The Broadkill Review

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The Broadkill Review

Interviews

Robert Pinsky

When Robert Pinsky suggested that he would be willing to be interviewed by The Broadkill Review, we immediately accepted the offer, and then were faced with the question of which of our editors would be given the task of conducting the interview.

Luckily, Linda Blaskey ("3 New Poems and a Note on Craft" TBR vol. 1, no. 1) stepped up. The first thing she did was to sit down and make a list of questions she wanted to ask of the eminent former Poet-Laureate of the United States.

Then she inquired of some of the other editors what questions they might have asked had they drawn the short straw.

Finally, anticipating the likelihood that some of Mr. Pinsky’s responses would generate follow-up questions, she tried to imagine what those might be.

We also determined that we would forward the finished interview back to Mr. Pinsky so that he might judge whether his responses represented what he meant as accurately as possible.

You will find what Mr. Pinsky has to say of great interest. Ms. Blaskey’s interview begins on page 5.

Being Poet Laureate, Six Years Later

by Fleda Brown, Poet Laureate of Delaware

I am constantly adjusting. Every day is a different experience. When I was teaching at the University of Delaware, at least my classes were predictable. Now I’ve been learning a kind of Zen alertness to the changing winds of what needs to be done. Not that I “need” to do anything. A laureate’s position is honorary, entirely. The point is simply to honor someone for good work, not to appoint someone to a “job.” Many poets laureate don’t do a thing except to stay at their own writing, and sometimes I think I’d do more good in the long run if I’d retreat and do just that.

But the temptation to stir things up in Delaware was and is too great. When I took the title (I won’t call it a job), I was aware that poetry—indeed all literary arts—were poor cousins to the other arts in the state. There was no visibility for poets and no communal support except for the Individual Artists Fellowships, won less frequently by writers than by other artists. Of course we’re a small state, and there is necessarily a limited number of writers whose work is of “professional” