poem and they bought it. I got $800. Off we went to Italy, and I had nothing but contempt for the poem. Years later, somebody said to me, "You had a poem in *The New Yorker* years ago that was terrific. It was about...." He described it. He said, "Why didn't you ever put it in a book?" I said, "It was no good." The guy said, "It was terrific." I went home, dug it out, and it was a good poem. It was much better than a lot of poems that I'd written from the heart, or that were "true," whatever that means. I remember writing another poem around the same time. I sent it out for publication, and the editor—a very good poet—wrote back telling me she thought it was the best war poem written since Henry Reed's "Naming of Parts," a fabulous English poem from World War II. I thought, Wow, she's a smart woman, it must be a hell of a poem. When it came time to put a book together a few years later, I looked carefully at it and found it clunky, obvious, a mediocre poem. I thought I was standing out in a rainstorm and got hit by lightning. I got pissed on.

DeMarchi: With time you have a more objective eye about your own work.

Levine: Yeah, or with anybody else's for that matter.

DeMarchi: Sure, sure. At the time you thought it was lightning, then it was piss.

Levine: Sometimes your initial judgment is your best judgment. Let me give you a few examples not using my own work. I remember exactly where I was—in the hot unairconditioned library at Fresno State—I remember the look of the magazine, the feel of the chair I was sitting in when I first read Galway Kinnell's "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World." The experience was that intense. It seemed as though time stopped as I read it, and when I'd finished I said to myself, "This is fabulous. This is the best poem anyone of my generation has written." Forty years later I feel the same way. The same thing happened the first time I read a group of Plath's poems that appeared later in *Ariel*. Someone mailed me a copy of the British magazine *Encounter* with a note telling me to read these poems. I'd just come home from a long teaching day, and I was wiped out. I put the magazine on top of the oven and thought I'd eventually get to it. As I went to my room to flop on the bed I grabbed the magazine. Then I read those poems and came wide awake. I'd known her only as the author of *The Colossus*, but these poems were written by a fantastic poet. Sometimes you get it right away.

DeMarchi: What poems from your oeuvre still have a lot of authority?

Levine: We'd be here too long.

DeMarchi: I'll tell you one of my favorites, and maybe you can describe how it came about, the process of its creation. Could you tell me about "My Grave" from *What Work Is*?

Levine: I don't think I could. There are a lot of my poems that are like "My Grave" that I don't remember writing. They weren't revised much. They came out—boom!—pretty much the way they are. So I don't remember how they were created. I don't remember whether I started with the first line or the last line. Sometimes I start a poem and I throw so much away that what I'm finally working with is the last seven lines, and then I build a new introduction and a middle.

DeMarchi: Is that how you work? You probably work in a lot of different ways, depending on the specific poem. Sometimes you work straight through, sometimes you begin with the end, sometimes you write a whole poem and realize the last line is the only one worth salvaging so you incorporate it in another work.

Levine: Yeah. Oh yeah. Sometimes, too, I have saved hunks of failed poems that I thought contained good writing. I'll go back and look at them and say, what can I do with this shit? I try very hard not to throw away decent writing.

DeMarchi: That's what I love about poetry. I remember something that the poet Campbell McGrath once said. He stressed the fact that a poet often makes illogical leaps, but by stringing things together the poet makes these connections logical. Your poetry has that quality. "My Grave" jumps from topic to topic to topic. Even "What Work Is" sticks in the scene, but it goes to memories to observations to Wagner. You pull out momentarily and get full of piss and vinegar—

Levine: Salty.

DeMarchi: And you address the reader directly: "Forget you. This is about waiting..."

Levine: What you just described from "What Work Is" is a strategy I saw in Auden when I was young. That's one of the reasons I urge my students to read Auden; I think he's a storehouse of interesting strategies as well as a fabulous poet. I grew up during a period somewhat like this one, with the feeling that society was on the brink of catastrophe, which is certainly how I feel now with Bush. And Auden came into his fullness as a poet at the same time that fascism was taking over Europe. There's this constant sense of menace in his work. He's saying to his readers, "Wake up, you middle class dumbbells. Everything that you think you believe in is being caricatured by Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin. All these values that you mouth are going to come back at you and *kill* you unless you wake up." That tone, that need to assault the reader, the knowledge that Auden had of who was reading poetry, comfortable people who didn't want to hear. He had to find some

(continued on next page)

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Levine

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sneaky way to get it in under the door. He had to disguise it in a folksy ballad, a song, in some lovely or jazzy presentation. Then suddenly the reader says, Oh shit! That's where we are.

DeMarchi: Poetry as subversion.

Levine: Yeah.

DeMarchi: Do you incorporate that in your poetry? You're obviously a very politically active, politically minded person.

Levine: Yeah.

DeMarchi: Where do you see America going under Bush's new economic plan?

Levine: It's going to be Reagan all over again and worse, an ugly redistribution of wealth. Bush has no concern for the air, the water, the children. It's payback time for the people who financed him. He and Cheney are corporate America, and that's all they're concerned about.

DeMarchi: You said that Auden wrote to wake people up.

Levine: Yeah.

DeMarchi: *Do you think* more people were reading poetry then and taking it more seriously than they do now?

Levine: No.

DeMarchi: Is poetry going to make a difference? Because Auden said that nothing he ever wrote saved a single Jew from the gas chambers.

Levine: He also said that poetry makes nothing happen. But that's not true. Poetry makes a great deal happen, but it's certainly not going to bring down Bush. It didn't do anything to awaken the British middle class to the threat of fascism.

DeMarchi: We talked earlier about there being two Phil Levine myths attached to Iowa. The first was that you sat in on classes without actually being enrolled in their program. That turned out to be fact. The second is about a former student of yours and a supposed recommendation letter you wrote on his behalf. The story goes that he was in your class and was a bit of an annoyance. More than that, he was not a great poet. He asked you for a recommendation letter to Iowa, and you agreed. He sent in an application with a note promising a forthcoming recommendation letter from Phil Levine. They let him in the program. Here's where the story becomes mythical. I heard that you sent in a letter that urged Iowa to reject this guy's application. Then he got kicked out of the program within a year. Is there any truth to this story?

Levine: Not much. I don't know what he did, what he wrote them, but I never urged Iowa to reject him or anyone else. I doubt he ever asked me for a letter. He wasn't that dumb. The year he applied a terrific student poet also applied, and she was rejected. I did write a letter for her, and I was stunned when they rejected her. I phoned a couple of people there, Jerry Stern and Connie Brothers and asked them what they were doing. I'd sent them some terrific students, and suddenly my recommendation was meaningless. I couldn't believe they'd read her poems, which should have awakened them. At last they read the poems and accepted her. When I went to teach there a couple of years later, she was completing her PhD and he had already left with his MFA. Someone not long ago told me that at Breadloaf I had once torn a student poem in half and said to the class, "Now we have two bad poems." I heard the same story about Howard Nemerov, and he probably didn't do it either. It is not easy to be truthful and hurt people's feelings, and I don't think the few teachers who are should have to drag those lies around.

DeMarchi: I read an interview with Robert Pinsky last week and he said that John Coltrane is one of his major influences. Tell me about you and jazz. We're here in your study and I see the *All Music Guide to Jazz*. I see you've got a bunch of classic recordings by Sonny Stitt, Miles Davis, Charlie Haden, Bill Evans, Brad Mehldau. What is it that draws you to jazz and what does jazz bring to your poetry?

Levine: It is an incredibly rich music. The voices are so singular and authentic. The men and women who are good at it are just so good. Even the ones who aren't giants can work with the ones that are and not let them down. It is also the music of my growing up. Bebop is the music of my era, and no other art expresses so fully the mood of 1945, the war suddenly over, the monster released, the mangled world asking for a little rest. I found jazz when I was about 16 and never lost my allegiance to it. It has never failed me. If I were a dancer or a singer I could probably be more specific about the influence. My poetry isn't "jazzy" in the way we use that word to mean a thing that's splashy, hot, sexy, but then much of the jazz I love isn't "jazzy" in that sense. If I had to choose one musician who has inspired and influenced my writing the most it would be Lester Young. The understatement combined with humor and lyricism. His playing is never far from the blues. I love the way he sets a rhythmic base and then bursts through it. But I never think about what I'm going to take for my poetry when I listen to Lester; I just listen and joy and suffer along with the music. Jazz was given to me as a kid. I believe I knew by the time I was 16 or 17 that this would be a love affair for a lifetime. That great gift is what my poem "I Remember Clifford" is about. A door opens, an actual door to a club in Detroit, The Bluebird, the sound of Clifford's horn comes through the winter night, and you hear it for the rest of your life. Wherever I go I take my tapes and a Walkman. A year ago I went to Italy for a month and took a dozen tapes. This place I stayed had a terrific stereo, and everyone there loved hearing Evans and Miles and Pres except for one of the composers.

DeMarchi: Not structured enough?

Levine: Told me he did not like improvisation.

DeMarchi: I think poetry gives the same thing that music gives to the world.

Levine: I think so too.

When I was in my 30s a man whose work
I didn't care for wrote and asked for a blurb.
I didn't want to turn him down.
I didn't want to say, I really don't like
your poems. I should have. But
I didn't. What I said was, I don't
write blurbs. I was about 36 or so.
Well, once I hit upon it, it just seemed
wonderful. You know, because a lot
of the people who have asked for blurbs
are people I like but whose poems
I don't like. It was so much easier
than saying, I really don't like your book,
or, I think your work is okay.

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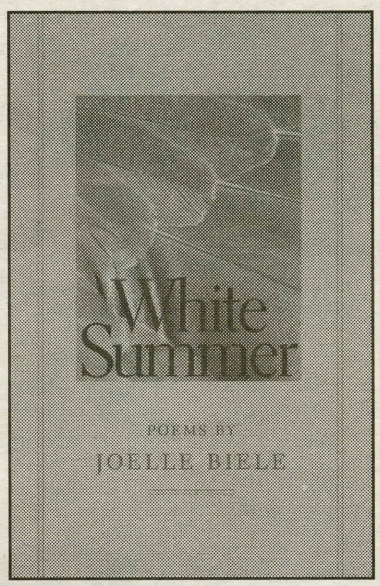

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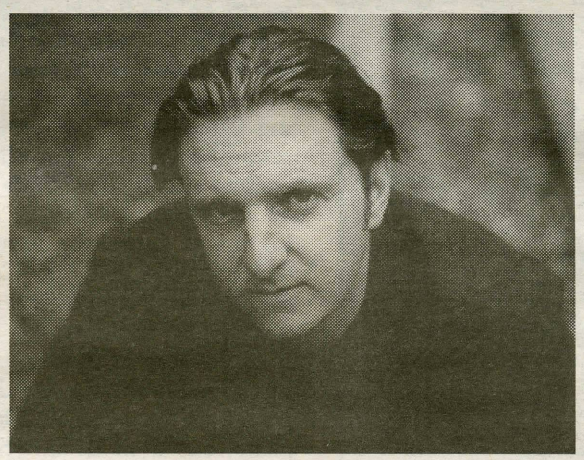

Chad Davidson, author of *Consolation Miracle* 2002 winner

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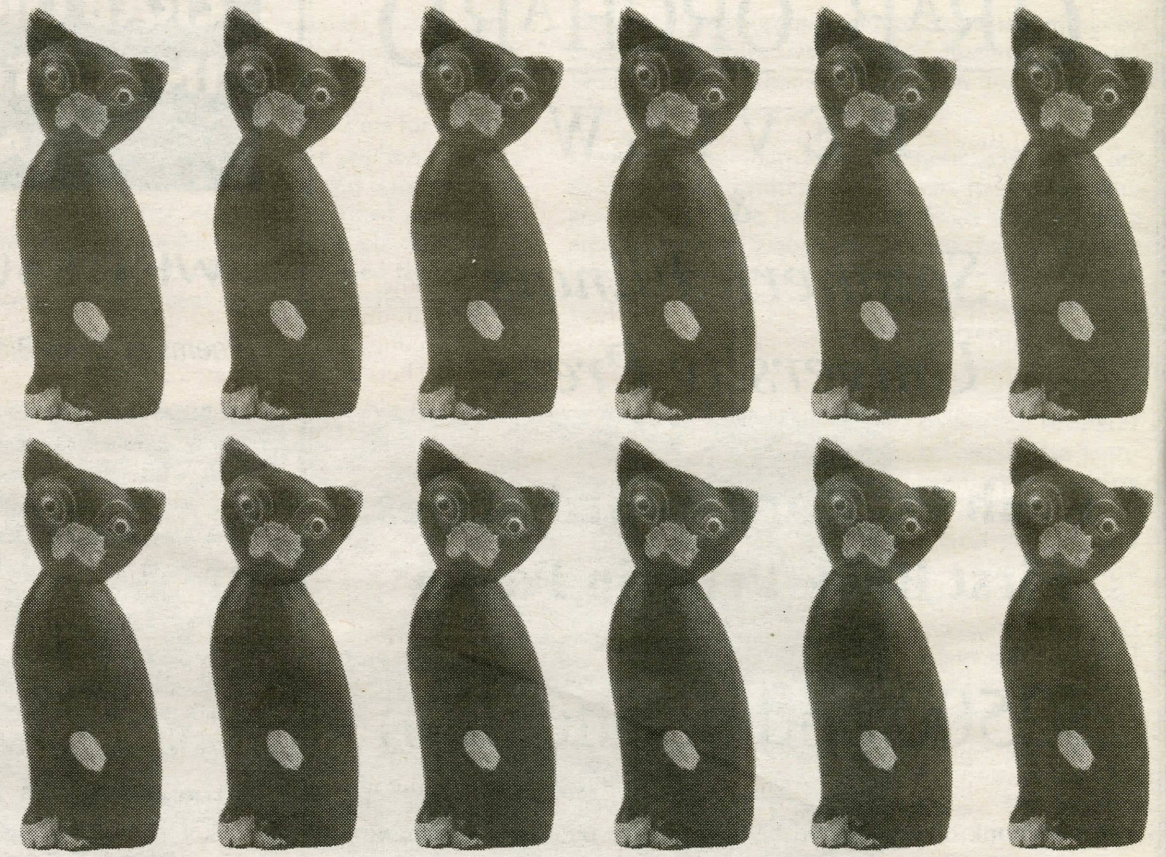
CATS IN ZANZIBAR



BY MAXINE KUMIN

As Henry David Thoreau said, "it is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar" in search of yourself. "Extra vagance!" he proclaimed, nailing down the Latin roots of the word he calmly broke in two. "It depends how you are yarded."

Pobiz is both *extra:* beyond, and *vagant:* wandering. Composing the poem itself is a separate and self-rewarding process. Traveling around the university reading circuit, the library chain, the prized venues of The Writer's Voice, the 92nd Street Y, the Library of Congress, doing a stint as poet-in-residence at East Geopolis College, conducting workshops, serving on panels at literary conferences—this is the poetry business.

At this writing pobiz appears to be in good health. But consider the homely details of life on the road. It's a little like a life in sales. Lots of flights on little planes out of an airline's hub. Lots of uncertainties, not only about how you will be received but where they'll put you up, who'll turn out for the reading. Who's in the front office, so to speak. Whether you'll hit it off.

Sometimes things go smoothly, as crisply as an iron nosing along the sleeve of the poet's shirt. Planes are met, interviews are conducted tactfully, meals, with a reasonable range of choices, are provided. Sometimes it is otherwise. For example:

I arrive just shy of midnight at the pleasant campus of a middle-sized college and am shown to my room-and-bath on the second floor of a charming old Victorian building. It's a frosty night. The room is stifling but both windows glide open at a touch. There's a coffee machine, a small fridge with milk and orange juice, a bowl, a box of cereal: ideal. I sleep the sleep of the seasoned sojourner… and wake to a deeply chilled room. The forced hot air blowers of last night are no longer emitting.

There's a phone number for the housekeeper, who has an apartment on the first floor, but no one answers. I leave a polite message and proceed to get dressed for the out of doors indoors. When a welcoming member of the faculty calls me shortly after, I explain the situation. She is aghast; she will call Maintenance at once.

It's a Sunday. Abbott and Costello from Maintenance arrive. The thermostat is situated at the top of the second-floor stairs, but its plastic cover is locked in place. After a fruitless 30 minutes trying to insert a screwdriver, a knife, a coat hanger—anything!—in the narrow gap between cover and wall in order to nudge the dial up (*dammitall, I almost had it. No, lemme try*), they depart.

Meanwhile, I've discovered an electric baseboard heater in the bathroom with its own thermostat, which I push up to 80 degrees. I assemble breakfast and arrange it on the vanity, manage to wedge the desk chair into the bathroom, close the door behind me and eat, sitting catty corner between toilet and sink. The rest of the morning passes deliciously as from under the bedcovers I watch an exercise class on TV, followed by a garden show, and a home makeover. (It is too cold to hold a pen, I tell myself.)

A little past noon, Patricia (this, and other first names have been changed, for obvious reasons) from the faculty arrives to take me to lunch. We walk to the one hotel as nothing else is open on The Lord's Day. Service is slow. Also, we find lots to talk about, so it is midafternoon when we return to campus. The

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Maxine Kumin *is the author of 13 books of poetry, most recently* The Long Marriage. Bringing Together: Uncollected Early Poems 1958–1988 *is forthcoming in June from W.W. Norton. She won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 1973 and has subsequently been awarded the Aiken Taylor Prize, the Poets' Prize, the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Centennial Award, and the Ruth E. Lilly Prize, among others. In 1980–81, she served as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, a post now known as Poet Laureate. She and her husband live on a farm in New Hampshire.*

housekeeper is in. She comes upstairs with us and after several tries, unlocks the cover. The minute she eases the dial upward, the blowers whoosh on in my room.

The reason the cover is locked, she explains, is to prevent guests from tampering with it. I try to visualize naughty guests—children?—pushing the thermostat up and down. The problem, she continues, is that the back rooms, one of which is mine, are the last to get heat. It's a vintage building. It's an issue they plan to deal with. But she agrees to leave the cover off for the remainder of my visit and I promise not to abuse the privilege.

Indeed, be careful what you wish for. In half an hour my room is too tropical to bear. I tiptoe down the hall and nudge the dial down until the blowers shut off, confident that I can turn them back on at will. After the requisite dinner with faculty and sponsors of the program, after the reading and the book signing, Patricia and a few friends see me to my quarters. The thermostat cover is still absent. My room is only slightly cool; I fall asleep secure in the knowledge that tomorrow morning I can reheat it. After breakfast I will participate in a question-and-answer session and then depart.

When I wake up, the room is once again freezing. I slip down the hall in my nightgown, but wait! The cover is back on, locked in place. I sigh and repeat yesterday's procedure—breakfast in the john again.

A week later, I go to a well-known liberal arts college in a northern state. This gig begins auspiciously. Ralph, the student meeting my plane, stands where we agreed to meet. He's hired a car to convey us from the airport to the college. Of course there's horrendous traffic. The driver disapproves of Ralph's Mapquest directions and takes his own route. We arrive with an hour to spare, but not so fast! The key to the guest house must be sent for from the building across the quad. Ralph, a meticulous if not obsessive individual, says he fears he will have a nervous breakdown before the key arrives. Even though I am anxious to get settled, I can't say what I really think: why couldn't this detail have been taken care of in advance? Instead, a mother at heart, I have to comfort him.

We finally gain entry by way of a Roman-numeraled code, Ralph carries my bags to another suspiciously isolated room, and roots around for a door to the bathroom. Mercifully, there is one. No phone, however. There's also a defunct TV, perhaps left in place for decoration, but no matter. I inquire about libations to accompany the buffet supper being set up downstairs and send Ralph off with sufficient funds to purchase a couple of bottles of wine. Three wonderful women faculty members and two glasses of Pinot Grigio revive my flagging spirits.

A packed reading, lots of Q-and-A, lots of books sold and signed. I sleep the only slightly troubled sleep of a poet who cannot make or receive a phone call and is to share the lone bathroom with unknown others. In the morning, just as I am shuffling into my slippers, one unknown but blatantly male other takes possession, sliding the bolt shut just behind my head. Thirty minutes of dramatic hawking and spitting, nose blowing and breaking wind precede the sounds of shaving, razor rinsed and rapped dozens of times against basin, (is he unburdening himself of a lifetime beard?) followed by a greedy shower.

My bladder is bursting. The seemingly endless ablutions end. He remembers to unlock the door to my room.

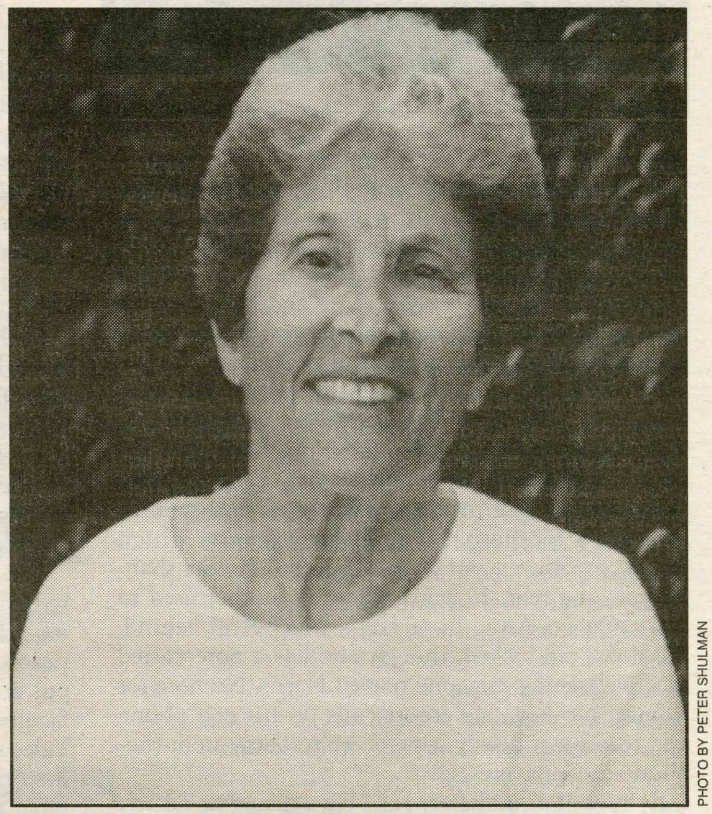

PHOTO BY PETER SHULMAN

Maxine Kumin

I endure a lone breakfast in a distant all-but-vacant cafeteria, cross back to the guest house but am unable to regain entry. I must go back to the cafeteria, halloo into the kitchen, and ask to be rescued. A directional dyslexic, I have transposed the V and the III. A humiliating episode but surely not the

(continued on next page)

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Waterloo of the Confederacy

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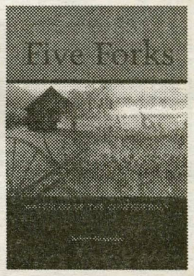

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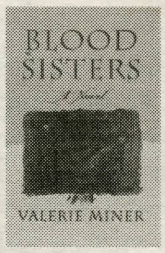

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—Geary Hobson, author of *Last of the Ofos*

Paper, $19.95, 0-87013-663-1

Kumin

continued from page 37

last.

At noon, my transport to the next college arrives. We drive to a small town in an adjoining state, where I am to stay in a highly recommended B & B. This young professor claims that many Important Poets before me have stayed there and have given it very high marks. Although he personally has never been there, I am in for a treat, he assures me.

This B & B is a bit off the beaten path. We drive around for what seems hours. When we finally find it, the gates are locked. Honking the horn does not bring a welcoming wave. We get out of the car, precariously parked in a narrow verge, and trek in through a footpath. I circle the property, which clearly was once a grand estate but looks rather shabby from the rear. It sports what my mother used to call a Queen Anne front and a Mary Ann behind. All doors are locked, though one has a note pasted to it welcoming someone named Harris. No note for Kumin. No key. My escort calls on his cell phone and receives a hearty generic we're- away-from-the-phone-just-now message.

By now it is midafternoon. He calls other faculty members but is unable to reach any of them. I suggest a motel, any motel at this point. There is nothing decent, he claims, within a reasonable radius. I stand my ground. We cannot wait for the absent landlords any longer. Finally, he remembers an old inn about 20 miles north and calls information for the number. Yes, they have a vacancy.

At sundown I am settled in a room in a circa 1880 inn. The private bath retains the old white hexagonal floor tiles I remember from my childhood. The same massive fixtures—and the same low water pressure. The floors creak above and below my room when anyone passes, a reassuring sound from my childhood in a similarly somewhat shabby old Victorian.

The reading goes well, there are a few questions, a successful book signing, I am taken out to dinner by two of the English faculty who bring in a nice bottle of Chardonnay and eat heartily and appreciatively on the college budget. A check is produced as I say my farewells. A car will come for me in the morning and it does. Not a bad ending.

Perhaps it is here, between gigs, that I remember something else Thoreau had to say, tinged with his New England asperity. He advised the British poet-wannabe that instead of first seeking his mercantile fortune in India, he should have gone up garret at once. The life of hermit-transcendentalist, composing poems in solitude and poverty, indeed has its attractions.

But then there follows a pleasant week at a small red brick college in Virginia, once known as a finishing school for debutantes, now a multicultural institution. The hotel is only a hundred steps from campus and it offers generous sit-down breakfasts. The faculty members, PhDs from the likes of Emory and Yale, cosset me shamelessly. My husband goes with me on this jaunt. There's the obligatory reception (coat and tie for Victor, a rare occurrence), a reading, several classes to visit. While I teach, he tours Monticello, Appomatox, the Natural Bridge, the Woodrow Wilson Library, and the George C. Marshall Museum.

We are able to free up an afternoon to visit novelist and essayist Donald McCaig and his wife Anne, their 80 sheep and assorted sheep dogs. It's lambing season on the McCaig farm; I'm surprised by this news. In New England, the ewes lamb in late February. This flock, Rambouillet crossed with Tunis, breeds at any season. We get a grand tour of the newborns.

Later, Donald goes out to check on a pregnant ewe he had segregated earlier and returns, carrying the lamb in a sort of harness/cradle that he holds with one hand. The ewe follows, nosing her baby. The sheep dog follows the ewe, nosing her tail stub to guard against any sudden moments of panic. This newborn is a big singleton; when there's a pair, he carries two such harnesses. I ask him what he does if the ewe delivers triplets. "Yell for Anne," he replies.

Later, Donald treats us a to stellar performance: the dog he will take to a show the following weekend herds a flock of about 60 sheep toward us, circles it, divides it in half, reunites the two halves, takes them back to their original grazing grounds. All this on minimal hand signals and brief whistles. To us it appears a species of magic. This show alone is well worth the long drive over the mountain and back, to say nothing of the last-and-first 13 miles of rackety gravel road.

A week later, I fly to Kansas City, happy to have found a direct flight from New Hampshire, with one stop in Philadelphia. It is late evening when we land; I am astonished to find my host, Bob Stewart, waiting for me at the gate. Security in Kansas City is minimal; there is no barrier between deplaning passengers and their welcomers.

I am housed in a small European-style hotel with all the amenities, including breakfast buffet-style downstairs. Bob takes me to lunch in the atrium of the Nelson Art Museum, a massive open space with three stories' worth of balconies, and provides a brief tour of the city. I remember from a previous visit how delightful the Henry Moore sculptures look, looming over wide green lawns, and how much Kansas City reminds me of Washington, DC, with its casual open public spaces and its dearth of high-rise buildings.

A young poet on the faculty has arranged a

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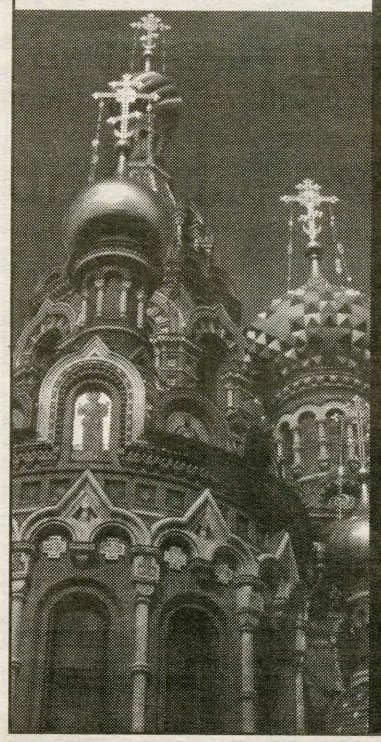

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potluck supper at her house before the reading. We move seamlessly from good wine and vegetarian casseroles to the university theater. A full house. Lots of books for sale. The perfect gig, I say to myself, thanking my hosts, who cordially deliver me to the airport in the morning. And it is, until we land in Philadelphia.

There will be a change of equipment here, we are told. The chaos of disembarkment, transfers, and reloading onto another plane ensues, where, after a 45-minute hold, the pilot regretfully informs us that our landing strip is fogged in. We cannot take off. Eighty two stalled passengers once again dumbly disembark. We wait in line like sheep to be rebooked by a single harried agent.

In the meantime, I've struck up a conversation with a couple in their 50s accompanied by two white-haired ladies. They live in the next town over from mine. (That's how we talk in New Hampshire.) We discover we have mutual acquaintances. After we are finally provided with boarding passes for the 10:00 p.m. flight, we agree to go to the nearest beanery, half bar, half deli, for some supper.

I offer to buy everyone a drink. The middle-aged couple demurs and settles at a table, but the two seniors accompany me to the bar and the three of us hoist ourselves up on stools. One tells me she is 87, the mother of the man at the table. Her companion and best friend is 85.

The bartender makes a great show of polishing the wood in front of us. We are his only customers.

"What'll you have, ladies?"

"Do you have Tanqueray gin?"

"Yep."

"I'll have Tanquerary gin on the rocks with a twist," declares my neighbor, hitching her stool closer to the bar, and her partner orders the same. I choose a Bloody Mary. After that round, we agree we deserve another go.

The airport gradually empties. The corridor to the ladies' room has grown spookily dim. None of us feels much like talking now. We are the last flight into New Hampshire, arriving just before midnight.

SOMETIMES THINGS GO SMOOTHLY, AS CRISPLY AS AN IRON NOSING ALONG THE SLEEVE OF THE POET'S SHIRT. PLANES ARE MET, INTERVIEWS ARE CONDUCTED TACTFULLY, MEALS, WITH A REASONABLE RANGE OF CHOICES, ARE PROVIDED. SOMETIMES IT IS OTHERWISE.

Some months later, I fly south to do two gigs back to back. This has been carefully orchestrated in advance. An acquaintance from the first university will meet my flight and convey me 70 miles to my destination. My plane lands in a huge airport. A train connects the several concourses with Ticketing and Baggage Claim. I arrive as agreed at the latter, where on the other side of a token rope barrier, families, friends, and drivers for various limo services are clustered.

I search the lineup anxiously. Sam is not there. To the young man at my right elbow I must appear elderly and bewildered (neither far from the truth), for he offers me the use of his cell phone. Sam has said that he will keep his on just in case. I dial. A female voice picks up quite abruptly: "This is Jane." And then the connection fades. Jane, I think to myself. Jane who? Did I get a wrong number? My companion shows me how to press redial. This time, I have my wits about me. Perhaps this is Sam's wife, whom I have never met. "Is this Jane X?" "Yes. Sam's car broke down halfway to the airport, he had to call me to come get him. We're on our way, about 40 minutes to go."

The airline, I learn, had promised to page me but did not. We pass Sam's broken-down car on the other side of the highway. A little after 11 p.m. Sam delivers me to my hotel room, a Hospitality Suite complete with microwave, refrigerator, sink… but no hospitality. No welcoming bowl of fruit and cheese, no crackers. Ah well. This is pobiz, I tell myself.

A moment after he leaves, I realize there is

(continued on next page)



Kumin

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a noisy party taking place next door. Just behind my bed, for that matter. The front desk, confiding that the Hospitality Suites are always noisy, relocates me to a normal room down the hall.

The next morning I wait anxiously for a call from a friend who lives three hours away and has driven to town for our rendezvous. We plan to have lunch. Each time I call the number of the house where she is staying I get the answering machine.

At almost noon my door opens. A large gentleman with two suitcases stands there. We are equally bewildered. He starts back to the elevator and I phone the front desk. Not only is the clerk sorry for the error but it appears that a lady—to whom he confesses he gave the wrong room number—has been waiting for me in the lobby for over an hour.

The next morning, a Lincoln Town Car conveys me to a little college with spacious grounds, meticulously tended. An impressive equestrian facility. Herds of free-ranging deer. Paradisiacal. I am shown to my room in one of the college's ancient little guest houses—once again it has a connecting bath but I am assured no one will share it.

In addition to its antiquity, this accommodation is Spartan. No luggage rack. Three wire hangers. Bare floors. No radio or television. No shelf, table or stool in the bathroom for toiletries. No complimentary toiletries, needless to say. Supper, alas, served in the college dining room, is dry. I am cross to have to forgo a glass or two of wine but the reading, I am mollified, is packed (I find out later that attendance was mandatory) and there are books for sale.

On the two-hour trip next morning to the airport for my flight home, I lean back in the commodious town car and recall some gigs from long ago. One at the now-defunct Eisenhower College in an upstate New York cow pasture, where I was shown to a narrow dormitory room with the bath at the end of the hall. It was, at least in my memory, winter and I had neglected to pack bedroom slippers.

Another winter, this time in upstate Maine, housed after the reading in a cozy, electrically heated University apartment overlooking the parking lot, I woke to an unanticipated raging blizzard. It was a real nor'easter. I could barely make out the turtled outline of my car. The entire town had lost power; consequently, there was no heat. The room gradually grew so cold that I took the rug off the floor and covered the bed with it. It is said that freezing to death is not unpleasant. I prepared to find out.

In midmorning, through a peephole I had scraped in the frosted window, I spied a large hooded and booted figure approaching. It was poet Wesley McNair, who had sponsored the event and had assured me the day before that only light snow was predicted.

Fortunately, the McNair homestead was only a few blocks away. Wes hoisted my carry-on to his shoulder and we followed his footsteps back, he in the role of Good King Wenceslas and I the good slave, to the comfort of a wood stove and candlelight. I became Wes and Diane's house guest for the next 48 hours. What luck to fall into such good company! What an unlikely way to initiate a warm friendship that has endured.

Long ago, in Missoula, Montana, when Richard Hugo was still alive, I read at the university at his invitation. Afterward, his wife hosted a barbecue in their spacious backyard. Her two quarter horses wandered around unfenced, like large dogs. Somebody had brought his guitar and we sang a while. I did not know then how little time was left to Dick, only the sweetness of the occasion

Some years ago, in a small town in the midwest, I spent several weeks conducting two fiction and poetry workshops at the local college. Here, I was luxuriously housed. I was met and conveyed to every event. Faculty members took turns inviting me to bountiful suppers. I met their dogs and cats and children. Everyone seemed to live in a huge mid-19th century Gothic house paneled in warm oak, with high ceilings and a third-floor turret. Owners vied with each other to trumpet how inexpensively their houses had been bought.

An air of spaciousness extended to the classes as well. Students here were reasonable and mannerly; it was before body piercing but after sexual liberation. Everyone called the poet by her first name. Comments in the workshops were chummy and direct. Many of the stories were wildly obsessed with sex, both hetero- and homo-, vividly explicated. Some of this, I thought, surely must be invention. They can't all be copulating in these bizarre settings and positions? And then the light dawned: sex had taken the place of political action.

How often, in the course of conducting pobiz, I have met women to admire, brilliant women scholars teaching in colleges that offered little intellectual stimulation; wives, locked in commuter marriages because neither institution would hire the other spouse, catching the red-eye on one coast or the other on alternate weekends. Soccer mom professors bonding to pursue outside interests ranging from ornithology to mountain climbing, babies in Snuglis on their backs, toddlers by the hand. Lesbian couples getting together for Saturday night potlucks and poetry workshops in a small college town in the middle of a flyover state.

And then, 20 years ago, I was met by a young woman I'll call Cathy, adjunct professor at a big southwestern university, whom I cannot forget. We set out from the airport in her pickup truck. As we cruised along the interstate at 70 mph, a tire blew. The car behind us barely managed to pull past us without incident and sped on. Cathy wrestled the truck to a stop in the deep gravel of the shoulder, but not without damaging the tire rim so that it would not take a spare.

Dame Fortune had arranged to have an exit ramp at that exact spot. We coasted down it to an intersection bounded on all sides by cornfields, where—I swear I am not making this up—a fully operational public telephone booth stood. (Need I explain that this was before cell phones?) Cathy had to make several calls before she was able to reach someone at the poetry festival who was free to come collect us.

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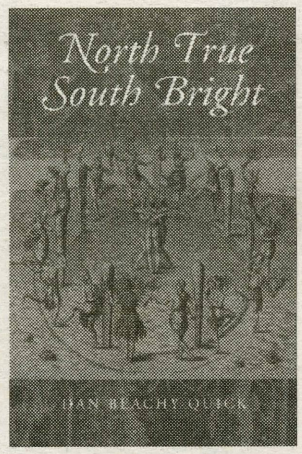
Telling me
What tree I am I must cut

Down. Elm-beetle *brittles* the branch
Not mine, my mouth
To gypsy-moth's mouth's unknown—
My voice
I learned to throw
Inside a leaf to tell moths, *No—*
Starve—you'll starve
Before I let my house grow cold.



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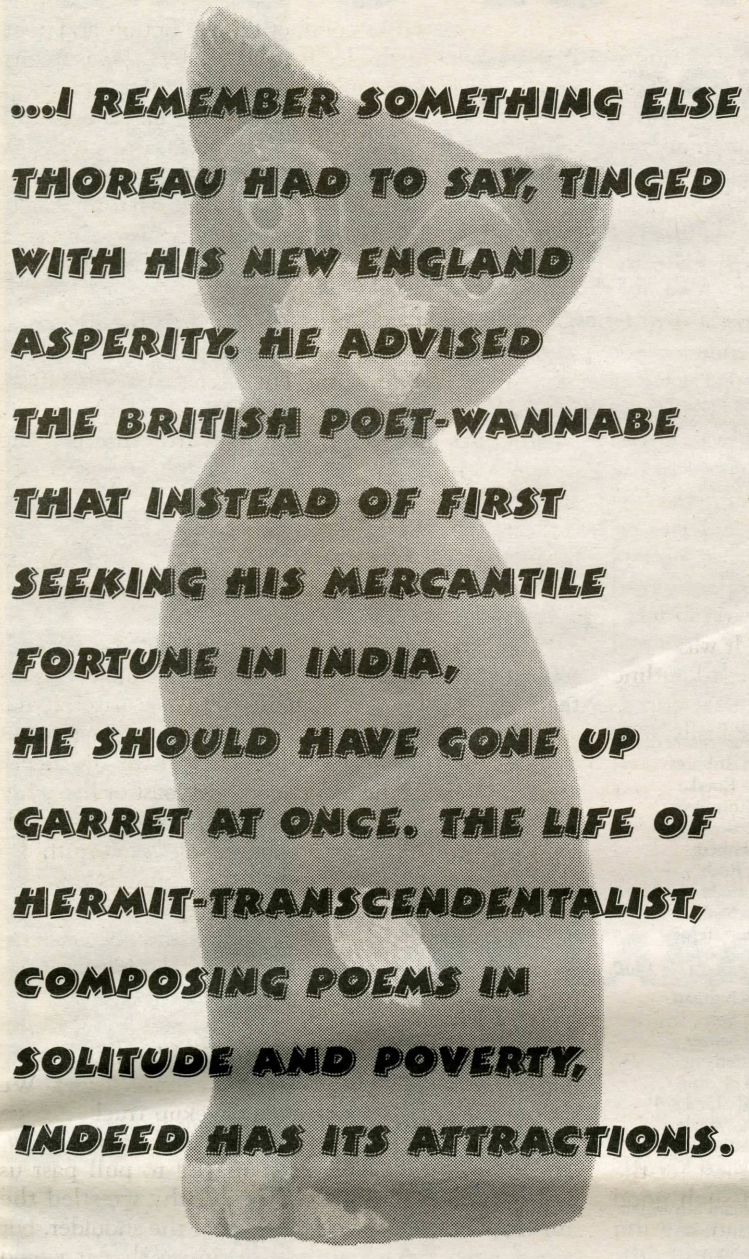

In the long afternoon that elapsed before our ride arrived, I learned that her mother, in her late 40s, was dying of Huntington's chorea, a hereditary degenerative disorder that results in abnormal writhing and dementia. It is invariably fatal. Children of an affected parent have a 50% chance of developing the disease. Predictive testing is available but Cathy hadn't been able to bring herself to undergo it. Meanwhile, she taught freshman comp three days a week and wrote dark poems she showed to no one. Her husband, spooked by her possibly bleak future, was divorcing her.

I carry Cathy around with me. Why didn't I make the effort to stay in touch with her? Couldn't I have asked her to send me poems? Couldn't I have gradually won her over, gotten her to take the test so as not to live her life out in fear and depression? And if the test was positive, wouldn't she need all the support she could get? Why wasn't I part of that picture?

Pobiz also involves, because of my history of horse connections, visits to barns ranging from elegant facilities with indoor arenas, heated washrooms and so on to modest two-stall barns where a professor tends her own aged gelding. This is the horse she has had since girlhood, and this creature biting at my sleeve is the macho Shetland pony who serves as his stable companion.

I am told many an equine tale. The editor of a midsize daily newspaper who teaches journalism at the Atlantic coast college where I'm to read explains how she put herself through college as an exercise girl at the local race track. Her first time out, two jockeys rode up along either side of her horse and carried her off at a flat gallop.

She had never galloped a thoroughbred racehorse before and was so terrified that she wet her pants. Enraged and humiliated in equal measure, she fought back tears as she slid off the horse, meanwhile trying to hide her wet britches. "It was the Ordeal," she said, "right out of the Middle Ages."

From that moment on, though, the jockeys were wonderfully chivalrous. They cantered around the oval with her decorously, helped her saddle fractious horses, gave her a leg up and made her life at the track quite livable.

She tells me this over complimentary dinner, the Department picking up the check, starved junior faculty members pigging out on roast beef and chocolate mousse, the poet nibbling a spinach salad. After the reading and book signing, several of us gather for coffee and brownies. It gradually becomes clear that there is something they want me to know.

I hear about Anne Sexton's reading at this very institution in the last year of her life.

Of course they all went out drinking afterward. Anne had them read her poems aloud to her, every poem from the reading she had just given, and many from earlier books. It was a memorable roistering evening. I think to myself how glad I am to be too old to go out drinking afterward and roister. Farewell, old roistering days! Farewell, too, old best friend Anne, trying so hard to stay alive that she had to have casual acquaintances read her poems back to her to make sure she was still sentient.

I have mourned Anne, we have all mourned Anne, and she has taken her place in the canon. But somehow I am sadder for Cathy, whom I failed to comfort, who is very likely still alive and may or may not be writhing her way to madness and death.

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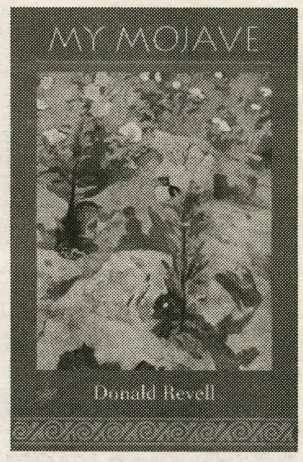
My Mojave | Donald Revell

Harvest

The god grows with us preparing
Answers to questions none will ask
Or only the winged beetle
In desert summer air
Too warm for anyone to breathe

Aversion then compulsion then
Children exchange childish blood
For coronets grown with God
It is cool enough to breathe now
It is autumn for the taking



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D.W. Fenza	P	DC
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Annie Finch	P	OH
Charles Fishman	P	NY
Michael Fitzgerald	P, NF, & Childrens	VA
Charles Fort	P	NE
Linda Nemec Foster	P	MI
Alice Friman	P	IN
Richard Frost	P	NY
Abby Frucht	F	WI
David Galef	F	MS
Philip Garrison	CNF	WA
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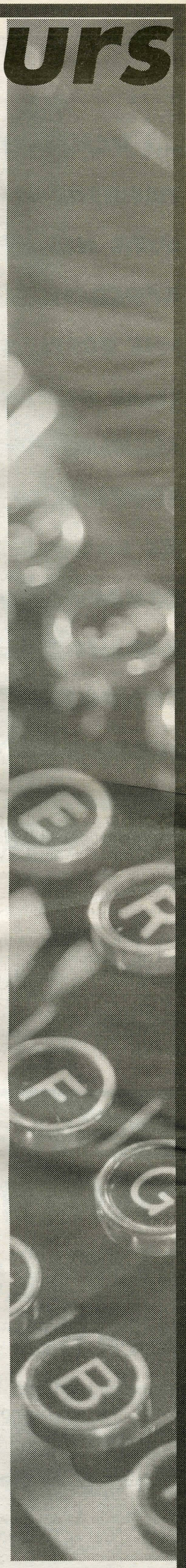

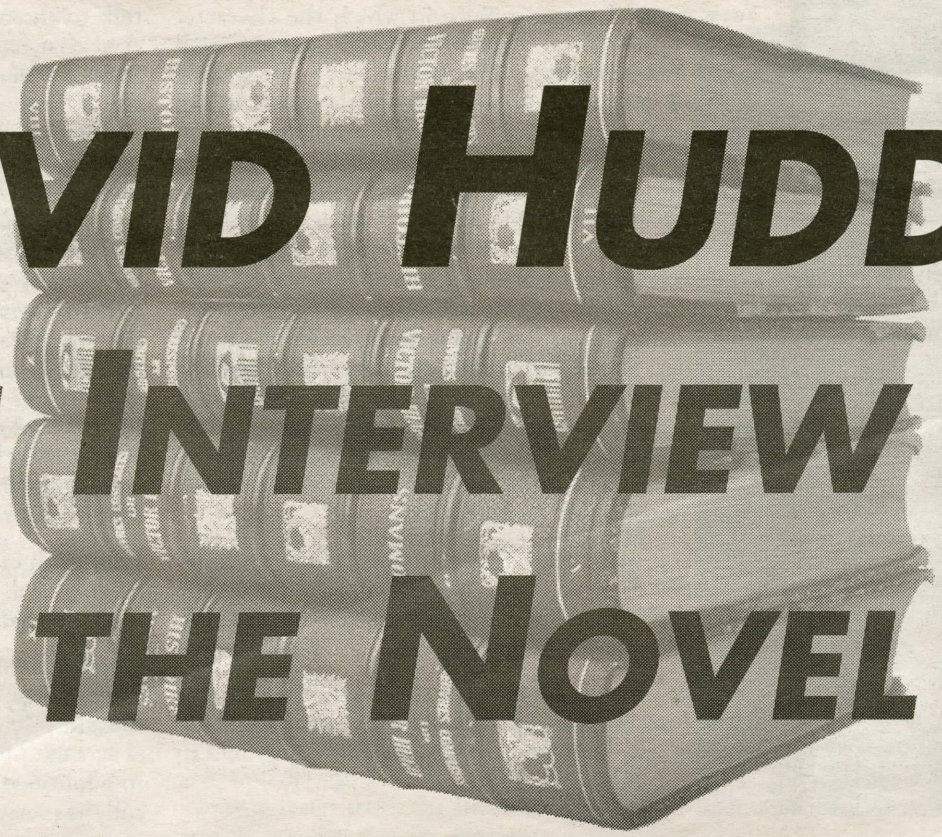

David Huddle: An Interview on the Novel

by Laban Carrick Hill

Born in 1942 and reared in rural Ivanhoe, Virginia, David Huddle went off as a young man to fight in the Vietnam War. Upon his return he studied writing with Peter Taylor at the University of Virginia and earned an MA at Hollins and an MFA at Columbia. Since 1971 he has been a professor of creative writing at the University of Vermont and is also on the faculty of the Bread Loaf School of English. Huddle is the author of 14 books of poetry, short fiction, essays, and novels. His fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers as well as in *Best American Short Stories*. His first novel, *Story of a Millions Years* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), was named a Distinguished Book of the Year by *Esquire* and a Best Book of the Year by the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* in 1999. His most recent book, a novel titled *La Tour Dreams of the Wolf Girl* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), was described by Jane Mendelsohn in the *New York Times Book Review*, as "subtle and bracing." He is the recipient of two NEA fellowships and has received an honorary doctor of humanities degree from Shenandoah College.

Laban Carrick Hill: When did you first think you might want to write a novel?

***Laban Carrick Hill's** cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance for young adults,* Harlem Stomp! A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance *will be published in Fall 2003 by Little, Brown, with an introduction by Nikki Giovanni. His critical study of Jonathan Franzen's* The Corrections *will be published by SparkNotes in Summer 2003. His poems recently appeared in the anthology* Contemporary Poetry of New England *(Middlebury College Press, 2002). He has also written critical biographies for Scribners Writers series. He has published 14 children's adventure novels and numerous poems and articles in magazines and journals.*

David Huddle: Well, probably right at the same time that I began hoping to be any kind of writer at all which was probably in my last year of school at the University of Virginia when I took a writing class. I had also been taking English classes, in which I read some books that really affected me, especially the Faulkner and Hemingway novels. That was when I was around 20 years old.

Hill: So you wanted to write in the same vein as the books that you prized?

Huddle: Yes.

Hill: I know that you began writing novels long before you published your first novel. Why did you wait so long to attempt to publish a novel?

Huddle: I'm a slow learner.

Hill: Why did it take you so long to complete a novel when your initial impulse as a writer was to write a novel?

Huddle: I think my natural inclination and maybe my natural talent for writing was the short story. I think that's not unusual. You could say that that is true for both Hemingway and Faulkner. You could say that they both started out with short stories. But I wasn't able to go beyond the short story for a long time. There are a few writers like that. I studied under one of them at the University of Virginia, a man named Peter Taylor. There are others. Andre Dubus's first book was a novel (*The Lieutenant* [1967]), but he did not write any more novels after that, and I don't think he felt that was a good book. Writing, in this regard is sort of like running. Some runners are suited for the marathon and others for the hundred-yard dash. Given my inclination, it has taken me quite a long time to learn how to make a novel come about. And even as I've done it it's more a matter of learning how to generate a number of related stories and put them together in such a way that they make a coherent pattern that can be called a novel.

Hill: Why did you stick with the novel?

Huddle: There's no way to get around that ambition. Quite often over the years I took vows—I said I am not going to write a novel, I don't have to write a novel, I don't really want to write a novel. But I always kept wanting to.

Hill: What is it about the novel that makes it the great white whale for many people?

Huddle: I'm sure there is a literary explanation for it. The novel, for a fiction-writer, is the higher ambition in the same way that the desire to write a symphony is the higher ambition for a composer or to write a three-act play must be for a playwright. It's just the larger form and I think it's the higher achievement. It might not be a higher achievement than a really great collection of short stories. But it's the big prize.

Hill: Is it because the novel is the ideal vehicle for big ideas?

Huddle: That could be. I imagine that's what carries a fair number of people into it, like Jonathan Franzen. He is somebody who is motivated by more purely intellectual concerns. I don't think that I have ever been that kind of writer. It's not that I'm anti-intellectual, and it's not that my novels don't have intellectual concerns. But I start with character and situation and then hope that ideas evolve out of those basic elements. Ideas are certainly not my motivating force.

Hill: In your novel *La Tour Dreams of the Wolf Girl*, you have La Tour describe painting as "light becoming flesh." What did you mean by that?

Huddle: Painters and writers alike wish to come as close as they can to making life with their art. That's

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the thrill of it. As a fiction writer, to have a character come to life in language is the great achievement. It's what feels good. It's what you like about doing it. It's also what makes the novel work. You want to have a character who's come to life so clearly and compellingly that as a writer you have to bow down to that character's inclinations rather than just pulling the puppet strings. So I'm just guessing about what painters feel. I do have some friends who are visual artists, but I don't know a great deal about how art works for them. I can only speculate since the paintings to which I respond quite often are those in which the figures within the painting seem to come to life and then the paintings themselves seem to take on a kind of life too.

Hill: Is the novel as a whole a vehicle for that process? A much stronger vehicle?

Huddle: I think so. I've written a few stories that have unusually lively characters in them, and once or twice I've carried one of them over from one story to another. That is probably what got *Story of A Million Years* going; I began a piece in which the character Marcy appeared as a minor character, and that's all that I had in mind for her. But as I went on writing she took on such a presence that I thought I would write another story that would be entirely hers. That second piece is what was published in the first chapter of that novel. It was also published in *Best American Short Stories* as "Past My Future." I have an old story in an early book of short stories, called "The Undesirable," that has in it a woman character, Darcy Webster, who turned out to be larger than that story. So a recent project I've had is trying to write a novel about her. She is that kind of character. She didn't fit into what was one of my longest stories. And I guess when I think of novels that I admire, one of them would be *Madame Bovary* and another would be *Anna Karenina*. In both those cases there are characters that only a novel would do justice to.

Hill: You write a lot about women. In these gender conscious days, you have a real sympathy for female characters. What is it about women that draws you to them as characters in a narrative?

Huddle: I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that both of my children are daughters. I've watched them grow up and have had the privilege of being able to talk to them about what is going on in their lives. And that has happened in a time when I think the lives of women in American culture are really changing. A feminist revolution is occurring in our country, and having daughters in this time makes the lives of women a crucially interesting part of my life. I feel like the women characters that I've done are more intriguing than the male characters. It is very hard for me to come up with positive male characters—I don't have many of them. My women characters are not saints by any means, but it seems to me that maybe the struggles that women go through—and I don't necessarily mean that politically, I just mean in their lives—make me more sympathetic toward them than I am toward my male characters. I had a strange revelation recently. Many of us feel that as we grow older we become like our parents, but it suddenly struck me that it's not my father I'm becoming, it's my mother.

Hill: Both of your novels, though obviously not autobiographical, seem to place themselves in a world that is not all that different from your own. Why is that?

Huddle: I think my best early writing was very autobiographical. The book called *Only the Little Bone* is the equivalent of a novel of growing up. It's a fictional account of my family and my youth and my coming to adulthood. Learning how to write autobiographically is pretty much how I took possession of the art of writing.

Hill: You do it so well in your poems.

Huddle: Thank you. I appreciate that. But I have also felt the need to go beyond those boundaries and try to write out of the imagination.

Hill: How do you see the novel relating to the community? If it evolves out of the community that the author is in, how does it relate to the community?

Huddle: I wonder about that. I will confess to you that as I'm writing I'm not thinking of what I'm doing in terms of that question. I don't think about what the UVM community is going to think about me, or what the Burlington community is going to think about me.

Hill: What about the way the novel mirrors the world? Does it create a more authentic mirror of the community or reality?

Huddle: I guess I have to say that that is not a concern of mine. I do know that there are writers who work out of such concern. Jonathan Franzen is an example. A lot of what he is doing is kind of addressing contemporary culture and criticizing it. He's criticizing the way we live our lives. I don't think of what I'm doing is that at all. Maybe that's because I have a lot of respect for Vermont and Burlington. I count myself lucky to live in these places so I wouldn't consciously take on writing as an act of criticism.

Hill: You have written that all good writing "is an arrangement of words that yields something true and interesting about human experience." How does the novel in particular do this?

Huddle: The novel can do more justice to the enormous complexity of human experience. I think that *La Tour* does some of that. What I hope *La Tour* might demonstrate is how art can be a very real part of somebody's life. In *The Story of a Million Years*, the different tellings of the same story and the different facets of the same experience—that seems possible only within the form of the novel. There's an incredible intricacy of human connection within a single household, not to mention a neighborhood or a whole city. A novel is the one place where you can do justice to that.

Hill: You've also written that works of art are the mere by-product of an artist's work, but at the same time you've said it's an unnatural form for you. How do you resolve this conflict?

Huddle: Maybe I'm always thinking one book ahead.

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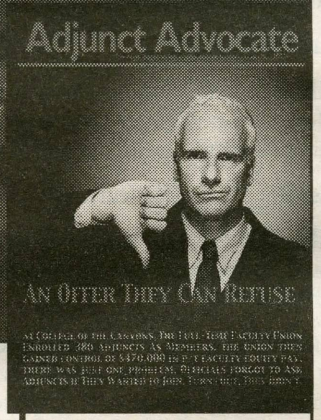

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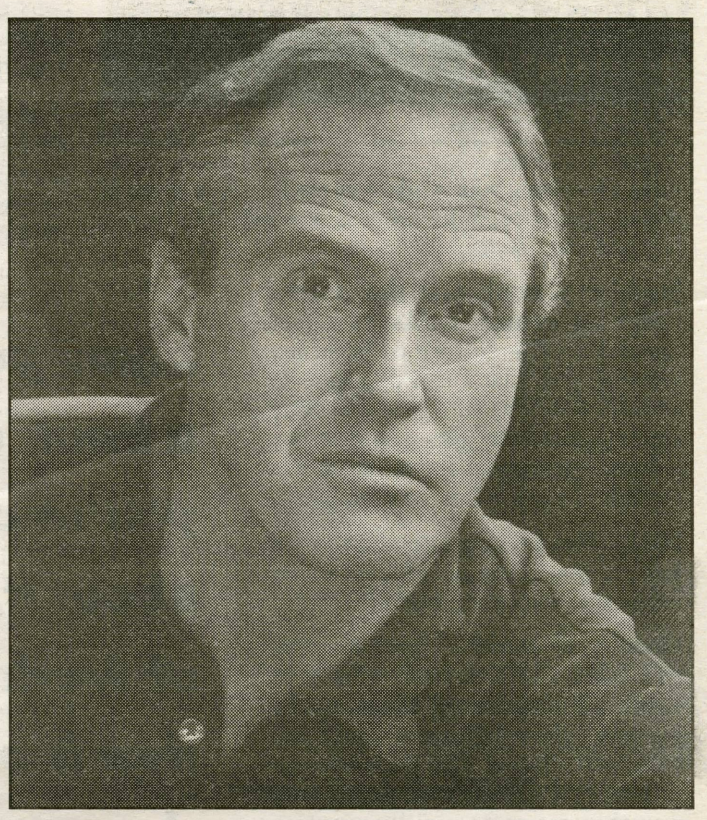
Even though you and I are talking about *La Tour* now, *La Tour* has been pretty much finished for a long while. I have made no changes in the text for two years or more. What's out there is always pretty much behind you. Of course, I'm thinking about what comes next. If I'm any kind of artist at all, what I learned in *La Tour, Story of a Million Years* will be of benefit to me in the next books that I write. I don't know that I can say more than that or that I should say more than that. Harper Lee wrote only one book (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) which amazes me. If I were a one-book writer, I sure would have liked to have written that book. Maybe you put all that you have in a book at a given time, but what you're doing, without thinking a lot about it, is creating on a continuum of work. You're doing something that is ongoing. A single book doesn't have everything riding on it. A single book doesn't contain everything an author has to say about human experience.

Hill: What makes a novel entertaining?

Huddle: For me it's always character. Good writing is nice and I appreciate that, but there are a lot of books that are beautifully written that don't engage my attention because I don't become engaged with the character. But I can stand a fair amount of bad prose if I'm reading about a character I find deeply interesting.

Hill: In your interview with *UVM View* you said the novel wasn't your natural form. For you it's a kind of unnatural act in that you cobbled together several stories into one to create a novel. How is a novel different from an extended short story?

Huddle: It a very subtle issue. But some of it has to do with the very crude issue of marketing. There are a fair number of books that are in the territory between novels and story-sequences. For instance Julia Alverez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. The advance copy of that book came forward as a collection of stories. Yet eventually it was marketed as a novel. Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* is a similar book. It may have come forward at first as a gathering of stories but eventually it was marketed as a novel. There is a territory in there in which it seems to me that you can clearly say this is a book of short stories and that's a novel that has a lot of story-like chapters in it. But there's also a territory that's pretty vague. Years ago when she was an editor at Knopf, Alice Quinn liked the manuscript of my story collection *Only the Little Bone* and wanted to publish it. She talked with Robert Gottlieb who was running the place at the time. They both were pretty interested in it, but they wanted me to try to make it into a novel. I had a couple of problems with that. One was that I really didn't know how to go about doing it, and the other was that I felt a little bit insulted. This was a good book. These were good stories. Why shouldn't they be published as a collection of stories? Anyway Knopf didn't do it, and David Godine did do it. With *The Story of a Million Years* my editors there—specifically Janet Silver who was head of the trade division at Houghton Mifflin—said we want this to be a novel. Those editors went further and gave me a lot of help in turning it into a novel. They helped me put the pieces together so that it could legitimately be called a novel.



David Huddle

Hill: When you think of a novel from a writing point of view, it is almost a jigsaw puzzle for you.

Huddle: Yes. I'll admit that I think that it's not the most efficient or best way to put a novel together. But given the nature of my abilities that's the method I have to use. It has the benefit of giving, perhaps not a perfectly original or singular kind of book, but a kind of book that has its own virtues. It has that faceted aspect to it in asking readers to consider things from different points of view. It asks for a particular kind of reading engagement, and it rewards that engagement with a particular kind of reading pleasure. I've come to be a little bit proud of that. Both of those novels have complexities that wouldn't have been available to me if I had started at point A and written all the way down to point Z.

Hill: In terms of its mimetic quality, how does this structure mirror the world or create an authentic place?

Huddle: I wish I had a sophisticated enough vocabulary to give you a great answer to that. I think it's a little bit like Picasso and Cubism. Take a piece of a face and another piece of a face and put them together in a way that you wouldn't expect. When that happens you get a whole new idea of what the human face is all about. That's a little bit like what I'm doing when I speak of Suzanne Nelson's relationship with her husband and present a piece in which La Tour is painting Vivienne or Vivienne is modeling for La Tour. Those two pieces put together ask you to consider how men and women are with each other in a way that you wouldn't with a more straightforward picture.

Hill: For much of the novel's history it has been attacked as frivolous entertainment that distracted readers from proper concentration on their spiritual state. Aside from the obvious fact that novels are not true, it seems that the criticisms arise from the novel's appeal to the reader's daily experience and its concerns with triviality and worldliness. How do you think the contemporary novel has made this attack moot?

Huddle: I don't know that it has. Because I'm not inclined to be intellectual, especially about the novel. I don't think I have ever taught the novel as a course, and what I like about novels when I read them is generally what novels have always done. I love good writing about daily experience.

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Hill: One thing your work does really well is speak of daily experience. Why are you so compelled by the "in media res" style?

Huddle: I think that the culture keeps on evolving. Maybe I just depend on the culture to hone my sensibility so that I can continue to address ordinary life. I would hope that my sensibility puts a spin on my writing that suggests the greater forces at work in the world in which I live.

Hill: Would you say that what attracts you to the novel is its ability to teach us something useful?

Huddle: Absolutely. I have to speak to a book I've just read, a book of stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, by Jhumpa Lahiri. I think it could just be as well a novel. The book addresses issues of Indian Americans in a way that seems to me illuminating for those who haven't come out of two different cultures. It also seems to demonstrate something useful about how we live now that people of extremely different cultures are all of a sudden jammed together by technology and transportation.

Hill: How do you believe contemporary society has influenced the way the novel is written both in content and structure? Does contemporary society inform you and does it inform the way you've constructed novels?

Huddle: It has probably done so in ways that I'm not even aware of. I can't remember who said after the Second World War that the practice of art at all seems frivolous in the face of the Holocaust. The contemporary world keeps on smacking us in the face or assaulting us. I can't imagine that there would be an American writer anywhere who had not been powerfully affected by the events of 9/11. I don't have the slightest idea of what to do with 9/11, but I'm sure that it will work on me.

Hill: In the wake of 9/11 I could not help but think of Samuel Beckett's title of his novel *I Can't Go On, I'll Go On*.

Huddle: Well, there you have it. There's the basic principle. It's interesting that journals—and *The New Yorker* was one—immediately started contacting writers to respond to the events. There's a whole category of novelists—David Foster Wallace and Don Dellilo, for example—who are keyed into international political issues way more than I am. I seem to be a farm boy way out in the country hearing about events on the radio instead of being right there in New York and watching the World Trade Center blow up.

Hill: How has the pervasiveness of a moderately literate middle class audience for literary production affected what you write?

Huddle: I have been encouraged by the fact that a fair number of people still read literary fiction. I'm a big fan of John Cheever. It has always interested me that someone

...you put all that you have in a book at a given time, but what you're doing, without thinking a lot about it, is creating on a continuum of work. You're doing something that is ongoing. A single book doesn't have everything riding on it. A single book doesn't contain everything an author has to say about human experience.

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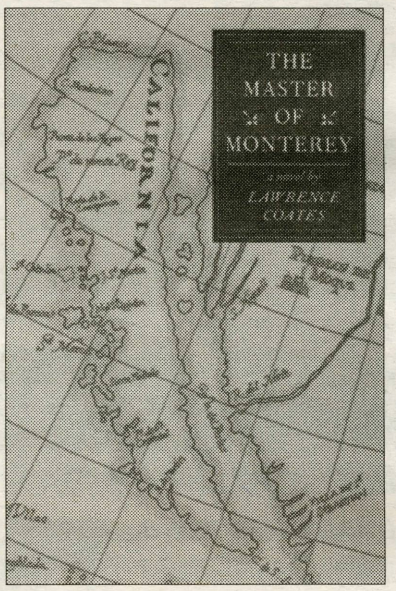

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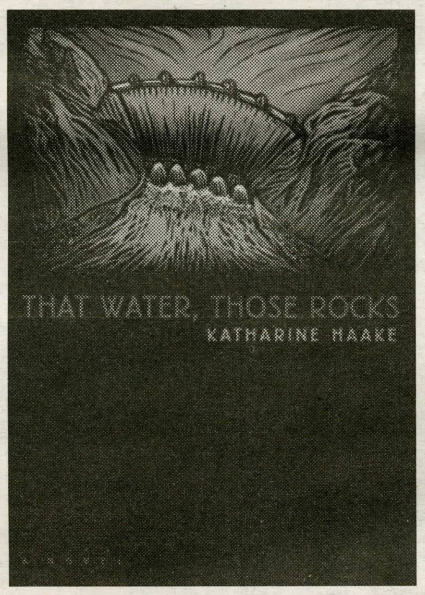

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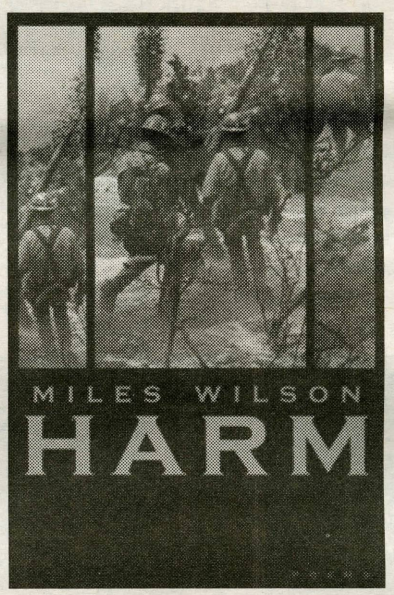

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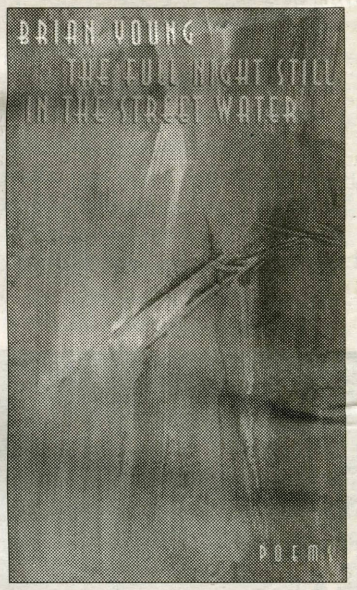

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made the distinction that John Cheever wrote about a class of people who would probably read his work, whereas Raymond Carver wrote about a class of people who would not ever read his work. I have thought that if I wrote a good book there would be plenty of people out there who would appreciate it and I would be rewarded. Mostly, I have a sense that my books are read and that's an encouragement. I wonder how writers survive when they know they are writing work that's so difficult, so challenging that there are not many people who will be able to read it at all.

Hill: Does the novel in any way function as a way to validate personal experience both for the writer and the reader? How so?

Huddle: I don't know. Validate, I wouldn't say. When I came home from Vietnam I carried some disturbing memories with me. And again I probably wasn't aware of all the pressure of it. My army experience just seemed to me like a normal kind of thing. That was when I took up writing in a serious way and made a real commitment to it. I think that writing enabled me to process a fair amount of the disturbance that I brought back with me from Vietnam. In that sense, it is always for me sort of a way of moving forward, not getting stuck in a particular place because of some psychological forces that would hold me back. Writing allows me to move through it. I wouldn't call it a validation. I would call it a method of examining my life and moving forward.

Hill: Samuel Johnson described the main audience of novels as "The young, the ignorant, and the idle." How would you characterize your ideal reader?

Huddle: Well, not that way. More mature people are more likely to like the kind of writing that I do. Unfortunately a fair number of the people who might enjoy my books are too busy to read them.

Hill: Johnson also warned about the "power of example" of fiction which can "take possession of the memory by a kind of violence and produce effects almost without intervention of will." Can today's novels be such a dangerous tool or has television now taken over that arena?

Huddle: I do think that films do that. I do not think that many people who read novels are taken up in that way any more. But wasn't Hinkley that kind of reader? Didn't the guy who shot Reagan claim that he was influenced by reading J.D. Salinger? That seems to me just random craziness, not anything having to do with Salinger's writing.

Hill: How about something like Kerouac's *On the Road?*

Huddle: I guess there are some people who continue to be affected by that book. But that seems to me not a harmful thing at all in the way I understand Johnson's comment to suggest that terrible things will happen to you if you read novels. In the time in which Johnson wrote, the novel was sufficiently new that it must have seemed like television or the Internet, a terribly corrupt force that had appeared on the horizon.

Hill: Many critics of the past rate the novel's ability to create a "fidelity to nature" as its primary characteristic. Do you think that is still true today? How important is realism?

Huddle: That does seem to me that it is something it can do, create the illusion of reality. But almost from the beginning, with Cervantes and *Don Quixote*, it's been more complicated than that. My youngest daughter, who's a pretty serious reader, is reading Tom Robbins. I would say that Tom Robbins is doing anything but being faithful to nature. A fair number of readers enjoy "infidelity to nature." I would have to put *La Tour Dreams of the Wolf Girl* into the unfaithful category because it includes so much historical fantasy.

Hill: Does Melville's notion of giving "more reality than real life can show" still hold true? Do you feel that your *La Tour* novel explores that extra-real universe?

Huddle: I would hope that that would be the case. If there is any new track in *La Tour* it would be in the territory of the "extra-real." I am trying to talk about how art provokes the imagination and informs our daily lives. Our daily lives can be pretty humdrum, but the dimension of it that comes out of responding to art lifts it up a notch. Our interaction with art makes our lives more worthwhile and interesting and fascinating. I am not trying to do anything original. But this idea about how art affects our lives is not one I have found explicated to my satisfaction in the books I have read.

Hill: In *La Tour* you place these two worlds in proximity with each other in a way that works much like a metaphor in that two things are placed side to side to imply a comparison. Is this an accurate description?

Huddle: It's a tricky kind of thing because there's always the temptation to go further than placing in proximity. But explaining the connection produces a falsehood. I have been chastised by some reviewers for not making those connections more evident. It's in this territory of the undeniable but unexplained connection between the fantasy world and the real world that I hope to offer my readers something refreshing.

If we give in to the notion that all of our thoughts and feelings and actions and everything about our lives has already been lived out, we're accepting a really despairing vision. Just the belief that there is something new and different out there to be taken hold of motivates most of us. Even the most brainless human being is after something fresh.

Hill: So your writing is against the sort of post-post-modern belief that all stories have been told?

Huddle: Yes. I would say that. It could be the case that I am able to believe that out of sheer naiveté.

Hill: In a letter to Turgenev, Flaubert admitted that "reality, as I see it, should be a springboard." What do you think Flaubert meant?

Huddle: And who was more realistic than Flaubert?

Hill: Do you feel when writing a novel reality is a springboard?

Huddle: That sort of describes what I start with. I

(continued on next page)

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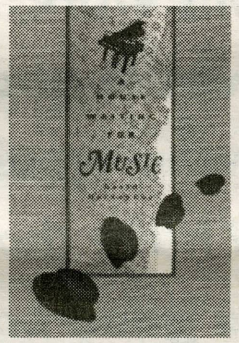

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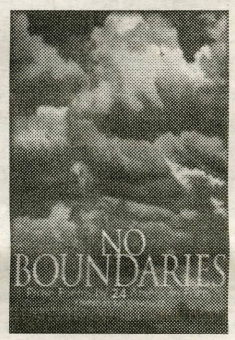

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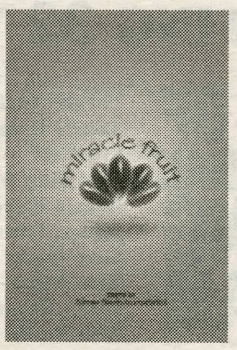

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Huddle

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construct boxes or forms of confinement, forces against which my characters struggle, and then I have to do my best to find a way out for them. The way out almost always having to do with the imagination.

Hill: What is it about working against something that can bring you some place new?

Huddle: Recently in a poem I came to this observation that every living creature carries out a struggle. Maybe that's the most basic fact of life. I think we look to artists to help us with the struggle—not to make things prettier or more pleasant, but actually to show us some methods for dealing with our difficulties.

Hill: So our basic condition is one of conflict?

Huddle: Yes.

Hill: Then an artist's project is to address that conflict?

Huddle: I think so. That's the instinctive thing that an artist does. Maybe it's not exclusive to artists, maybe all artisans address the conflict directly or indirectly. I'm sure you've noticed lovely houses in Burlington, Vermont. I sometimes see houses that weren't built for rich people, just ordinary houses, that have a lovely piece of craftsmanship. I'll be driving by a house that's falling down and all of a sudden there's this gorgeous detail at the peak of a roof or on the eaves of the porch. It's a common human impulse—to make something beautiful, something that shows us the way toward beauty.

Hill: How do you think novelists today try to ensure legitimacy to the novel and to ensure their work is not dismissed as trivial?

Huddle: Once again I think of people like David Foster Wallace or Don Dellilo who seem more concerned with that issue than I am. I can't claim that it doesn't enter my consideration, because neither *La Tour Dreams of the Wolf Girl* nor *Story of a Million Years* is ordinary. Obviously I've taken strategies that are unconventional. The main reason I've done this, however, has to do with my own difficulties with handling such a huge form as the novel. Ambition is part of a literary sensibility. But I don't consciously set out to be "important" in my writing.

Hill: Virginia Woolf's essay "Modern Fiction" argues that "if a writer were a free man and not a slave" to the conventions of the literary marketplace, there would be in his novels "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest, or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it." How powerful is the marketplace?

It has always interested me that someone made the distinction that John Cheever wrote about a class of people who would probably read his work, whereas Raymond Carver wrote about a class of people who would not ever read his work. I have thought that if I wrote a good book there would be plenty of people out there who would appreciate it and I would be rewarded.

Huddle: I'm trying to think about whether, in Virginia Woolf's time, writers would have been affected more by the marketplace than now. Here in the United States in the 21st century, most writers have teaching jobs at universities that allow them to make a living without having to rely on their book sales. It is certainly true that writers want to make money. Flannery O'Connor said that "No writer was hotter for the dollar than Henry James." But it's pretty easy to look at the books that are being published and see which ones are written by people who are trying to carry out an artistic task in the writing of their book and which ones are written merely to make a buck. It's almost comes down to metabolism, just who you are—you are this kind of person so you are this kind of writer. If I could write really trashy, financially successful novels I would do it, and I suspect that many other so-called "literary" authors would too.

Hill: As someone who is in the Academy you don't have to think about large book sales, but you still have novelistic conventions like plot and character development. Why is that?

Huddle: I like those things. They appeal to me. Oh, I know that's a terrible thing to admit.

Hill: When I think of that Woolf quote, who would read the book if the writer followed the advice?

Huddle: In some ways Virginia Woolf is like that. Only the really devoted can love every bit of what she wrote. I have always really loved the work of the very readable J.D. Salinger. He would probably admit to liking the ordinary things like the buttons sewn on a suit.

Hill: Do you think it's a generational thing? Since the '60s we have appreciated more ordinary and diverse stories.

Huddle: That's true. Democracy has a fair amount to do with it. I can remember the

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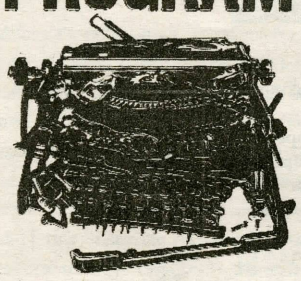

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first time I read James Baldwin's *Another Country*—around 1963 or '64. Man, did that book blow me away. It was in some part because it was a story that was right there, part of my own country and culture, but a story that I had never read before. You could almost say the same thing of Raymond Carver who tells the story of people who live marginal lives as alcoholics. It's the kind of the grit of those stories, the details of them, that make them compelling. I would say the same thing about *Interpreter of Maladies*. It's the details of a life that is at one and the same time extremely exotic and yet perfectly ordinary and American. I'd say it's the forces of democracy that are responsible for our receiving these stories of people whose lives haven't been available to us by way of literature until recently.

Hill: Does the importance of the novel have something to do with the way it affirms a constellation of human values?

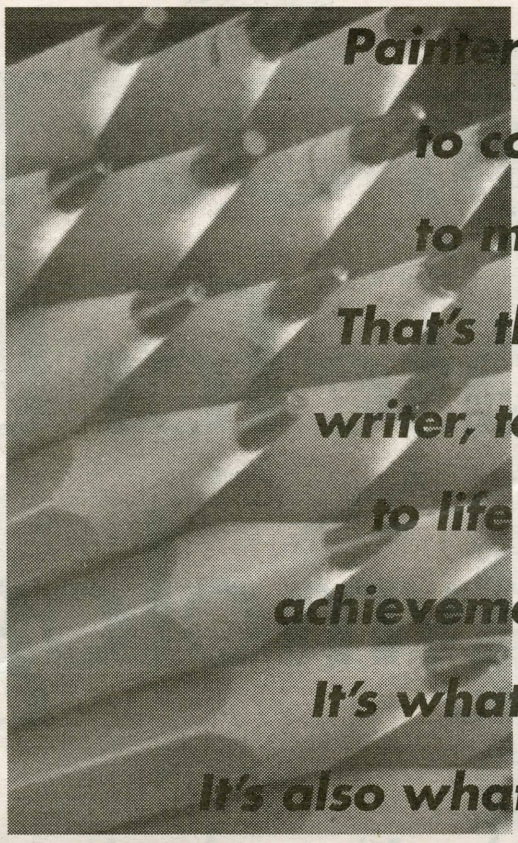
Huddle: I wonder about that. Certainly, the same could be said about a symphony or a painting, that it "affirms a constellation of human values." The novel can articulate human consciousness in a way that can't be done by other forms of art, certainly can't be done by television or film.

Hill: You've talked about the novel as a receptacle for big ideas. Does that also mean a vehicle for moral subject matter or ennobling or a mode of social criticism? What is it you meant by big ideas?

Huddle: When Faulkner observed in his Nobel Prize speech that man will prevail, that is pretty much the issue with any work of art. You are looking for an answer to that question. Can we go on? Can we proceed with any notion of hope? That's the ultimate conflict: hope vs. despair. That particular issue is played out in every novel, and it has to be played out in a new and convincing fashion. You've got to start over again with the same elements and make them work in a brand new kind of way.

Hill: So you would come down on the side of hope?

Huddle: Yeah. Flannery O'Connor says that people who have given up hope don't write novels because novels are such an awful experience that no one tries to write one without a lot of hope. That's true of artists in general. Then again, when you think of Mark Rothko and one of his paintings where it's utterly black with just a little peeping through of gray, you can think that Rothko is saying, "No, I don't think man will prevail, and it's not worth going on."



Hill: I always find Rothko uplifting.

Huddle: That's as it should be. It's almost like reading a punk novel where there is completely abhorrent moral behavior, but when you read it your response is almost a positive.

Hill: Do you think that there has been a shift toward hope or has it always been there?

Huddle: There's a story that always blows me away called *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* by Thaddeus Borowsky. It's about a concentration camp, about persons who actually had to collaborate with the Germans in carrying out the camp's work. It is just so detailed and so awful, but when you read it you can't help but receive some hope from it. Primo Levi hated false hope. I would like to put myself in that camp in that I hate false hope, which is all around us everywhere. That's the real difference. An artist is always looking for genuine hope, for useful hope. I put myself in that camp. I hate false hope, and yet when I try to make a story or novel or book, I am writing it out of a desire to find something hopeful.

Hill: Do you have anything else you want to add about the novel?

Huddle: Well, I guess I don't. For me it's a thrill to have finally published one, and publishing a couple of novels in this "mature" stage of my career may have saved me a lot of difficulty. Writers who have published successful novels early in their writing lives often have expectations placed upon them that are hard for a young person to handle.

Hill: Is it addictive?

Huddle: Writing novels?

Hill: Yes. Do you want to write another one?

Huddle: I do. Those two came pretty close together, and I was trying to do a third one right on the same pace. But it got stalled. I take that as a signal from the muse to be a little bit more patient.

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Roots in Our Throats: A Case for Using Etymology

by Natasha Sajé

Every piece of writing depends on two language tools—syntax and diction—tools so basic that writers don't pay enough attention to them. Of course, a story can employ very simple syntax and diction—like the folktale—and still be a wonderful story. But if we want to become better writers, we have to refine our skills in every way possible. My focus here is diction: English comes from the Anglo-Saxon and from Latin or Greek, and a writer can often choose between these "families" to achieve a particular effect. Moreover, understanding the etymology (word origins) of words can help a writer imbue her writing with greater power: buried or historical meanings of words carry amplifying images with them. And finally, accessing etymology is a way to access history and understand ideological change.

Language changes more slowly than culture, which prompts important questions about the disparity between the two. For example, the word "malaria" comes from "bad air" in Italian which tells us that when the word was coined, the disease was thought to be caused by the air around Roman swamps, rather than mosquitos carrying protozoa, which we know to be the case now. Another example is how the word "pride" has changed, from being a sin in Milton's era—indeed the first sin—to being a badge of honor today. The change in context is due to a change in thinking about individual power. A contemporary American contemplating "man's first disobedience" would most likely praise him for his initiative. Etymology is a tool that helps writers understand their cultures.

The writer who uses etymology, implicitly or explicitly, accesses not only the history of words, but of ideas.

My understanding of etymology and the ideological nature of language has been shaped by philosophy, specifically the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jacques Derrida. In his essay "Building, Thinking, Dwelling," Heidegger states: "It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man."[1] Language represents ideology, a web of assumptions about how the world is, a web too large and powerful for any one person to change. Language supports the status quo, which for example is in the case of English, patriarchal. Understanding etymology, however, gives us a way to access ideology and thus a way to understand the ramifications of particular problems.

Families of Words

The English language is lexically rich because of its history. When the Norman French invaded England in 1066, French became the language of the court and the ruling class, and Germanic-based Old English was relegated to "the common people." For a period of 400 years, English responded to the French influx via variance in spelling and by using different letters to make the same sound (as in for instance, "dough"), but most obviously by expanding its vocabulary. By Shakespeare's time, English had absorbed many Latin and Greek words. When Samuel Johnson wrote his dictionary in 1755, he was attempting to standardize what had already become an unruly—or gloriously rich—language, infused with new words prompted by colonization, exploration, and technology. When English came to the new world, it was further enriched by Native American words like canoe and moccasin. Although English, like French, German, and Italian, has Indo-European roots, its diction is less pure and more interesting because synonyms have roots in both the Anglo-Saxon and the Latinate/Greek, and because it has absorbed "new world" words.

Until our era, most writers learned Latin and Greek and had training in the history and structure

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of English, and in etymology. Even William Blake, who was not trained in classical languages, taught himself enough about Latin and Greek to use the devices of etymology in his poems. Times have changed, however. While 41% of high school students study a foreign language, only 1.5% of that group study Latin, much less Greek.[2] This means that most contemporary readers and writers must make a conscious effort to learn etymology by looking up words in a dictionary that lists word roots.

The writer who chooses words with an eye (and ear) to their history is able to make his writing more effective. Consider the word "inculcate," which is sometimes used as a synonym for "teach." The root of inculcate is the Latin word for heel, *calx*, so the word carries with it the image of a heel pressing something into the ground; when used as a synonym for teach, the metaphorical meaning is colored by this violent image. The first listing for inculcate in the Oxford English Dictionary is a 1550 use by Coverdale: "This practyse dyd the holy elect of god in the olde time not onli inculcate and teach with words but also expresse and performe in dede." Like Coverdale, contemporary writers can choose words from one or both families of our language. For example, the Anglo-Saxon word "woods" suggests something different from the Latinate "forest," even though the two are equivalents. Imagine the Latinate version of Frost's poem, "Stopping by the [Forest] on a Snowy Evening": whose [forest] this is I think I know... The Anglo-Saxon branch of our language is a boon to poets in particular because of its many monosyllabic words, which are easier to work with in metrical verse.

Below is a list of some Anglo-Saxon words and their Latinate or Greek "equivalents" :

fear	phobia
truth	veracity
mad	insane
lazy	indolent
fat	obese
woods	forest
shit	excrement
worry	uneasiness, anxiety
speak	discourse
dark	obscure
greedy	rapacious
short	insufficient
light	illumination
fire	conflagration
eat	consume
weird	idiosyncratic
sorrow	anguish, melancholy
green	verdant
skin	epidermis
chew	masticate
heart	cardio
water	aqua
first	primary
horse	equine
thrill	ecstasy
fair	equitable
will	testament

Lawyers, as you might notice from the last two items on the list, tend to play it safe and use one from each column to convey a single idea. Football coaches tend toward the Anglo-Saxon and bureaucrats load up on Latinate diction because—pun intended—it obfuscates. Writers have a choice between Anglo-Saxon "gut" and "body" words and Latinate or Greek "head" words that sound, at least to an American ear, more intellectual. When I gave this paper to an audience that included a native speaker of Italian, she pointed out that to her, the Latinate words sounded more natural and body-centered. Even within cultures, people may hear words idiosyncratically, based on regional, family, and bodily differences. But these differences are subtle. English is a dance between the Anglo-Saxon and the Latinate/Greek, although some writers tend more to one than the other.



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Look, for example, at these two second sentences

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from stories by Henry James and Raymond Carver: (1) "The pair of mourners, sufficiently stricken, were in the garden of the vicarage together, before luncheon, waiting to be summoned to that meal, and Arthur Prime had still in his face the intention, she was moved to call it the expression, of feeling something or other."[3] (2) "The four of us were sitting around his kitchen table drinking gin."[4] James and Carver set up their stories in an identical journalistic fashion, laying out who's doing what, when, and how. But the difference in their choice of diction signals James as a Latinate/Greek writer and Carver as a primarily Anglo-Saxon writer. This makes sense in light of James's concern with consciousness and his distaste for the body's grossness in contrast to Carver's pride in his working class roots. Most writers tend not to be so clearly one or the other—in fact art depends on balancing the two, using an Anglo-Saxon word when it might carry more weight or fit the meter and the Latinate when it might surprise or suggest a shift of thought.

Look at what happens when the poet Josephine Jacobsen restricts herself to Anglo-Saxon diction:

The Monosyllable

One day
she fell
in love with its
heft and speed.
Tough, lean,

fast as light
slow
as a cloud.
It took care
of rain, short

noon, long dark.
It had rough kin;
did not stall.
With it, she said,
I may,

if I can,
sleep; since I must
die.
Some say,
rise.[5]

(Reprinted by permission of University of Pennsylvania Press)

I often teach this poem when I teach diction, and I ask students to "mess up" Jacobsen's poem by substituting Latinate or Greek words for her monosyllables. The results are hilarious and instructive. The word "die" has a different connotation and sound than the word "terminate" or "expire," and "rise" is very different from "ascend," to mention just two of the possible substitutions. Anglo-Saxon diction, as Jacobsen points out, has "heft and speed." Using it exclusively in a poem like this also dictates the short line lengths. Imagine the poem with pentameter lines: "One day she fell in love with its heft and speed." Because the monosyllables are more concentrated, or pack in more meaning in a shorter space, the reader needs white space surrounding them in order to have time to absorb the poem. If the monosyllable were not Jacobsen's point, a Latinate word or two would provide merciful relief. Interestingly, 60% of English words have Latin roots, but 90% of English words containing more than two syllables come from Latin.[6]

Embedded Meanings

The etymology of a word can deepen the meaning of a poem by carrying an image, as in the poem below by Madeleine Mysko. See if you can guess which word carries an important image here.

Out of Blue

It wasn't wind or thunder; color foretold
A summer storm. The orange tiger lily,
The yellow black-eyed Susan, the pink phlox
Were too much themselves in the charged light.
The trees to the west sharpened against the sky.
The sky was exaggerated, a purple hue.

I set out to gather toys from the yard
And towels from the line, but at the hedge was struck
By hydrangea blue. I felt it travel,
Through me, toward the ground of a day
I couldn't quite remember, and I was left
Bewildered, bereft of I didn't know what.

I had to lean into the broad leaves, to reach
Deep, to snap stems until my arms
Were filled with blooms as big as baby bonnets.
The broken-green odor blessed the air
As I carried that crucial blue across the lawn,
And the maples blanched at the first gust of wind.[7]

(Reprinted with Madeleine Mysko's permission.)

Mysko's poem tells the story of a woman who goes into her yard to gather toys before a summer storm. She is sad, "bewildered, bereft of I didn't know what." She snaps some hydrangea blossoms to carry back into the house and is consoled. The poet refers to the color of the flowers as "crucial blue," and "crucial" comes from Latin, *cross*. Of course the poem is still understood without the reader knowing the etymology of "crucial," but the reader who does know sees the image of the woman carrying the blossoms as a suggestion of Christ carrying the cross, and the poem more clearly becomes a poem of faith and redemption. The word "blessed" is another hint that the woman is bereft without faith, and that faith consoles her.

Another embedded etymological meaning is contained in Paisley Rekdal's poem, "Stupid,"[8] which refers to the Darwin Awards, "commemorat[ing] those who improve our gene pool by removing themselves from it in really stupid ways."[9] Rekdal relates stories, such as that of a man who drowned in two feet of water or another who was stabbed to death by a friend while trying to prove a knife couldn't penetrate a flak vest. Braided together with these instances of human stupidity in Rekdal's poem is the story of Job, "that book of the pious man / who suffered because the devil wanted to teach God / faith kills through illusion." Toward the end of the poem Rekdal addresses Job directly, "Job, you are stupid for your faith as we are stupid for our lack of it, / snickering at the stockbrocker jogging off the cliff, though / shouldn't we wonder at all a man can endure / to believe… " The etymology of the word "stupid," although not mentioned in the poem, deepens its meaning. Stupid comes from Latin, "stupere," to be astonished, which comes from the Greek, "typein," to beat. It is the root of our words stupefy and stupendous. Rekdal's poem considers the borders between faith and insanity, joy and despair, life and death. When the reader keeps in mind the image of a person being astonished as the origin of "stupid," this image changes the evaluation of the behavior discussed, and consequently the "Darwin Award" winners, like Job, seem to be acting on faith rather than merely exercising poor judgment.

Examples of embedded etymological meanings are abundant in the work of earlier poets such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton. Milton, thanks to his knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes, coined many words, including pandemonium, disfigurement, and displode. *Dis*, Neil Forsyth tells us, is related to the Greek *dis*, "but picks up the flavor of the Greek prefix 'dys,' meaning unlucky or ill."[10] "Dis" is also the name of the inner city and principal inhabitant of Dante's Hell. This understanding gives the first line of *Paradise Lost*, "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit," deeper significance. The writer who uses etymology draws upon deep resources. The reader who understands this web of etymological connections has a richer experience than one who does not.

The word "etymology" itself comes from the Greek root, "eteos" for true. Understanding word origins is a way of understanding history, and more specifically understanding that context changes meaning.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's much-quoted "language is fossil poetry," from his essay "The Poet," speaks to his understanding of the primacy of etymology. The essay argues that the poet's power comes from his ability to use the archetypal symbols that are words. Emerson calls "the poet the Namer, or Language-maker" and writes, "The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture."[11] Walt Whitman also championed the use of etymology: "the scope of [English] etymologies is the scope not only of man and civilization, but the history of Nature in all departments, and of the organic Universe, brought up to date; for all are comprehended in words, and their backgrounds"[12] Joseph Kronick goes as far as to argue that "Whitman's project will be to refashion the language through an etymological uncovering of origins. This presumptive historical task will, however, be conducted on common speech, American slang to be precise, rather than within the Indo-European family of languages"[13]

Gerard Manley Hopkins is another poet whose interest in etymology is well documented in his diaries. For instance, the entry for September 24, 1863, is an etymological riff on the word "horn":

> The various lights under which a horn may be looked at have given rise to a vast number of words in language. It may be regarded as a projection, a climax, a badge of strength, power or vigour, a tapering body, a spiral, a wavy object, a bow, a vessel to hold withal or to drink from, a smooth hard material not brittle, stony, metallic or wooden, something sprouting up, something to thrust or push with, a sign of honour or pride, an instrument of music, etc. From the shape, *ker-*

> *nel* and *granum*, *grain*, *corn*. From the curve of the horn, κορωνι , *corona*, *crown*. From the spiral *crinis*, meaning ringlets, locks. From its being the highest point comes our crown perhaps, in the sense of the top of the head, and the Greek, κερας horn, and κάρα, head, were evidently identical; then for its sprouting up and growing, compare keren, cornu, κερας horn with grow, *cresco*, *grandis*, grass, great, *groot*...[14]

This is only half of the entry! In it, one can see Hopkins' mind ranging over the word and its histories, even inventing etymology as a way of combining images with history.

In the hands of a skilled etymologist, such riffs become ways to think about cultural and historical change, as when Martin Heidegger follows the etymologies of the German word for build, *bauen*, which originally meant dwell, to stay in a place. "The real meaning of the verb *bauen* has been lost to us. But a cover trace of it has been preserved in the German word, *Nachbar*, neighbor. The neighbor is in Old English the *neahgebur*; *neah*, near, and *gebur*, dweller. The *Nachbar* is the *Nachgebur*, the *Nachgebauer*, the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby.... The way in which you and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man is insofar as he dwells, this word *bauen* however also means at the same time to cherish and protect, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine."[15] At a time when building usually means ruining the earth by imposing our will on it, Heidegger reminds us how we have drifted from the notion of "cherish and protect."

A contemporary American novelist passionate about etymology is Paul West, whose book *The Secret Lives of Words* is a personal and entertaining etymological dictionary. West admits that he began a novel about astronomy with the word "consider," which means "set alongside the stars" from the prefix *cum* meaning "with" and *sidus* meaning "star." West writes, "Ancient astrologers such as Roman practitioners of divination coined this word, but more recent astrologers fix on planets. Tracking the courses of stars soon weakened into observing them, and that into observing in general, and in no time observing has become 'remarking,' not in the sense of 'notice' but in that of 'saying,' in which case it joins the abominable modern 'I was' and 'I went,' both referring to speech."[16] West's book, like Hopkins' diary entries, testifies to the addictive nature of learning etymologies. Every unknown word is a mystery waiting to be solved.

False Etymologies

An etymological dictionary that begins to unravel these mysteries and that specifically chronicles the American influence on the English language is Allen Metcalf and David Barnhart's *America in So Many Words: Words That Shaped America*. Their entry on the word "turkey" offers another model of an etymological journey:

> Whoever named the bird *turkey*—a word that English speakers began mentioning as long ago as 1541—made a big mistake. Although that bird came from Guinea in Africa, the English apparently first imported it from Turkish merchants. So, naturally, they called it a *turkey*. When English speakers established their first colony in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, they thought they saw turkeys there too. "We found an Ilet, on which were many Turkeys," wrote one. These birds were not from Turkey and were not related to the guinea fowl of Africa. But *turkeys* they were called, and *turkeys* they remain. Much of what we know about the Jamestown colony was written by Captain John Smith, whose efforts preserved the colony from collapse and who in turn was preserved by the Indian "princess" Pocahontas. Smith's accounts of the colony frequently mention turkeys as food, gifts, and objects of trade. In 1607, Smith writes, to celebrate the first peace after the first armed clash, the Indians brought "Venison, Turkies, wild foule, bread, and what they had, singing and dauncing in signe of friendship till they departed." Elsewhere Smith noted that the Indians made warm and beautiful cloaks from turkey feathers. Further north, as the Plymouth colony neared the end of its first year in 1621, Governor William Bradford likewise observed "great store of wild Turkies, of which they tooke many." Undoubtedly turkeys were among the "fowl" served at the first THANKSGIVING (1621) dinner...[17]

The entry also gives a sense of how "false" ideas take hold and then go on to have a life of their own.

So does Susan Mitchell's poem, "The False Etymologies of Isidore of Seville."[18] Isidore (560-636 A.D.), a Christian Bishop and scholar, produced *Etymologiae*, or *Origines*, as it is sometimes called. Enormously popular throughout the Middle Ages, this work attempted to compile all knowledge in an encyclopedic fashion. Isidore's quest points to a recurrent theme in etymology, that of the search for origins and universal truth. Mitchell writes that Isidore of Seville believed, "This one / from that, eyrie from air, so ear from airy, the ear / a nest that hears in air its own name" but then admits that she's "translating," that she's "making this up." However, if Mitchell invents the particulars, the gist remains: Isidore's desire to understand origins led him to make erroneous connections on his religious journey.

> He wants to follow the initial S for Salvation,
> pursue the long curve of the swan's
> song back up to the winding
> throat and dab the first fruit with his own saliva.
>
> He'll do it on hands and knees, the pilgrimage
> of each word to its source, first sound
> from which the others
> bubbled up, original gurgling innocent of sense.

Mitchell's poem suggests that the poet's interest in language is rooted (pun intended) in a different religion, that of pleasure: "I haven't his patience. I haven't got / all eternity. I skip to the parts I love best, the vowels / steeped like peaches in brandy...." The poem ends by stating that the language of pleasure is childish but also that pleasure is as powerful a

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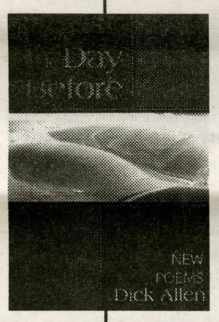

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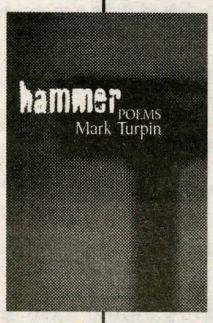

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motivation as scholarship:

The language of pleasure is makeshift, leaves and branches
hastily thrown. Of mud and dribble.
Of huff and puff and higgledy-piggledy.
Of rampage, ruckus. Of blow your house down.

If "true etymology" reveals history, then "false etymology" reveals wishful thinking, the connections we make in our effort to order the world. Often the "essential truth" of etymology reaches to Christianity. Gertrude Schnakenberg's poem "Supernatural Love"[19] gives us another vision of the "dictionary mystic" and the search for truth, focusing on the etymology of the word "carnation," whose root is Latin, *carne*, meaning flesh. The speaker's father "bends to pore / over the Latin blossom" of words, while his four-year-old daughter is trying to needlepoint. The little girl refers to carnations as "Christ's flowers," which prompts the father to look up the word "clove" (the scent of the flower) and he finds, "from French, for clou, meaning a nail." Thus in Schnackenberg's poem the child makes an etymological link that produces a mystical (but false, as the carnation takes its name from the color that the flower shares with blood) truth:

The incarnation blossoms, flesh and nail,
I twist my threads like stems into a knot
And smooth "Beloved," but my needle caught
Within the threads, *Thy blood so dearly bought*,
The needle strikes my finger to the bone.

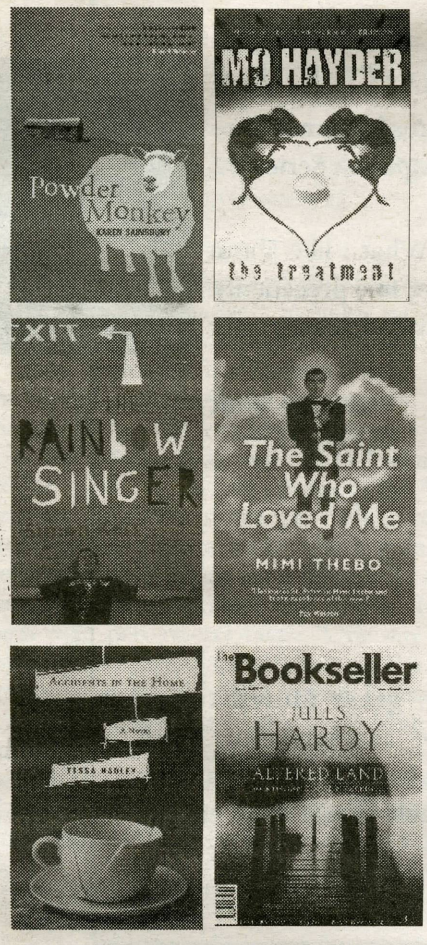
Other examples of poets who create "false" etymologies to think through problems include poets as disparate as Elizabeth Alexander and Allen Grossman. In Elizabeth Alexander's poem "Affirmative Action Blues,"[20] the speaker implores her boss not to use the word "niggardly" even though its etymology, she admits, is "probably / derived from French Norman, and that Chaucer and Milton and / Shakespeare used it. It means 'stingy,' and the root is not the same as 'nigger,' / which derives from 'negar,' meaning black, but they are, perhaps, / perhaps, etymologically related. The two 'g's' are two teeth gnawing, / rodent is from the Latin 'rodere' which means 'to gnaw.'" The poet is replicating the kind of leap common in a false etymology—a leap that makes sense even if it isn't accurate.

Similarly, Allen Grossman's poem "Sentinel Yellowwoods"[21] is a kind of ode to the yellowwood tree—cladrastis lutea. The root *lutea* comes from the Latin word for yellow, while the word for the instrument lute comes from German and Arab roots that contain no reference to color. Grossman riffs on "odorous silent adorning lutes" synesthetically combining the sight, scent, and sound of the trees into an intimation of his own mortality: "I am going to die soon, and their shadow foretells it / enlarging the world." That Grossman knows he is creating a "false" link is apparent from his reference to "flowers Arabian, and blazing with gladdening metals / Mysterious flies...." True or false, etymology in poems becomes a way to access ideology—that is, assumptions about what is normal in our culture. Word histories are traces of evolution (or devolution) in our thinking.

> West admits that he began a novel about astronomy with the word "consider," which means "set alongside the stars" from the prefix *cum* meaning "with" and *sidus* meaning "star."

Historical Impact

The word "etymology" itself comes from the Greek root, "eteos" for true. Understanding word origins is a way of understanding history, and more specifically understanding that context changes meaning. For much of the 20th century, Formalism



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(usually in its guise as New Criticism) reigned supreme, and literary critics examined literary texts divorced from their context. Gradually literary criticism has once again begun to appreciate—even rely on—contexts. Poststructuralist criticism often focuses on such contextual issues as history, gender, race, and sexual orientation. Even when a poststructuralist critic focuses solely on the text, it is to look for slippages, gray areas, and the non-sense of the thing—what is sometimes termed a Derridean reading, or deconstruction. Poststructuralists insist that etymology is important not as a search for fixed origins, but rather as a search for determinations.

Because narrative especially lends itself to contextual study, more exciting theoretical work is being done on narrative than on lyric poetry. For example, a New Historicist might ask us to look at colonial American medical records in order to understand the high rate of premarital pregnancy in 18th-century America, and this understanding changes one's reading of the novels of that time. Lyric poetry not only does not lend itself as easily to New Historical criticism, but takes its essence from human universality. Sappho's poems, for example, speak to us 2000 years after their writing because of the primacy of desire—a speaker who wants her love object to see her:

> He's a god, that man who sits with you, who listens to you talk and laugh. Seeing you with him makes my heart pound, and because you are lost to me, I can't speak, my tongue breaks into pieces, and fire runs under my skin. I'm blinded, my ears ring, sweat pours down, and my body trembles. Paler than summer wheat, I might as well be dead… (my translation)

No wonder that Sappho is more popular today than a poet like Dryden whose poems require so much understanding of context. History is interested in the unique, in things that happen once and only once, or the relationship of the singular to the cyclical, while lyric poetry focuses on the repeated feeling, on a timeless evocation of the human condition, particularly human emotion. Etymology, however, is a way for the lyric poet to access history and a way for the reader of lyric poetry to read more contextually.

While Isidore of Seville saw etymology as a path to concrete origins and lasting truth, since then philosophers have been chipping away at these ideas. Nietzsche writes, "Woman (truth) will not be pinned down."[22] Jacques Derrida elaborates on the analogy, pointing to the positive aspects of truth that is not fixed. Derrida argues that Nietzsche understood that women (like Jews) are artists and masters of style, and that style (the superficial) is a more useful way to think about truth than permanent core or centrality. Truth is transient, contextual, shifting; it is not behind a veil, *it is* the veil according to Jacques Derrida—not something to be uncovered, but rather contained only in movement.[23] Derrida is one of the more recent philosophers who, over the last two hundred years, have gradually moved to this understanding of truth. They have abandoned the notion of Descartes, for example, that truth could be arrived at through reason, and that once arrived at, would remain fixed. The Enlightenment confidence in rationality and definitive science has been challenged on this and many other fronts as when, for example, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein stressed language as truth's unstable "carrier." Language then—and by extension etymology, the unfolding meanings of a word—is not a vehicle for direct and final meaning (logocentrism) but is instead the medium on which constellations of power shape the true and the false. As such, etymology becomes a means to analyze these wrestling discourses. Truth changes according to context.

Quite a few contemporary poets make etymology their explicit subject for poems, offering occasions for thinking about contexts, history, and shifting truth. Etymology is also a resource I counsel students to use when they are stuck; I tell them to open the dictionary to a word or word history they don't know and put it in a poem. The key to this exercise is the initial state of inquiry that sends the poet on a journey of discovery. The poet doesn't know what the poem, finally, will be "about" when she uses the word's etymology as a starting point before she knows the twists and turns of its history. For example, when I decided to write about vanilla as part of a series of poems about food, and started researching its etymology, I discovered that it comes from the Spanish *vainilla*, diminutive of Latin, *vagina*, the term for sheath. Thus, the pod-shaped bean was named after a human vagina, and the vagina itself was named for the function it provides for a penis. This seems to me to be the quintessential demonstration of patriarchal language, a demonstration that might seem shocking, as when, one magazine editor to whom I submitted the resulting poem asked if the ending—"no matter that some words glide over the tongue, / entice us with sweet stories, / we're still stuck / with their roots in our throats" [24]—were a reference to *Deep Throat*. If we had continued our dialogue, I would have said yes, in the sense that women are dominated by the patriarchal nature of language in the same way that Linda Lovelace was dominated.

I can't imagine that Heather McHugh knew that her poem would take the shape of a "dirge" when she started looking up the string of words in the poem below. This element of surprise is important in writing poems that feel fresh to the reader: if it feels fresh to the writer, it will feel fresh to the reader.

Etymological Dirge

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear…

Calm comes from burning.
Tall comes from fast.
Comely doesn't come from come.
Person comes from mask.

The kin of charity is whose,
the root of charity is dear.
Incentive has its source in song
and winning in the sufferer.

Afford yourself what you can carry out.

(continued on next page)

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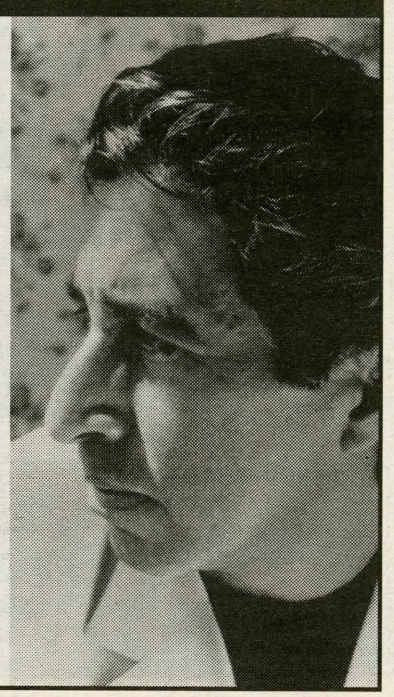

Sajé

continued from page 55

A coward and a coda share a word.
We get our ugliness from fear.
We get our danger from the lord. [25]

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The etymology of plants is the subject of a poem by Gary Snyder where etymology broadens the scope and shows human relations to the natural world. Snyder's poem, "Earrings Dangling and Miles of Desert,"[26] is an extended definition of sagebrush, Artemisia, the plant that grows over vast stretches of the American west, a plant rapidly being choked out by non-indigenous and faster growing annuals such as cheatgrass. Combining prose and poetry, Snyder tells us the growing habits and uses of sagebrush, as well as its variations around the world: for example, "mugwort and moxa in China" as well as its Paiute names. He ends the poem with a lyric ode:

Artem in Greek meant "to dangle" or "earring"
(Well-connected, "articulate," art....)
Her blue-gray-green
stretching out there
sagebrush flats reach to the edge
head away
emptiness far as the mind can see—
Raincloud maidens come walking
lightning-streak silver,
gray skirts sweeping and trailing—

Hail, Artemisia,
aromatic in the rain,
I will think of you in my other poems.

Snyder uses etymology to create the image of the earrings, the title for his poem, and as a way of "humanizing" a plant whose destiny concerns him. Etymology becomes a way of thinking about what is—and more important—what is possible. Through etymology, writers have the power to understand how ideology works, and perhaps, to point to, or even tug its tail. Understanding what is and why it is permits us slowly, incrementally, to change. The writer who uses etymology, implicitly or explicitly, accesses not only the history of words, but of ideas.

AWP

Etymology is also a resource I counsel students to use when they are stuck; I tell them to open the dictionary to a word or word history they don't know and put it in a poem.

Notes

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23. Ibid, 59-60.

24. Natasha Sajé, *Red Under the Skin*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh P, 1994).

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2004 American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize in Poetry. Judge: Yusef Komunyakaa. The prize of $3,000, with an introduction by the judge and distribution of the winning book by Copper Canyon Press through Consortium, will be awarded in 2004 with publication of the book in the same year. The author will receive a standard book publishing contract, with royalties paid in addition to the $3,000 prize, and a $1,000 grant for book tour expenses. The prize is open to any writer in English who is a U.S. citizen and who has not published a book-length collection of poems. The editors of the *American Poetry Review* will screen manuscripts for the judge. Please note: Manuscripts cannot be returned. Manuscripts must be postmarked between Aug. 1 and Oct. 31, 2003. The winning author and all other entrants will be notified by Jan. 31, 2004. Send entry fee of $25 by check or money order, payable to the *American Poetry Review*, an SASE for notification of contest results, and an SASP for notification of receipt of the manuscript. Send your submission to: *The American Poetry Review*/Honickman First Book Prize, 117 South 17th St., Ste. 910, Philadelphia, PA 19103. For more information, or complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.aprweb.org/bookprize/guidelines.shtml>.

***RUNES* Award 2003.** First Place: $1,000. Judge: Li-Young Lee. The competition theme is "Memory." Deadline: May 31. Entry fee: $15 for 3 poems (includes a subscription), $3 for each additional poem. It is *not* necessary to enter the competition to be published in *RUNES*. Editors: CB Follett and Susan Terris. More info on our Web site at <http://members.aol.com/Runes>. Send submission with SASE to *RUNES* c/o Arctos Press, P.O. Box 401, Sausalito, CA, 94966.

Sarabande Books announces the Woodford Reserve Series in Kentucky Literature. We will publish one book annually of poetry, short stories, creative nonfiction, or novella(s), or a short novel. Submissions are welcome during the month of July only from any writer of English who is a native of Kentucky, or who has lived in Kentucky for at least five years, or whose manuscript is set in Kentucky, or whose manuscript is about Kentucky. Please send a SASE for further information (2234 Dundee Road, Louisville, KY 40205), or see the Guidelines link on our Web site: <http://www.SarabandeBooks.org>.

Red Hen Press Short Fiction Award. A prize of $1,000 and publication of original short story in the *Los Angeles Review*. Mark E. Cull and Kate Gale will judge. Submit 25 pages maximum length story with $15 entry fee/submission. Name on cover sheet only. SASE for notification only. June 30 postmark deadline. Visit our Web site for complete guidelines. Red Hen Press, Sort Fiction Award, P.O. Box 3537, Granada Hills, CA 91394. Kate Gale, Managing Editor. (818) 831-0649. <editor@redhen.org>. <http://www.redhen.org/>.

Red Hen Press David Family Environmental Book Award. A prize of $1,000 and publication of original manuscript of nonfiction environmental writing is given annually. Alison Hawthorne Deming will judge. Submit 64 page minimum manuscript with $20 entry fee/submission. Name on cover sheet only. SASE for notification only. Aug. 30 postmark deadline. Visit our Web site for complete guidelines. Red Hen Press, Environmental Book Award, P.O. Box 3537, Granada Hills, CA 91394. Kate Gale, Managing Editor. (818) 831-0649. <editor@redhen.org>. <http://www.redhen.org/>.

Red Hen Press Poetry Award. A prize of $1,000 and publication of previously unpublished poem in the *Los Angeles Review*. Gail Wronsky and Mark Salerno will judge. Submit up to 3 poems with 120 lines maximum with $10 entry fee/submission. Name on cover sheet only. SASE for notification only. Sept. 30 postmark deadline. Visit our Web site for complete guidelines. Red Hen Press, RHP Poetry Award, P.O. Box 3537, Granada Hills, CA 91394. Kate Gale, Managing Editor. (818) 831-0649. <editor@redhen.org>. <http://www.redhen.org/>.

Red Hen Press Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award. A prize of $1,000 and publication by Red Hen Press is given annually for an unpublished poetry collection. Robin Becker, B.H. Fairchild, and Carol Potter will judge. Submit 48 to 90 pages of poetry with $20 entry fee/submission. Name on cover sheet only. SASE for notification only. Oct. 31 postmark deadline. Visit our Web site for complete guidelines. Red Hen Press, Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award, P.O. Box 3537, Granada Hills, CA 91394. Kate Gale, Managing Editor. (818) 831-0649. <editor@redhen.org>. <http://www.redhen.org/>.

2003 Andre Dubus Novella Award. Smallmouth Press is pleased to announce the 2003 Andre Dubus Novella Award. Winner will receive $1,000 and electronic publication. Final selection will be made by a nationally known, independent judge. All submissions should be between 75 and 150 double-spaced pages. Name should not appear anywhere on the manuscript. Include cover sheet with your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and manuscript title. $15 entry fee per novella submission. Make check payable to Smallmouth Press. Entries must be postmarked between March 15, 2003 and July 15, 2003. Mail entries to: Smallmouth Press, Andre Dubus Novella Award, P.O. Box 661, New York, NY 10185.

Ashland Poetry Press Richard Snyder Publication Prize. A prize of $1,000 and publication by Ashland Poetry Press will be given annually for a book-length poetry manuscript. Established in honor of Richard Snyder, cofounder of Ashland Poetry Press, the prize celebrates his "tenacious dedication to craftsmanship and thematic integrity." Deborah Fleming, Yeats scholar and poetry professor at Ashland University, will screen the manuscripts. Robert Phillips will judge. Submit a manuscript of 60 to 80 pages, with no more than one poem per page, and a $20 entry fee by June 30. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Ashland Poetry Press, Richard Snyder Publication Prize, English Dept., Ashland University, Ashland, OH 44805. Stephen Haven, Editor. <http://www.ashland.edu/aupoetry >.

2003 Oregon Book Awards and Oregon Literary Fellowships. Application forms for the Oregon Book Awards and the Oregon Literary Fellowships are now available. Three new categories have been added to the list of OBAs given to Oregon authors. Oregon Book Awards are announced at a ceremony each Nov. for published books of poetry, fiction, literary nonfiction, drama and young readers literature. The number of award categories has increased: Fiction has been split into two categories: Short Fiction and Novel. Literary nonfiction has been split into two categories: General Nonfiction and Creative Nonfiction. Young readers literature has been split into

(continued on next page)



Grants & Awards

(continued from page 57)

two categories: Children's Literature and Young Adult Literature. Poetry category is unchanged. Drama category has been designated a biennial award, which will next be given in 2004. Also offered are the following nomination-based Special Awards: C.E.S. Wood Retrospective Award honors a distinguished career in Oregon letters. Stewart H. Holbrook Award honors a person or an organization that contributes to the advancement of Oregon's literary life. Walt Morey Special Award honors a person or an organization that contributes to young readers' literature. Oregon Literary Fellowships for Writers, Publishers and Women Writers are awarded in Dec. in the genres of poetry, fiction, literary nonfiction, drama and young readers literature. Applications are available from the Web site <http://www.literary-arts.org> or by mailing a business-sized SASE to: OBA/OLF Applications, Literary Arts, 219 NW 12th Ave., Suite 201, Portland, OR 97209. Please specify in which program you are interested; one application per envelope. Completed nominations/applications are due: Oregon Book Awards and Special Awards May 30, 2003; Oregon Literary Fellowships June 27, 2003.

The 2003 Backwaters Prize from the Backwaters Press. Announcing the Reader's Choice Awards: Starting with the 2002 contest, as part of the annual Backwaters Prize the press will select two additional manuscripts for publication from among the twenty finalists. The two books will be published following the same guidelines as for the Backwaters Prize, except that the prize will be publication of the manuscript only. Finalists for the Backwaters Prize will be automatically judged for the Reader's Choice Awards by our reader's panel as soon as the Judge chooses the winner of the Backwaters Prize. Winners will be announced along with the winner of the Backwaters Prize. This contest is open to anyone writing in English, whether the poet has previous book publications or not. Full-length ms., (between 60 & 85 pages, not including credits, title page, contents page) original poetry in English. Include an SASP for notification of receipt of ms. by the Press, if desired. Entry fee: $25. You may submit more than one ms., but each must be accompanied by the $25 entry fee. Mss. received without entry fee will be recycled. Please make personal check to the Backwaters Press. Submission Deadline: Postmarked no later than June 4, 2003. Prize: $1,000 and ten copies of the book to the winning poet; publication in an edition of at least 500 copies, perfect bound. Judge for 2003 is Hayden Carruth. The Backwaters Press, Greg Kosmicki, Editor, 3502 North 52nd St., Omaha, NE 68104-3506. (402)451-4052. For complete guidelines visit the Web site <http://www.thebackwaterspress.homestead.com/bwprize.html>.

The Akron Series in Poetry has been founded to bring to the public writers who speak in original and compelling voices. The winning poet will receive $1,000 and publication of his or her book. The final judge for 2003 will be Maxine Kumin. Other manuscripts may also be considered for publication in the series. Manuscripts must be typed, preferably double-spaced, and consecutively numbered, for a total length between 60 and 100 pages. Manuscripts must be postmarked between May 15 and June 30. Simultaneous submissions are permitted, but The University of Akron Press must be notified immediately if the manuscript is accepted elsewhere. An entry fee of $25 is required for each manuscript submission. Make check or money order payable to The University of Akron Press. The cancelled check will serve as notification of receipt. Include with each submission a SAS postcard for notification of receipt of manuscript, and a SASE for notification of contest results in Sept. No manuscripts can be returned. Manuscripts should be sent to: The Akron Poetry Prize, The University of Akron Press, 374B Bierce Library, University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-1703. For complete guidelines go to: <http://www3.uakron.edu/uapress/poetryprize.html>.

2003 War Poetry Contest Second annual contest on the theme of war sponsored by Winning Writers. Judge: Jendi Reiter. Prizes: $1,000, $500, $250; five HMs win $50 each. Winners published online. Fee: $10 total for 1-3 original, unpublished poems, 500-line total limit. Deadline: May 31. Online submissions welcome. Guidelines: <http://www.winningwriters.com> or SASE to Winning Writers, 39 Avenue A, Dept. 111, New York, NY 10009.

2003 Pearl Poetry Prize offers $1,000 and publication for a book of original poetry. Judge: Fred Voss. Submit 48-64 page manuscript with a $20 entry fee (includes copy of winning book). Deadline: July 15. Send SASE for complete guidelines: Pearl, 3030 E. Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803, or visit <http://www.pearlmag.com>.

The University of Georgia Press Contemporary Poetry Series. Each year the University of Georgia Press selects four books of poetry for publication in its Contemporary Poetry Series. Poets who have never had a book of poems published can submit their book-length poetry manuscript (at least 50 pages) from Sept. 1–30. Poets with at least one full-length book publication (chapbooks excluded) should submit manuscripts from Jan. 1-31. Publication plus a standard royalty contract will be awarded. $20 submission fee payable to the University of Georgia Press. Checks drawn on a U.S. affiliate bank and money orders accepted. Publication is open to writers of English, whether or not they are U.S. citizens. Send SASE for guidelines to: The University of Georgia Press, Contemporary Poetry Series, 330 Research Dr., Athens, GA 30602-4901. For submission guidelines visit <http://www.ugapress.uga.edu/pressinfo/subguide_poet.html>.

Boston Review Sixth Annual Poetry Contest. Judge: Richard Howard. The winning poet will receive $1,000 and have his or her work published in the Oct./Nov. 2003 issue of *Boston Review*. Submit up to five unpublished poems, no more than 10 pages total. Manuscripts must be submitted in duplicate, with a cover note listing the author's name, address, and phone number; names should not be on the poems themselves. Simultaneous submissions are allowed if the *Review* is notified of acceptance elsewhere. Submissions will not be returned. A $15 entry fee, payable to *Boston Review* must accompany all submissions. Submissions must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2003. All entrants will receive a one-year subscription to *Boston Review*, beginning with the Oct./Nov. 2003 issue. Winner will be announced no later than Oct. 1, 2003, on the *Review*'s Web site <http://bostonreview.mit.edu>. Send entries to: Poetry Contest, *Boston Review*, E53-407 MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139; (617) 494-0708.

Boston Review Eleventh Annual Short-Story Contest. Judge: Ha Jin. The winning author will receive $1,000 and have his or her work published in the Feb./March 2004 issue of *Boston Review*. Stories should not exceed four thousand words and must be previously unpublished. The author's name, address, and phone number should be on the first page of each entry; do not send a cover letter. A $20 processing fee, payable to *Boston Review* in the form of a check or money order, must accompany each story entered. Entrants will receive a one-year print subscription to the *Review* beginning with the Feb./March 2004 issue. Submissions must be postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2003. Manuscripts will not be returned. Send submissions to: Short-Story Contest, *Boston Review*, E53-407 MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139; (617) 494-0708.

Iowa Short Fiction Award. Any writer who has not previously published a volume of prose fiction is eligible to enter the competition for these awards. Revised manuscripts which have been previously entered may be resubmitted. Writers who have published a volume of poetry are eligible. Current students in the Iowa Writers' Workshop are not eligible. Award-winning manuscripts will be published by the University of Iowa Press under the Press' standard contract. The manuscript must be a collection of short stories of at least 150 word-processed, double-spaced pages. Stories previously published in periodicals are eligible for inclusion. Please do not send cash, checks, or money orders. Reasonable care is taken, but we are not responsible for loss of manuscripts in the mail or for the return of those not accompanied by a stamped envelope. We assume the author retains a copy of the manuscript. Manuscripts should be mailed to: Iowa Short Fiction Award, Iowa Writers' Workshop, 102 Dey House, Iowa City, IA 52242-1000. No application forms are necessary. Entries for the competition for the annual Iowa Short Fiction Award should be submitted between Aug. 1 and Sept. 30. Announcement of the winners will be made early in the following year.

May Swenson Poetry Award. The winning manuscript receives a $1,000 award, publication in the spring of 2004, and royalties. Guidelines: Submitted collections must be original poetry in English, 50 to 100 pages. No restrictions on form or subject. Submit one copy of the manuscript. Name/address on cover sheet only. $25 reading fee (includes copy of winning book). Postmark deadline Sept. 30, 2003. SASE for announcement of winner. Manuscript will not be returned. Judge reserves the right to declare no winner in any given year. May Swenson Poetry Award, Utah State University Press, 7800 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-7800.

Bellwether Prize in Fiction in support of literature of social change. Applicants for the Bellwether Prize must be U.S. citizens who have some previous publication record, but who have not previously published a book that sold more than 10,000 copies. The submission must be an original, previously unpublished novel at least 80,000 words in length. All submissions must be accompanied by an application form and $25 processing fee. Submissions for the next competition will be accepted during Sept. 2003. Applications for that prize cycle will be available in 2003. $25 processing fee (Check only) payable to NWUSO/Bellwether. Postmark entry between Sept. 1 and Oct. 1, 2003. Author of the winning manuscript will receive $25,000, and will enter into a publishing contract with a publishing company in agreement with the Bellwether Board of Directors in a given prize year, and named on the application form. Publisher of the 2002 Bellwether prizewinner will be HarperCollins Publishers.

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Crab Orchard Award Series First Book Prize in Poetry. A first book of poems will be selected for publication from an open competition of manuscripts. Postmark deadline: May 15, 2003 through July 1, 2003. Manuscripts should be 50-70 pages of original poetry, in English, by a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who has neither published, nor committed to publish, a volume of poetry 40 pages or more in length. The winner will receive a publication contract with Southern Illinois University Press, and will be awarded a $1,000 prize. The winner will also receive $1,500 as an honorarium for a reading at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. All submissions must be accompanied by a $25 entry fee. Please make your check out to "*Crab Orchard* Award Series in Poetry." All entrants will receive a one-year subscription to *Crab Orchard Review*. Please address entries to: Jon Tribble, Series Editor, *Crab Orchard* Award Series (First Book Prize in Poetry), Dept. of English, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL 62901-4503. For more information, or complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.siu.edu/~crborchd/firstpo.html>.

The *FIELD* Poetry Prize. The winning manuscript, a book-length collection of poems, is published by Oberlin College Press in the *FIELD* Poetry Series. The winning author also receives an award of $1,000. The contest is open to all poets; those who have published in book form as well as those who have not. Previously unpublished manuscripts of poetry in English between 50 and 80 pages in length will be considered. Entries for the 2003 prize must be postmarked during May 2003 only. The reading fee is $22, which includes a year's subscription to *FIELD*. Checks should be payable to Oberlin College Press. Manuscripts will not be returned. Include a SASP if you wish to be notified that your manuscript arrived at our office. Include an SASE if you wish to receive notice of the results. Send manuscript and reading fee to: *FIELD* Poetry Prize, Oberlin College Press, 10 N. Professor St., Oberlin, OH 44074. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.oberlin.edu/ocpress/Main/FieldPoetryPrize.html>.

Drue Heinz Literature Prize. The award is open to writers who have published a book-length collection of fiction or at least three short stories or novellas in commercial magazines or literary journals. Manuscripts are judged anonymously by nationally known writers; past judges have included Robert Penn Waren, Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver, Margaret Atwood, Russell Banks, and Rick Moody. The prize carries a cash award of $15,000 and publication by the University of Pittsburgh Press under its standard contract. Eligible submissions include a manuscript of short stories; one or more novellas (a novella may comprise a maximum of 150 double-spaced typed pages); or a combination of one or more novellas and short stories. Manuscripts will be judged anonymously. Manuscripts must be postmarked on or after May 1 and on or before June 30. Send submissions to: Drue Heinz Literature Prize, University of Pittsburgh Press, Eureka Building, Fifth Fl., 3400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15260. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.pitt.edu/~press/series/DrueHeinz.html>.

The Frances Locke Memorial Poetry Award for 2003. This is an annual competition for which there is a $1,000 cash award, publication in the Fall 2003 award issue and 5 complimentary copies. There is a reading fee of $10 for up to 5 poems of no more than 2 pages in length each. Any additional poems are $2 each. All work should be typed or computer generated and legible. Include a short biography with your submission. Put your name, address, telephone number or e-mail address on each poem. Deadline for submissions must bear a postmark of no later than June 15, 2003. No e-mail submissions will be allowed. Include a SASE for notification of winning poem. No poems will be returned. Send us only your most imaginative work. Serious work that allows the language of your imagination to reveal for you a new perception of your individual life. Send entries to: Frances Locke Memorial Poetry Award —2003, The Bitter Oleander Press, 4983 Tall Oaks Drive, Fayetteville, NY 13066-9776. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.bitteroleander.com/contest.html>.

Glimmer Train Summer Fiction Open. $2,000 and publication in *Glimmer Train Stories* to winner. First/second runners-up receive $1,000/$600, respectively. Open to all writers, all themes, and all story lengths. $15 entry fee required for each story. Submissions should be made online at <http://www.glimmertrain.com>. Deadline: June 30. Results will be e-mailed to all entrants by Oct. 15.

The Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Series Book Competition is open to all American writers, regardless of previous publication. Submit one copy of a complete poetry book manuscript of at least 48 pages. The manuscript must be postmarked no later than Sept. 30, 2003. Each entry should come accompanied by a SASE. If the entry arrives with an additional large, self-addressed envelope with $1.24 postage affixed, the entrant will receive a copy of the winning book when it appears. Include a money order or check to Pleiades Press for $15 with each entry. Reading fees will be used only for book production, advertising, and other costs of running the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Series. Pleiades Press and the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Series are nonprofit organizations staffed by faculty members at Central Missouri State University and Winthrop University and volunteer readers. The winning writer will receive $1,000 and the winning collection will be published in 2003 in paperback by Pleiades Press and distributed by Louisiana State University Press. Questions about the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Poetry Series can be directed to Kevin Prufer at: (660) 543-8106. Manuscripts should be sent between July 30 and Sept. 30, 2003 to: Kevin Prufer, LMWT Poetry Series, Dept. of English, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, MO 64093. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.cmsu.edu/englphil/pleiades/poetryseries.html>.

Potomac Review*: A *Journal of Arts and Humanities invites submissions of fiction for its 9th annual writing contest. The fiction winner will receive $1,000 and publication in Issue No. 36, fall/winter 2003. Other fiction finalists may also be published. Fiction: Submit up to 5,000 words. Fiction entries must be postmarked July 1–Sept. 15, 2003. Put author's name and address on cover sheet only. Include a brief bio. Send SASE for results, if desired. Entries will not be returned. Mail entries, enclosing an $18.00 check ($18.90 MD residents) payable to *Potomac Review*, Montgomery College, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville, MD 20850. Entry fee includes a year's subscription. No simultaneous submissions accepted. Guest judges. First serial rights only for *Potomac Review*.

The Spokane Prize in Poetry. Publication plus a $1,500 cash prize. Send book-length manuscript (no less than 48 pages) of poems, plus SASE for notification and $25 reading fee made out to "EWU PRESS": Eastern Washington University Press, The Spokane Prize in Poetry, 705 W. First Ave., Spokane, WA 99201. All U.S. authors, regardless of publication history, are eligible. Manuscripts must contain page numbers and table contents. There is no maximum page count and poems may have been previously published in journals, anthologies, or limited edition volumes. "Selected Poems" collections will not be accepted. Deadline: May 15, 2003. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.ewu.edu/dcesso/press/getlit/poetryprize.htm>.

Guy Owen Prize Contest: *Southern Poetry Review* offers $1,000 and publication in Winter 2003 issue for best poem selected by ranking poet. Send 5-7 previously unpublished poems and SASE to: *Southern Poetry Review*, Guy Owen Prize Contest, Dept. of Languages, Literature & Philosophy, AASU, Savannah, GA 31419 by June 15, 2003.

The Richard J. Margolis Award of Blue Mountain Center is a $5,000 prize, given annually to a promising new journalist or essayist whose work combines warmth, humor, wisdom, and concern with social justice. The award was established in honor of Richard J. Margolis, a journalist, essayist and poet who gave eloquent voice to the hardships of the rural poor, migrant farm workers, the elderly, Native Americans and others whose voices are seldom heard. He was also the author of a number of books for children. In addition to the financial grant, the award includes a one month residency at the Blue Mountain Center, a writers and artists colony in the Adirondacks in Blue Mountain Lake, New York. Applications should include at least two examples of the writer's work (published or unpublished, 30 pages maximum) and a short biographical note including a description of his or her current and anticipated work. Please send three copies of writing samples. Writing sample will not be returned. Send applications to: Richard J. Margolis Award of Blue Mountain Center. c/o Margolis & Associates, 137 Newbury St., 2nd Flr., Boston, MA 02116. Deadline: July 1, 2003. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.margolis.com/award/>.

Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award. $1,000 Prize. Final Judge: Dana Gioia. Deadline: June 15, 2003. Sponsored by the *Formalist: A Journal of Metrical Poetry*. Sonnets must be original and unpublished. No translations. Writers may enter as many sonnets as they wish. Sonnet sequences are acceptable, but each sonnet will be considered individually. Entry fee: $3 per sonnet. Author's name, address, and phone number should be typed on the back of each entry. The winning poem and eleven finalists will be published in the Fall/Winter 2003 issue of the *Formalist*. Entries must be sent to the address listed below and postmarked no later than June 15, 2003. Enclose an SASE if you would like to be notified of the contest results by Sept. 2003. Entries cannot be returned. For further information contact: *The Formalist*, 320 Hunter Dr., Evansville, IN 47711. For complete guide-

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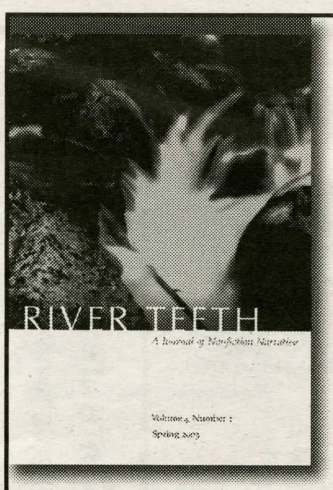

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Grants & Awards

(continued from page 59)

lines, visit the Web site: <http://www2.evans ville.edu/theformalist/contest.html>.

Robert Frost Poetry Contest. Please send two copies of your poem written in the "spirit of Robert Frost" (whatever you feel that may be). Poets may submit up to three poems of not more than three pages for consideration. Poems will not be returned and they will not be used for any other purpose. If you wish to receive information regarding the winning poet, enclose a SASE. Deadline for submission is Sept. 1, 2003. Please enclose a $10 per poem entry fee made payable to The Robert Frost Foundation. Mail entries to: Att: Poetry Contest, The Robert Frost Foundation, Heritage Place, 439 South Union St., Lawrence, MA 01843. Please contact <mejaneiro@aol.com> for additional information. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.frostfoundation.org/contest.html>.

Ohio State University Press/The Journal Award in Poetry. *The Journal*, the literary magazine of Ohio State University, selects one full-length manuscript of poetry each year for publication by Ohio State University Press. The award carries with it a $2,000 cash prize. Entries of at least 48 typed pages of original poetry must be postmarked during the month of Sept. Entries postmarked later than Sept. 30 will be returned unread. Include a nonrefundable handling fee of $25 with each manuscript (check or money order payable to Ohio State University). Entrants will receive a one-year subscription (two issues) to the *Journal*. Include a stamped, self-addressed business-sized envelope so we can notify you of the results. Manuscripts will not be returned. Mail to: David Citino, Poetry Editor, Ohio State University Press, 1070 Carmack Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1002. For complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.ohiostatepress.org/PoetryPrz.html>.

PEP Writers Contest 2003. Write a 500 word (or less) *story that begins with this sentence:* When I woke up I heard something that sounded like cracking ice. First Prize up to $10,000; Second Prize up to $5,000; Third Prize up to $2,500. All entries must be prose (no poetry please), written and printed (either laser or inkjet) in English, double-spaced, on white paper using Times New Roman or Courier New 12 point typeface. Entries must be postmarked before June 15, 2003. Contest entry is strictly limited to the first 1,000 submissions. Entry fee: $25. E-mail your entry to <donna@thewritecoach.com>; or mail to: PEP Contest 2003-A, c/o Donna M Chavez, 605 W Jackson Ave., Naperville, IL 60540-5207. Questions: <donna@thewritecoach.com> or call (800) 235-6156. Please visit: <http://www.thewritecoach.com/contest2.htm> for complete contest rules and entry form.

2002 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. The Academy of American Poets and *The Nation* magazine invite publishers to submit entries to the 2003 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize, a $25,000 award for the most outstanding book of poems published in the U.S. during 2002. The contest is open to books by living American poets published in a standard edition (40 pages or more in length and 500 or more copies). Self-published books are not eligible. Publishers may enter as many books as they wish. The jurors for this year's contest are Judith Ortiz-Cofer, Andrew Hudgins, and Robert Wrigley. Finalists will be announced in Sept. and winners in Oct. Send four copies of the book to: The Academy of American Poets, 588 Broadway, Ste. 1203, New York, NY 10012-3250. For entry form and complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.poets.org/awards/marshall.cfm>.

Guy Owen Poetry Prize is given by the *Southern Poetry Review* annually for the best unpublished poem offered in an open competition. Given in memory of Guy Owen, a poet, fiction writer and founder of *Southern Poetry Review*. Submit 3–5 poems with SASE. All submissions considered for publication. Prize: $1,000 and publication in *Southern Poetry Review*. Deadline: June 15. Entry fee: $15 fee, which includes one-year subscription to *Southern Poetry Review* to begin with the Winter issue, containing the winning poem. Send entries to: Guy Owen Poetry Prize, *Southern Poetry Review*, Armstrong Atlantic State University, LLP Dept., 11935 Abercorn St., Savannah, GA 31419.

Leeway Foundation's Window of Opportunity Grants support specific, concrete, and timely opportunities that have a significant impact on an artist's work. Women artists working in all disciplines are encouraged to apply and may request up to $2,000. To be eligible, artists must be current/permanent residents of the Philadelphia five-county area, and have already secured a commitment from a recognized organization or sponsor for the project for which they are applying. Full-time students are not eligible. Deadline: June 23 and Nov. 3. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.leeway.org>.

2004 Michigan Literary Fiction Awards. The awards are presented annually in the categories of novel and short fiction collection. Winners are selected by a panel of prominent judges. A prize of $1,000 is given in each category and the work is published by the University of Michigan Press in the fall. To qualify, contestants must have previously published at least one book of literary fiction in English. Deadline: July 1. Before submitting, visit the Web site for full details on the awards. <http://www.press.umich.edu/fiction>. Please direct any questions about the awards via e-mail to: <ump.fiction@umich.edu>. Michigan Literary Fiction Awards, University of Michigan Press, 839 Greene St., P.O. Box 1104, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1104.

Ironweed Press Fiction Prize. The competition is open to any book-length work of fiction. The winner will receive a $2,500 prize and have his/her manuscript published as a trade paperback as part of Inronweed Press's "Discovery Voices" series. A handling fee of $25 (check payable to Ironweed Press, Inc.) per manuscript. Include an SASE to receive notification of the results. Manuscripts will be recycled. Submissions must be postmarked by June 27. The winner will be announced on Nov. 3. SASE for complete guidelines. Ironweed Press, P.O. Box 754208, Parkside Station, Forest Hills, NY 11375.

2003 James Laughlin Award. The James Laughlin Award is given to recognize and support a poet's second book. Only manuscripts already under contract with publishers are considered for the James Laughlin Award. The Academy of American Poets awards the winning poet a cash prize of $5,000 and purchases at least 10,000 copies of the book for distribution to its members. Submissions are accepted each year from Jan. 1 to May 1. Judges for 2003: Mary Jo Bang, Thom Gunn, and Campbell McGrath. For entry form and guidelines for submission write to: James Laughlin Award, The Academy of American Poets, 588 Broadway, Ste. 604, New York, NY 10012 or visit the Web site: <http://www.poets.org/awards/laughlin.cfm>.

Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition. *Writer's Digest* is pleased to announce the 72nd Annual Writing Competition. More than $25,000 in prizes will be awarded in 10 categories. The grand prize includes $1,500 in cash and the winner's choice of a trip to New York City to meet editors and agents, or a trip to the Maui Writer's Conference. The first entry deadline is May 15, with an entry fee of $10 per manuscript, ($5 each additional poetry submission). The late entry deadline is May 30, 2003, with an additional reading fee of $2 per manuscript. For more information on categories and length restrictions, or for an Official Entry Form, visit the Web site: <http://www.writersdigest.com>, call (513) 531-2690, ext. 1328, or send an e-mail to: <competitions@fwpubs.com>.

New Letters Poetry Prize is offered annually for unpublished work to discover and reward new and upcoming writers. Prize: 1st—$1,000 and publication in *New Letters*; one runner-up will receive a one-year subscription and will be considered for publication. All entries will be given consideration for publication. Deadline: May 20. $15 entry fee entitles entrant to a subscription to the magazine, plus one entry to the contest. $10 for every entry after the first. Multiple entries are accepted. Send entries to: *New Letters*, University House, Rm. 105-A, 5101 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO 64110.

Alexander Patterson Cappon Fiction Award is offered annually for unpublished work to discover and reward new and established writers. Prize: 1st—$1,000 and publication in future issue of *New Letters*; one runner-up will receive a one-year subscription and will be considered for publication. All entries will be given consideration for publication. Deadline: May 20. $15 entry fee entitles entrant to a subscription to the magazine, plus one entry to the contest. $10 for every entry after the first. Multiple entries are accepted. Send entries to: *New Letters*, University House, Rm. 105-A, 5101 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO 64110.

Dorothy Churchill Cappon Creative Nonfiction Award is offered annually for unpublished work to discover and reward new and established writers. Prize: 1st—$1,000 and publication in future issue of *New Letters*; one runner-up will receive a one-year subscription and will be considered for publication. All entries will be given consideration for publication. Deadline: May 20. $15 entry fee entitles entrant to a subscription to the magazine, plus one entry to the contest. $10 for every entry after the first. Multiple entries are accepted. Send entries to: *New Letters*, University House, Rm. 105-A, 5101 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO 64110.

Poetry 2003 International Poetry Competition is offered annually for unpublished poetry. Provides prizes and unique international recognition for poets as *Atlanta Review* appears in 120 countries. SASE for Guidelines or by e-mail. Open to all poets. Acquires first North American serial rights only—copyright returns to poet. Prize: 1st—$2,000; 2nd—$500; 3rd—$250. Also 50 International Merit Awards (free issue and certificate) and many entrants are published in *Atlanta Review*. Deadline: May 12. Entry fee: $5/first poem; $2/each additional poem. Send entries to: Poetry 2003 International Poetry Competition, *Atlanta Review*, P.O. Box 8248, Atlanta, GA 31106. E-mail: <contest@atlantareview.com>. Web site: <http://www.atlantareview.com>.

Peter Taylor Prize for the Novel. The Knoxville Writers' Guild and the University of Tennessee Press are sponsoring the fourth annual Peter Taylor Prize for the

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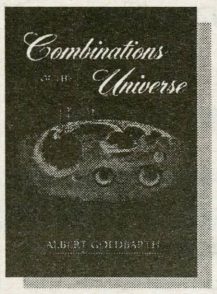

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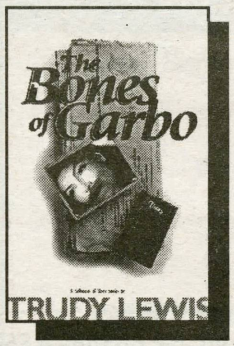

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Novel. The prize includes $1,000 and publication by the University of Tennessee Press. The judge for this year's contest is novelist John Casey. Editors of the press will consider finalists for possible publication. Open to both unpublished and published novelists. Entries should be postmarked between Feb. 1 and April 30. For guidelines, send an SASE to the Knoxville Writers Guild, P.O. Box 2565, Knoxville, TN 37901-2565, or visit <http://www.knoxvillewritersguild.org> or <http://www.utpress.org>.

Larry Levis Poetry Prize, Lawrence Foundation Award, Virginia Faulkner Award for Excellence in Writing, Glenna Luschei *Prairie Schooner* Award, Edward Stanley Award, Bernice Slote Award, Annual *Prairie Schooner* Strousse Award, Hugh J. Luke Award, Jane Geske Award, *Prairie Schooner* Readers' Choice Awards. The awards are given annually for the best works published in *Prairie Schooner* in the preceding calendar year as selected by the editors. Submissions accepted Sept.–May. Larry Levis Poetry Prize, $1,000; Lawrence Foundation Award, $1,000; Virginia Faulkner Award for Excellence in Writing, $1,000; Glenna Luschei *Prairie Schooner* Award, $1,000; Edward Stanley Award, $1,000; Bernice Slote Award, $500; Annual *Prairie Schooner* Strousse Award, $500; Hugh J. Luke Award, $250; Jane Geske Award, $250; *Prairie Schooner* Readers' Choice Awards, $250. 201 Andrews Hall, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588. *Prairie Schooner* Web site: <http://www.unl.edu/schooner/psmain.htm>.

Marlboro *Review* Poetry Prize. $1,000 and publication in the *Marlboro Review* is given annually for a poem or group of poems. Submit up to five poems of any length with a $10 entry fee by April 30, 2003. The judge is Michael Ryan. All entries will be considered for publication. Send SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines: <http://www.marlbororeview.com>. The *Marlboro Review* Poetry Prize, P.O. Box 243, Marlboro, VT 05344.

Arts & Letters Prizes. The *Arts & Letters* Prizes competition offers publication and a $1,000 prize for winners in Fiction (Short Story), Poetry, and Drama (One-Act Play). A $15 submission fee, payable in U.S. dollars, includes a two-issue subscription. All submissions will be considered for publication. Submissions will be accepted postmarked Jan. 1–April 30. The poetry & fiction winners should plan to attend a weekend Awards Ceremony in late Oct. or early Nov., featuring final judges. *Arts & Letters* will provide lodging and, if necessary, domestic airfare for winners. *Arts & Letters* plans to produce the winning one-act play at the Georgia Fesitval of *Arts & Letters*, scheduled for mid-March 2004. If the play is produced, the winning playwright will be invited to the festival to attend the production; lodging and, if necessary, domestic airfare will be provided. Send SASE for complete guidelines, or visit the Web site at: <http://al.gcsu.edu/prizes.htm>. *Arts & Letters* Prizes, Campus Box 89, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061-0490.

Ninth Annual *Ledge* Poetry Award. The award is offered annually for an unpublished poem of exceptional quality and significance. All poems considered for publication in the magazine. Open to any writer. First prize: $1,000 and publication in the *Ledge Magazine*. Deadline: April 30. SASE for Guidelines. Entry fee: $10 for three poems; $3/additional poem ($13 subscription gains free entry for the first three poems). Send entries to: *The Ledge Magazine*, 78-44 80th St., Glendale, NY 11385. Winners will be announced in Aug. E-mail: <tkmonaghan@aol.com>.

Vermont Studio Center Full Fellowship Competition. Given three times a year, the fellowships, include studio, room, board, and access to the facilities at the Studio Center, a year-round community of writers and visual artists. Submit up to 10 pages of poetry or 10–15 pages of prose with a $25 entry fee. The three full fellowship application deadlines are Feb. 15, June 15, and Oct. 1. Send SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site: <http://www.vermontstudiocenter.org> for the required application form and complete guidelines. E-mail: <info@vermontstudiocenter.org>. Vermont studio Center Full Fellowship Competition, P.O. Box 613PW, Johnson, VT 05656.

3rd Biennial Ursula K. LeGuin Prize for Imaginative Fiction Contest. Fantasy, horror, and science fiction submissions are welcome, and the contest is also open to stories that reach beyond the boundaries of these genres, but first and foremost they should be good stories. The First Prize is $1,000 and publication in *Rosebud*. It will be awarded to the best work of previously unpublished short fiction submitted to the competition. Ideal length is 3,500 words or less. Submit between April 1, 2003 and Oct. 1, 2003. There are no additional guidelines. Renowned author Ursula K. LeGuin will be the final judge. To enter, send one copy of your typed short story, a required reading fee of $10 (payable to *Rosebud*/LeGuin Prize) and an SASE to: Ursula K. LeGuin Prize, c/o J. Roderick Clark, N3310 Asje Rd., Cambridge, WI 53523. Questions, not submissions, may be e-mailed to: <jrodclark@smallbytes.com>. For contest updates and extensions, check the Web site: <http://www.rsbd.net>.

Atlantic Center for the Arts 2003 Artists-in-Residence Program. Free Master Artists-in-Residence program that allows artists to live, work, and collaborate during three-week long residencies. Each residency session includes three master artists of different disciplines. Schedule: Oct. 6-26, 2003 (application deadline: Aug. 1, 2003)—Eric Bogosian, playwright. Please visit the Web site: <http://www.atlanticcenterforthearts.org> for more information on how to apply.

43rd Annual St. Louis Poetry Center's National Poetry Contest. Judged by James Tate. Grand Prize: $2,000 and publication in *Margie*. Second prize: $250, third prize: $100. Submit up to three unpublished, typed poems (60 line limit per poem) to: St. Louis Poetry Center, 567 North and South Rd. #8, St. Louis, MO 63130. Deadline for contest is May 15, 2003. Application fee: $15. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.stlouispoetrycenter.org>.

Mid-List Press First Series Award for Creative Nonfiction. Open to any writer who has never published a book of creative nonfiction. Submit either a collection of essays or a single book-length work; minimum length 50,000 words. Awards include publication and a $1,000 advance against royalties. Simultaneous submissions accepted. Send SASE for guidelines and entry form or visit: <http://www.midlist.org>. Awards include publication and an advance against royalties. Deadline: April 1–July 1. Entry fee: $30. Send to: Mid-List Press, 4324 12th Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN 55407-3218.

Mid-List Press First Series Award in Short Fiction. Open to any writer who has never published a book of short fiction. Awards include publication and a $1,000 advance against royalties. Manuscripts must be at least 50,000 words in length. Send SASE for guidelines and entry form or visit: <http://www.midlist.org>. Deadline: April 1–July 1. Entry fee: $30. Send to: Mid-List Press, 4324 12th Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN 55407-3218.

Anhinga Prize for Poetry. $2,000 for the best unpublished manuscript of poetry, 48–72 pages long, submitted by a poet who has published no more than one full-length collection. Entries accepted until May 1. $20 entry fee. Send SASE for rules. Write to: Anhinga Prize for Poetry, P.O. Box 10595, Tallahassee, FL 32302-0595. Web site: <http://www.anhinga.org>, e-mail address: <info@anhinga.org>.

Edges: A Poetry Series. Poets should submit a full-length manuscript (minimum 48 pages) with e-mail address for notification of winner. The reading fee is $20, payable to CustomWords. The winner receives a cash award of $1,000, and copies of his/her book. The address to send submissions is CustomWords, P.O. Box 541106, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1106. The next deadline is Nov. 22, 2003.

Manhattanville College MA in Writing Program and *Inkwell* announce the 6th annual short fiction competition. $1,500 grand prize. Judge: Martha Cooley. Guidelines: Previously unpublished stories of 5,000 words or less; text typed, 12 pt. minimum, double-spaced, one-sided; cover sheet with name, address, phone, e-mail, title, and word count. No name or address anywhere on manuscripts. SASE for contest notification only. $15 entry fee per story. Checks made out to Manhattanville–*Inkwell*. Winning entry and top finalists published in *Inkwell*. Mail to: *Inkwell*, Fiction Competition Editor, Manhattanville College, 2900 Purchase Street, Purchase, NY 10577. Deadline for competitions: Postmarked by Oct. 31, 2003.

Manhattanville College MA in Writing Program and *Inkwell* announce the 7th annual poetry competition. $1,000 grand prize. Judge: Eamon Grennan. Guidelines: Up to 5 unpublished poems, 40 line limit per poem; text typed, 12 pt. minimum; cover sheet with name, address, phone, e-mail, title, and line count. No name or address anywhere on manuscript(s). SASE for contest notification only–manuscripts cannot be returned. $10 for first poem, $5 per each additional poem. Checks payable to Manhattanville–*Inkwell*. Winning entry and top finalists published in *Inkwell*. Mail to: *Inkwell*, Poetry Competition Editor, Manhattanville College, 2900 Purchase Street, Purchase, NY 10577. Deadline for competitions: Postmarked by Oct. 31, 2003.

Icarus International will award $1,000 to the winning entry in its Tenth Annual Literary Competition on its flight centennial theme, "The View From 100." The winning entry and finalists selected by the judge will be included in the *Icarus 2003* Literary Journal, which will be published in Dec. 2003. All entrants receive a copy of the Journal. Jeanne Murray Walker will be this year's judge. Poets are invited to submit one to three unpublished poems or prose poems, 100 line total limit, on the 2003 theme by the entry deadline of July 2, 2003. Send two copies of entries (one without/one with name and address) together with bio and SASE to: Icarus International, P. O. Box 1232, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948. $10 total entry fee is requested with submission.

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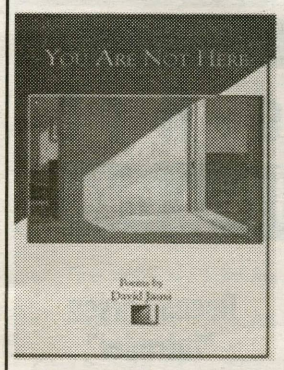
You Are Not Here

poems by David Jauss

Winner of the Fleur-de-Lis National Poetry Competition



In the central elegy of this powerful and moving book, David Jauss finds a way of expressing and transcending his grief for the death of his friend and former student, the poet Lynda Hull, through the severe discipline of jazz improvisation, retelling and magnificently reinventing the great myths of hell. Compassion, humor, restless intelligence, and flawless technique come together brilliantly in ***You Are Not Here*** to create poems of real tenderness and classical restraint.

–Maura Stanton

David Jauss's book of "night thoughts" is a meditation on mortality, and on the ways we transform the pain of our brevity into art. At the heart of ***You Are Not Here*** is a fierce elegaic sequence remembering a brilliant poet, Lynda Hull. Hers is a grievous, particular loss, but as any deep grief seems to do, it draws all losses unto itself, until the poem becomes what real elegies are: both a lamentation and a search for a way to move forward in a world where "without words there can be no return."

–Mark Doty

Fleur-de-Lis Press, Spalding University, 851 S. Fourth St., Louisville, KY 40203

www.louisvillereview.org • louisvillereview@spalding.edu • ISBN 0-9652520-5-1 • $10 ppd

Spalding University of Louisville, KY, is the home of *The Louisville Review*, Fleur-de-Lis Press, and a brief-residency Master of Fine Arts in Writing Program.

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When submitting manuscripts to publishers, send only crisp, clear copies & always send a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope (SASE) for the return of your work. You should only submit work to a publisher after you have acquainted yourself with that publisher's magazine or books. The publishers listed here are not necessarily endorsed by AWP.

Publishers & literary agents may send calls for manuscripts & notices of literary competitions to *The Writer's Chronicle*. We make every effort to publish free notices for our readers & fellow publishers; but, each issue, we receive many more notices than space permits. To guarantee placement of your entry, contact the editors of *The Writer's Chronicle* about classified advertising. $60 for 50 words; $1 for each additional word beyond 50. Classified ads appear in boxes. Contests with cash awards of less than $1,000 appear in Submit.

Pretext is the international literary magazine that brings together novelists, poets, critics, and essay writers in a kaleidoscope of forms. It offers writers a place for literary experiment and the opportunity to engage in debate about the nature of contemporary writing. We are looking for original short fiction, poems, essays, and memoir. Deadline: July 31. For full submission guides, contact *Pretext*, Pen&inc, School of English & American Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ; e-mail: <info@penandinc.co.uk>; phone: (01603) 592783.

MAMMOTH BOOKS runs two contests a year for book-length manuscripts: one poetry, one prose. For guidelines, e-mail <guidelines@mammothbooks.com>, or send SASE to Antonio Vallone, MAMMOTH books Contest Guidelines, 7 Juniata Street, DuBois, PA 15801. Check <http://www.mammothbooks.com>, <spdbooks.org>, or <amazon. com> for our titles. Out of the ice. Growing woollier. Tusks ahead.

Lee & Low Books, the award-winning publisher of multicultural books for children, is pleased to announce a writing contest for biographical profiles. Entries should be original, unpublished works and should profile the life of a person of color who has made a significant contribution to society. We encourage profiles of individuals who are not widely known or written about. The profile may focus on the childhood or adult life of the person, or both. Writing level should be appropriate for children ages 6 to 10. Entries should be no more than 750 words in length and accompanied by a cover letter that includes the writer's name, address, phone number, a brief biographical note, any relevant qualifications for writing about the subject, how the writer heard about the contest, and publication history, if any. Entries should be typed double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Writer should not send his or her only copy; submissions will not be returned. Multiple entries are permitted. Each entry should be submitted separately to: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Attn.: Biographical Profiles Contest. Dates for Submission: Entries will be accepted from March 1, 2003, to July 1, 2003, and must be postmarked within that period. The contest winner will be notified by Sept. 15, 2003. No other notification will be given to entrants. The winning profile will be published by Oct. 1, 2003, on our Web site <http://leeandlow.com/editorial/nfcontest.html> for a period of 3 months and the winner will receive his or her choice of $100 worth of Lee & Low titles, based on retail price. The judges are the editors of Lee & Low Books.

Fabulist and New Wave Fabulist (literary forms of science fiction, fantasy, and/or horror) short stories and New Wave Fabulist full length manuscripts sought by Omnidawn Publishing. No fees. Paid royalties. For submission guidelines go to <http://www.omnidawn.com.> For questions email <submissions@omnidawn.com>. No electronic submissions. Submit to Omnidawn Publishing, P.O. Box 5224, Richmond, CA 94805-5224.

88: A Journal of Contemporary American Poetry seeks submissions of poems and essays on poetics and/or other aspects of contemporary poetry during its open submission window March 1–May 30. Will consider mainstream lyric/narrative, formal, experimental, language-centered, New York School. 3-5 poems, cover letter with brief bio, SASE. Essays up to 2500 words MLA Style. Submit via USPS only to: Editor, 88, c/o Hollyridge Press, PO Box 2872, Venice, CA 90294. Guidelines at <www.HollyridgePress.com>.

Metrical Diversity. Non-iambic metrical poetry anthology, edited by Annie Finch and Natalie Gerber. Need dactyls, trochees, anapests, amphibrachs, alcaics, hendecasyllabics, etc. Meter must be exact. Light verse discouraged, innovative mixed meters and experimental/nonlinear work very welcome. Please nominate your favorite noniambic metrical poems by poets living or dead. You may also send 1-2 of your own poems in these meters, preferably previously published. Send in body of email (attached files will not be opened) to <noniambics@yahoo.edu> by May15. Please include name of poem, poet, and meter.

The Healing power of Story: Call for Inspiring True Stories. The publisher of the acclaimed book series *A Cup of Comfort* now sponsors several inspiring true-story contests each year. Every contest results in the publication of an anthology consisting of 50 or more creative nonfiction stories about the people and events that bring comfort, joy, and meaning to our lives. One grand prize of $500 is awarded for each contest/anthology, and all contributors receive a monetary fee and free copy of the book. We are currently compiling and seeking submissions for the following volume: *A Cup of Comfort: Courage*. Send positive and poignant stories about everyday heroes, in their own lives or in the lives of others; facing life's challenges (including disease, disability, death) with courage, dignity, compassion, and grace; taking chances; doing the right and noble thing, against the odds or against the grain. Submission deadline: May 15, 2003. Story Length: 1,000-2,000 words. Stories must be original, positive, based on real people and events, and in English. Preference given to anecdotal and emotionally evocative creative nonfiction stories and narrative essays. Please, no flowerly prose, poetry, journalistic articles, testimonials, profiles, or fiction. Simultaneous and previously published submissions accepted, with the exception of mass-market anthologies. Aspiring and published writers welcome. For guidelines: <wordsinger@aol.com>; SASE to P.O. Box 863, Eugene, Oregon 97440, USA; or <http://www.cupofcomfort.com>.

Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Established in 1999, the Cave Canem Poetry Prize supports the work of African American poets with excellent manuscripts who have not yet found a publisher for their first book. The winner receives $500 cash, publication of their manuscript by a national press, and 50 copies of the book. Judge: Quincy Troupe. Publisher: University of Georgia Press. Deadline: postmarked on or before May 15, 2003. Only submissions following these guidelines will be forwarded to the judge. African American poets who have not had a book professionally published may apply. Manuscripts will not be returned. No electronic submissions accepted. Send by U.S. mail to: Poetry Prize, Cave Canem Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 4286, Charlottesville, VA 22905-4286. For more information, or complete guidelines, visit the Web site: <http://www.cavecanempoets.org/pages/prize.html>.

Sandhills Press Book Awards. Sandhills Press, a nonprofit, seeks manuscripts for three book awards. The competitions are open to any writer, regardless of previous publication. Prizes will include book publication and a modest honorarium of $150 and 25 copies of the finished book. Sandhills Press is a Nebraska-based publisher, boasting more than thirty-five anthology, poetry, and chapbook publications during its 22 years of publishing. To submit manuscripts, refer to the guidelines at: <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/NCW/sandawds.htm>. Weldon Kees Book Award in Poetry. The entry fee to this contest is $10 per manuscript. Manuscripts should accommodate a 64 to 96 page poetry collection. Mari Sandoz Book Award in Fiction: The entry fee to this contest is $10 per manuscript. Manuscripts may comprise a group of short stories or be a novella; manuscripts should accommodate a 96 to 160 page fiction collection. John G. Neihardt Narrative Poem Award: The entry fee to this contest is $7.50 per manuscript. Manuscripts should be one long poem or a poetic sequence, of length substantial enough to accommodate a 28-40 page chapbook. The submission date, previously announced as April 1, has been extended to June 1. Authors may submit as many manuscripts as they wish. However, the appropriate reading fee must accompany each manuscript. Checks should be made payable to Sandhills Press, and materials should be submitted to the mailing address noted below. Inquiries may be addressed via e-mail to: <msanders@mail.mainland.cc.tx.us> and contestants who wish to see backlisted titles may submit an additional $7.00 and receive a full-length and a chapbook collection. All entrants will receive a copy of the winning collection in their respective categories. Sandhills Press, c/o Mark Sanders, 5614 Megan Street, Pearland, TX 77581.

Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory seeks essays for a special issue on literary murderesses. We seek essays on fictional murderesses as well as fictionalized accounts of historical figures from all periods. We are especially interested in essays that ground the literature in a cultural or historical analysis of crime and violence. Other topics may include discussions of literary violence in relation to gender, class, race, or language. Authors may include, but are not limited to, Angela Carter, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Aphra Behn, Thomas Hardy, H. Rider Haggard, Amanda Cross, Louisa May Alcott, and Max Beerbohm. *Lit* publishes critical essays that interpret texts from an engaging, coherent, theoretical perspective and provides original, close readings of texts. Submissions range from 5,000 to 10,000 words and must use MLA citation style. Please send essays in triplicate to: Regina Barreca, Editor, *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, Dept. of English, 215 Glenbrook Rd., Box 4025, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-4025. Deadline: Sept. 1, 2003. Web site: <http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~litjourn>. We also welcome submissions for

The New River

http://www.cddc.vt.edu/journals/newriver

Digital Writing and Art

Supported by The Center For Digital Discourse and Culture, and the Creative Writing Program at Virginia Tech

Ed Falco, Editor

Stephanie Strickland "Vniverse"

Rob Kendall "A Study in Conveyance"

M.D. Coverley "Fibonacci's Daughter"

Stuart Moulthrop "Hegirascope 2"

Deena Larsen "Intruder"



upcoming general issues.

KALEIDOSCOPE MAGAZINE. *Kaleidoscope: Exploring the Experience of Disability through Literature and the Fine Arts* semiannually publishes articles, fiction, poetry, personal essays, reviews, and art (including cartoons and photographs) that explore various aspects of disability. We are seeking submissions for issue No. 48, the theme of which is "Perspectives on Aging: I am Still Learning." Deadline for submissions: Aug. 1, 2003. We are looking for work (personal narratives, articles, fiction, poetry) which emphasize the *experience* of ageing. Remember that *Kaleidoscope* is a literary and fine arts magazine. We are not seeking material with an emphasis on medical or research information about ageing. To request writer's guidelines and/or send submissions, write to: Gail Willmott, Senior Editor at: United Disability Services, *Kaleidoscope* Magazine, 701 South Main St., Akron, OH 44311-1019. Phone: (330) 762-9755; fax: (330)762-0912; e-mail: <mshiplett@udsakron.org>.

DOROTHY DANIELS ANNUAL HONORARY WRITING AWARD. Deadline: July 30 (postmark). Entries must be orignial, unpublished, not currently submitted elsewhere, must have received no previous awards. $5 entry fee for each entry, fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. First prize of $100 in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. For complete guidelines, send SASE to NLAPW-SVB, P.O. Box 1485, Simi Valley, CA 93062.

THE JOURNAL invites submissions of poetry, short stories, self-contained novel excerpts, and literary nonfiction for publication. Send with SASE to: *The Journal*, Dept. of English, The Ohio State University, 164 West 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43210.

CUSTOMWORDS is a Cincinnati-based publisher that seeks to publish a wide range of poetry that celebrates the diversity of the art today. Many poetry presses focus on one or two styles, such as formalism or avant-garde, or one or two groups of poets, such as women. CustomWords aims to publish a broader cross-section of American poetry than other presses. For more information, see our Web site: <http://www.custom-words.com>.

PRISM *INTERNATIONAL* is seeking drama submissions. *PRISM international* congratulates Kevin Kerr for winning the Governor General's Award in Drama for his play *Unity (1918)*, which was published by Talonbooks. *PRISM*'s Spring of 2002 issue featured an excerpt from *Unity (1918)* For more information on *PRISM international*, including submission guidelines, please visit our Web site at: <http://prism.arts.ubc.ca>.

HEARTLANDS: THE NATURAL WORLD. Call for submissions. *Heartlands*, formerly the *Heartlands Today*, is going through some changes. We are evolving into a literary magazine. Our first issue will come out in Nov. We will also request and assign stories—profiles of people and places, photo stories, interviews, clusters of poems, fiction, and essays, around our theme of "Midwest: The Natural World." Please send manuscripts with an SASE to: *Heartlands*, Firelands Writing Center, Firelands College/One University Rd., Huron, OH 44839.

VIOLET REED HAAS POETRY CONTEST. Offered annually for poetry manuscripts of 50-75 pages. Prize: $500 and publication. Deadline: June 1. Entry Fee: $10. Manuscripts accepted year-round. Previously published poems eligible. Send entries to: Snake Nation Press, 110 #2 W. Force St., Valdosta, GA 31601.

OUR TIME IS NOW. New literary magazine seeks high-quality fiction, poetry, and essays by those aged 23 or younger. Reading now for second issue. Send submissions and SASE to: *Our Time Is Now*, Stivers School for the Arts, 1313 East Fifth St., Dayton, OH 45402. Visit our Web site at: <http://www.ourtimeisnow.org>.

THE LOUISVILLE REVIEW seeks previously unpublished poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, essays on the craft of writing, and student writing (K-grade 12). Send to: Sena Jeter Naslund, Editor, *TLR*, Spalding University, 851 S. Fourth St., Louisville, KY 40203. Include SASE. (Student writing must include parental permission to publish, if accepted.) <louisvillereview@spalding.edu>; <http://www.louisvillereview.org>.

PMLA. Submissions are being accepted for a special topic issue of *PMLA*, the journal of the Modern Language Association. The special topic is poetry; please visit: <http://www.mla.org> and go to the Publications. *PMLA* Journal section for a full description of the special topic and submission guidelines. Submissions must be by MLA members and will be accepted until May 23, 2003.

POETRY EAST is pleased to announce it is again accepting manuscripts of poetry, translations, reviews, and essays. Sample issues are $5. Manuscripts with SASE to: *Poetry East*, Dept. of English, 802 W. Belden, DePaul University, Chicago, IL 60614.

JABBERWOCK REVIEW is calling for submissions of poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and black and white photography and art. Please send no more than five poems or one story at a time. Send with SASE to: *Jabberwock Review*, Dept. of English, Mississippi State University, Drawer E, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

TWO LINES: A JOURNAL OF TRANSLATION, seeks original translations into English of writing from any genre—fiction, poetry, reportage, legal documents, anthropological data from the field, song lyrics, advertising, diaries, oral histories, case studies, essays—and short articles concerning the translation process will be considered. Especially sought are works which bring to the attention of the reader new genres and rarer languages. Previously unpublished work only. "Parties" is the theme for our 2003 issue. We are looking for any and all interpretations of the theme: celebrations, gatherings, affairs, factions, feasts, salons, unions, orgies, sects, partners, leagues, cabals, defendants, accomplices, holidays, conspirators, partakers. Submissions must include a brief introduction with information about the original author, the background of the piece, special problems the translation presented, and the way you see the piece in relation to the theme of the issue. For electronic submissions, save your documents as Rich Text Format. If you would like your materials returned, please send an appropriately-sized SASE. Send submissions to: <editors@twolines.com> or to: *Two Lines*, P.O. Box 641978, San Francisco, CA 94164. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.twolines.com>.

FICTION announces "The Non-Solicited Competition" for writers previously unpublished in a major literary magazine. $500 prize and publication in *Fiction* for winner. No longer than 5,000 words and postmarked by April 30, 2003. Must include a statement of any publication to be considered for the prize. There is no fee for entering this contest. You are invited to send in a brief response to stories published in previous issues of the magazine. Special rate for back issues available upon request. Mail entries to: The Non-Solicited Competition, *Fiction*, c/o Department of English, The City College of New York, Convent Ave. & 138th St., New York, NY 10031

RUNES A REVIEW OF POETRY, edited by CB Follett and Susan Terris, wants submissions for its 2003 anthology. The theme is "Memory." Submissions in April and May only. More info on our Web site at: <http://members.aol.com/Runes>. Send SASE with submission to RUNES, c/o Arctos Press, POB 401, Sausalito, CA 94966

POTOMAC REVIEW: A JOURNAL OF ARTS & HUMANITIES is a nonprofit, regionally rooted, at the heart of the nation, semiannual with a national and international range. Potomac Review invites submissions of poetry, prose, art, and photography. Poetry: up to 3 poems/5 pages. Prose: (Fiction/nonfiction) up to 5,000 words. Art/Photography: Images to run on 5.5 x 8.5 in. pages. Originals not accepted. Send duplicates of images on disc. See our Web site for further guidelines. Themes: "Beyond," Fall/Winter 2003; "Within/Without," Spring/Summer 2004. Non theme-related submissions also accepted. Send by regular mail to *Potomac Review*, Montgomery College, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville, MD 20850. Include SASE, brief bio, and e-mail address. Two complimentary copies for contributors; discount of 40 percent (regular $10, discount $6) for extra copies. Simultaneous submissions accepted. See our Web site: <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/potomacreview>.

FOURTH GENRE: EXPLORATIONS IN NONFICTION is no longer considering submissions for the Spring 2004 issue. Please send manuscripts only during our Sept. 15–Dec. 15, 2003 reading period. For guidelines, e-mail David Cooper/Michael Steinberg, Editors, at <fourthgenre@cal.msu.edu>. Please send all editorial inquiries to the e-mail address above, not to the Michigan State University Press. To subscribe, contact Michigan State University Press, Journals Division; 1405 South Harrison Road; 25 Manly Miles Building; East Lansing, MI 48823-5245; phone (517) 355-9543x111; or e-mail <hjm4@hotmail.com>. Subscriptions:$25 for one year (2 issues). Sample copy: $15.

PAPER STREET, a new biannual premiering in Spring 2004, seeks finest quality fiction and poetry from new and established writers. Reading period for both 2004 issues is May 1, 2003–Aug. 31,2003. Submit poetry and fiction with short bio to P.O. Box 14786, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-0786. Send SASE for guidelines or contact <PaperStreetPress@aol.com>.

ROSELILY READING SERIES. Roselily Productions is soliciting short scripts for its 2003 Reading Series, preferably three character minimum, to 6 character maximum, comedy, drama, dramedy, diverse multinational, multicultural casting, including roles for those who sign, are wheelchair bound etc. (all inclusive), play(s) should reflect the diversity of urban American life and can be in other settings and more momogeneious if the themes are universal. Would like to see foreign language phrases and sensibility, with simple phonetics next to or under the phrase, provided for the performers. There will be an honorarium of

(continued on next page)

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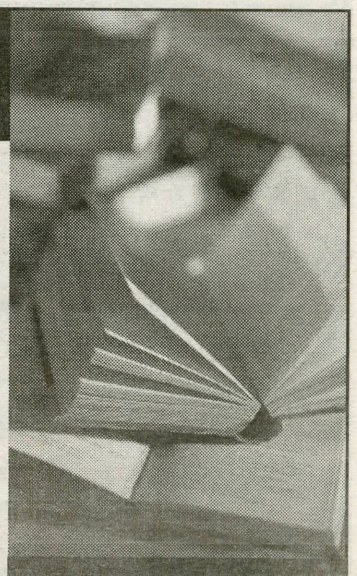
Tony Eprile, *fiction*
Indira Ganesan, *fiction*
Susan Goodman, *children's and young adult nonfiction*
Emily Hiestand, *nonfiction*
Alexandra Johnson, *nonfiction*
Christina Shea, *fiction*
Deborah Wiles, *children's and young adult fiction*

Visiting faculty 2003–2004:
Ellen Driscoll
Robie H. Harris
Marie Howe
Gail Mazur
Roland Merullo
Sue Miller
Robert Pinsky
Lloyd Schwartz
Maurice Sendak
Tom Sleigh



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(continued from page 63)

$100, plus certificates of merit awards and the possibility of production and/or publishing opportunity. We are exending our Feb. deadline as listed in The Dramatists Sourcebook, on a month by month basis, until late Spring. Scripts must include SASE, 30 pages maximum. Absolutely no phone calls. Send to: Laura Cosentino/Artistic Director, Roselily Productions, 862-49th St., Brooklyn, New York 11220-2422. Please mark the envelope: ADRS/TMC. There are hungry playwrights somewhere and we are hungry for their submissions. You can e-mail me Laura Cosentino/Artistic Director at <Thebabblersvp@planet-save.com>. Roselily Productions with Purple pRose Publications will be publishing two new plays and poetry after the 2003 competition and reading series.

THERE'S ALWAYS A STORY is looking for short stories, travel essays, and poetry begging to be read aloud. No children's stories. Selected submissions are recorded by seasoned actors and distributed exclusively to spas and luxury hotels as a guest service. Writers will receive $250 for each selected submission. (Poetry will be reimbursed per collection of work accepted.) Additionally, your bio and contact information will be prominently displayed at the spas and hotels. Keep short stories and essays under 3,000 words. No limit on poetry. No fee. No simultaneous submissions, please. Send with e-mail address and SASE to: There's Always a Story, 2311 Abrams Road, Ste. 100, Dallas, TX 75214. For more information, go to <http://www.theresalwaysastory.com>.

NATURAL BRIDGE, the literary journal published by the MFA Program at the University of Missouri, is seeking fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and poetry in translation for issue number 11, an issue that hopes to highlight the strength and power of the short story in all its forms. Though the guest editor, Mary Troy, is making a special call for the short story, she welcomes, as always, good poetry, poetry in translation, and creative nonfiction. Submit only between July 1 and Aug. 31, 2003. You will be notified by Dec. of 2003. Multiple submissions are acceptable. *Natural Bridge* number 11 will be published and distributed in May 2004. Send submissions to Mary Troy, Editor, *Natural Bridge*, Dept. of English, University of Missouri - St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Rd, St. Louis, MO 63121. Contact <marytroy@umsl.edu>. No electronic submissions.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? FAT, AS A MATTER OF FACT. The editors of the first fat fiction and poetry anthology seek previously unpublished personal essays and memoirs for their second anthology. We are looking for creative nonfiction that explores obesity and the fat experience from a unique perspective. Work should not exceed 8,000 words, and should be received by Aug. 31, 2003. Send manuscripts and SASEs to: Ira Sukrungruang, SUNY Oswego, English Dept., 207E Swetman Hall, Oswego, NY 13126.

THIRD ANNUAL LITERARY SASHIMI CONTEST: Send a 60-80 page collection of poems or short stories, or a novella, and let us sample your brilliance. The winning manuscript will be published by Gorsky Press. The winning author will receive $1,000. Reading fee: $15. Deadline: July 15, 2003. Gorsky Press, PO Box 42024, Los Angeles, CA 90042, <http://www.gorskypress.com>.

SPECTACULUM, an annual literary journal dedicated to poetry at length, will accept submissions for its 2004 issue beginning July 1, 2003. *Spectaculum* publishes five poets per issue, presenting at least 10 pages of each poet's work. We seek long poems, series, projects, and distinct, developed bodies of works that would be best presented at length. Submissions, sample orders, and/or inquiries may be sent to Endi Felicia Hartigan, Editor, *Spectaculum*, 927 S.E. 45th, Portland, OR 97215. No SASE, no response.

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TOP NYC BOOK EDITOR specializing in literary fiction, narrative nonfiction, and other genres will evaluate and polish your manuscript, help you navigate the publishing scene, and maximize your chances of publication. Call or write for free consultation: (212) 673-8366, <ruthg@nyc.rr.com>.

GRADUATE OF UC - IRVINE MFA PROGRAM, writing teacher, and experienced editor critiques, edits, and proofs manuscripts of all kinds, including novels, short stories, screenplays, and nonfiction. Manuscripts I've edited have found homes at major publishing houses. Rates are flexible depending on level of service. Call or email for a free estimate! Andrea Troyer: (323) 655-2019 or <atroyer@uci.edu>.

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Conferences, Colonies,& Centers

See the Web site of Writers' Conferences and Centers for more information and a calendar of the best conferences for writers: <http://www.awpwriter.org/wcc>.

Literary centers, colonies, & conferences may send notices of literary gatherings to *The Writer's Chronicle*. We make every effort to publish free notices for our readers & fellow literary organizations; but, each issue, we receive many more notices than space permits. To guarantee placement of your entry, contact the editors of *The Writer's Chronicle* about classified advertising. $60 for an entry of 50 words; $1 for each additional word beyond 50. Classified ads appear in boxes.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SOUTHERN LITERATURE FESTIVAL. Will honor George Garrett, Oct. 2-4, 2003. Participants include Jill McCorkle, Kelly Cherry, Reetika Vazirani, Henry Taylor, and scores of others. Readings, panels, agents, films. Students register free. For more information, e-mail: <mkallet@utk.edu> or visit the Web site: <http://web.utk.edu/~english/cw.georgecon.htm>.

NATIONAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION'S 2003 CONFERENCE. The National Writers Association Foundation announced their June 13–15 2003 Conference in Denver, CO. The conference will feature author W. Bruce Cameron and magazine and book editors. Hollywood producers will also be in attendance. The conference is open to the public. Daily and banquet rates are available upon request. Further information is available at the Web site: <http://www.nationalwriters.com> or by calling (303) 841-0246.

AEGEAN ARTS CIRCLE. Creative Writing Workshops on the Greek island of Andros. June 30-July 9 and July 13-July 22 with award-winning writers Kitsi Watterson, Creative Writing Professor at Princeton University and Brenda McClain, fiction writing instructor at North Carolina's Writer's Workshop. Visit us: <http://www.aegeanartscircle.com>. Contact us: <info@aegeanartscircle.com>.

JENTEL ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM. Offering one month residencies in rural ranch setting. Includes accommodation, studio, $400 stipend to visual artists and writers. Application and information: <http://www.jentelarts.org>. Jan. 15-May 13, 2004 Season Deadline: Sept. 15, 2003. May15- Dec.13, 2004 Season Deadline: Jan. 15, 2004.

"BEING A COMMITTED WOMAN WRITER TODAY: MAKING IT HAPPEN," will be a six-day retreat bringing together women writers who are just beginning their careers with nationally and internationally known authors for workshops and intense dialogue. Retreat is limited to 36 writers who will be screened for quality of work and level of commitment. A Room of Her Own Foundation is sponsoring this retreat to be held at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico August 11-17, 2003. For workshop details and application information, visit the foundation's Web site at <http://www.aroomofherownfoundation.org/> or write to P.O. Box 778, Placitas, NM 87043.

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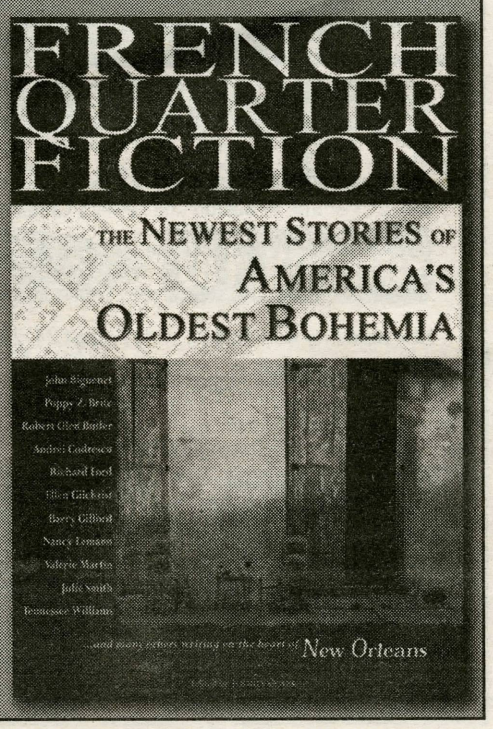

Books by Members

Members may list new titles in this column. Send books to AWP, *The Writer's Chronicle*; please note the price if it is not listed on the book.

Rooms are Never Finished, poems by Aga Shahid Ali. W.W. Norton & Company: $12.00 paper.

You Alone are Real to Me: Remembering Rainer Maria Rilke, by Lou Andreas-Salomé, tr. by Angela von der Lippe. BOA Editions, Ltd.: $22.00 cloth.

Any Kind of Excuse, poems by Nin Andrews. Kent State University Press: $6.00 paper.

Post-Freudian Dreaming, stories by Dick Bentley. Amherst Writers and Artists Press: $16.00 paper.

The Trip to Bordeaux by Ludwig Harig, tr. by Susan Bernofsky. Burning Deck: $10.00 paper.

Locales: Poems from the Fellowship of Southern Writers, ed. by Fred Chappell. Louisiana State University Press: $34.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.

The Master of Monterey, a novel by Lawrence Coates. University of Nevada Press: $20.00 paper.

The Next American Essay, ed. by John D'Agata. Graywolf Press: $18.00 paper.

We Fish: The Journey to Fatherhood, by Jack L. Daniel and Omari C. Daniel. University of Pittsburgh Press: $25.00 cloth.

A Child's Garden of Grammar, by Tom Disch, cartoons by Dave Morice. University of Michigan Press: $14.95 paper.

Serious Pink, poems by Sharon Dolin. Marsh Hawk Press: $15.00 paper.

Work Done Right, poems by David Dominguez. University of Arizona Press: $15.95 paper.

Lean Down Your Ear upon the Earth, and Listen: Thomas Wolfe's Greener Modernism, by Robert Taylor Ensign. University of South Carolina Press: $29.95 cloth.

Understanding Robert Coover, by Brian K. Evenson. University of South Carolina Press: $34.95 cloth.

The Palace of Ashes, poems by Sherry Fairchok. CavanKerry Press: $14.00 paper.

Soft Sift, poems by Mark Ford. Harcourt: $23.00 cloth.

Frankenstein was a Negro, poems by Charles Fort. Logan House Press.

Gut Feelings: A Writer's Truths and Minute Inventions, by Merrill Joan Gerber. University of Wisconsin Press: $24.95 cloth.

Davenport's Version, by John Gery. Portals Press: $20.00 paper.

Autumn Grasses: Poems, by Margaret Gibson. Louisiana State University Press: $26.95 cloth, $17.95 paper.

No Boundaries: Prose Poems by 24 American Poets, ed. by Ray Gonzalez. Tupelo Press.

WILL@epicqwest.com, memoir by Tom Grimes. Ludlow Press: $12.95 paper.

That Water, Those Rocks, a novel by Katharine Haake. University of Nevada Press: $18.00 paper.

Narrating Knowledge in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction, by Donald E. Hardy. University of South Carolina Press: $29.95 cloth.

A Private Madness: The Genius of Elinor Wylie, by Evelyn Hively. Kent State University Press: $29.00 paper.

Beyond Silence: Selected Shorter Poems, 1948–2003, by Daniel Hoffman. Louisiana State University Press: $49.95 cloth, $26.95 paper.

What I Cannot Say to You, stories by Vanessa Furse Jackson. University of Missouri Press: $15.95 paper.

The Starry Messenger, by George Keithley. University of Pittsburgh Press: $12.95 paper.

Orphics, poems by Leonard Kress. Kent State University Press: $6.00 paper.

Small Boat, poems by Lesle Lewis. University of Iowa Press: $13.00 paper.

Echoes of Memory, poems by Lucio Mariani. Wesleyan University Press: $30.00 cloth, $14.95 paper.

Indigenous: Growing Up Californian, memoir by Cris Mazza. City Lights Publishers: $16.95 paper.

Song of Thieves, poems by Shara McCallum. University of Pittsburgh Press: $12.95 paper.

Do I Owe You Something, memoir by Michael Mewshaw. Louisiana State University Press: $29.95 cloth.

Love Song With Motor Vehicles, poems by Alan Michael Parker. BOA Editions, Ltd.: $13.95 paper.

Reactions: New Poetry, ed. by Esther Morgan. Pen&inc: £7.99 paper.

Miracle Fruit, poems by Aimee Nezhukumatathil. Tupelo Press: $14.95 paper.

The Courtship of Maria Rivera Pena, a novella by Daniel A. Olivas. Silver Lake Publishing: $10.95 paper.

Edward Taylor's Gods Determinations and Preparatory Meditations: A Critical Edition, ed. by Daniel Patterson. Kent State University Press: $65.00 paper.

The Losers' Club, a novel by Richard Perez. Ludlow Press: $12.95 paper.

Just One of Those Things, poems by Sarah Perrier. Kent State University Press: $6.00 paper.

Slow Air, poems by Robin Robertson. Harcourt: $23.00 cloth.

Eleanor & Abel, a novel by Annette Sanford. Counterpoint: $22.00 paper.

Essay on Rime with Trial of a Poet, by Karl Shapiro. University of Michigan Press: $35.00 cloth, $15.95 paper.

Thieves' Latin, poems by Peter Jay Shippy. University of Iowa Press: $13.00 paper.

The Voice at 3:00 A.M.: Selected Late and New Poems, by Charles Simic. Harcourt: $25.00 paper.

Lost Gay Novels: A Reference Guide to Fifty Works from the First Half of the Twentieth Century, by Anthony Slide. Harrington Park Press: $49.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Big Back Yard, poems by Michael Teig. BOA Editions, Ltd.: $13.95 paper.

Fire is Favorable to the Dreamer, poems by Susan Terris. Arctos Press: $15.00 paper.

The Several World, poems by Will Toedtman. Kent State University Press: $6.00 paper.

1929, a novel by Frederick Turner. Counterpoint: $25.00 cloth.

One-Legged Dancer, poems by Pamela Uschuk. Wings Press: $16.00 paper.

Dining at the Lineman's Shack, by John Weston. University of Arizona Press: $36.00 cloth, $17.95 paper.

Holocaust Girls: History, Memory, & Obsessions, by S.L. Wisenberg. University of Nebraska Press: $24.95 cloth.

Eating in the Underworld, by Rachel Zucker. Wesleyan University Press: $26.00 cloth, $12.95 paper.

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See you in September!
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Poetry

Judged by Sandra Kohler

M.K. Babcock
Syracuse University
"Even As I Tell It, It's Wrong"

Robert Lowes
University of Missouri at St. Louis
"Missing"

Catherine Pierce
Ohio State University
"Evolution"

Jeff Fallis
University of Virginia
"The Philosophies of Popular Songs"

Erika Baxter
University of Virginia
"Cutting Up a Cow"

Lightsey Darst
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
"How My Mother Read"

Terri Carrion
Florida International University
"Lazy Tongue"

Jonas Lerman
Lewis & Clark College
"Poem, USA"

Jenny Spinner
University of Connecticut
"Block Island, 1998"

Catherine Pierce
Ohio State University
"Retribution"

Julie Iles O'Leary
SUNY College of Brockport
"When Light Comes Up"

Erika Mueller
Iowa State University
"Cancri: The Fourth House"

Barbara Darcey
University of New Orleans, Lakefront
"Reportage: In the Morning Where I Am"

Simone Muench
University of Illinois at Chicago
"Robert Desnos and the Hummingbird"

Patty Paine
Virginia Commonwealth University
"On the Verge"

Alex Alviar
University of Montana
"Reading Plotinus"

Kevin Ducey
University of Notre Dame
"Dien Bien Phu"

Matt Donovan
New York University
"Trenton, a Solmization, Two Rivers"

Carl Knickerbocker
Texas Tech University
"Miss Cody"

Marcus Slease
North Carolina at Greensboro
"Vinegar"

Honorable Mentions

Melissa Roth, *University of North Carolina - Greensboro*
Stephanie Rohrbaugh, *University of Alaska, Fairbanks*
Dana Kinzy, *West Virginia University*
Elliot Harmon, *University of South Dakota*

Short Fiction

Judged by Dan Leone

Rebecca Kanner
Washington University, St. Louis
"Thieves"

Wei Liu
University of Notre Dame
"Four Mothers Who Aren't"

Paulette Beete
American University
"Mighty Tight Woman"

Kelly Magee
Ohio State University
"Not People, Not This,"

Jennifer Gravley
University of Alabama
"Thirteen"

Matthew Purdy
Binghamton University
"Yard Work"

Nicole Backens
Colorado State University
"The Disciple of Because"

Leni Zumas
University of Massachusetts-Amherst
"Handfasting"

Kelli White
Emporia State University
"Four Dollar Water"

Honorable Mentions

Lisa Lishman, *Western Michigan University*
L.A. Hoffer, *University of Tennessee*
Meg Brulatour, *Virginia Commonwealth University*
Rebecca Kanner, *Washington University*

Judged by Sue William Silverman

Creative Nonfiction

Sheyene Heller
Goucher College, MFA in Creative Nonfiction
"A Soil Survey of Clay County Kansas"

Sarah Gage
University of Arizona
"What We Look for and What We Find"

Theresa Martin
Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis
"Dance Steps"

Chad Davidson
Binghamton University
"Building the Gazebo"

Lucie Lehmann Snodgrass
Johns Hopkins University
"Ohma"

Taya Noland
University of Idaho
"Chelsea Mornings"

Jocelyn McCarthy
American University
"The Guardian of All Things"

Kathryn Kefauver
University of San Francisco
"Part Lao, Part Falang"

Liz Stefaniak
Creighton University
"Julie's Brush with Death"

John Rabb
California State University, Fresno
"Swinging for the Fences"

Honorable Mentions

Karen Head, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*
Todd Hunter Campbell, *Bowling Green State University*
Don S. Olson, *Northern Arizona University*
Sheha Abraham, *University of Southern California*



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MAXINE KUMIN
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NATASHA SAJÉ
ON ETYMOLOGY

MAGGIE KAST
ON WRITING FROM THE BODY

HAL BLYTHE AND
CHARLIE SWEET
ON GENRE FICTION

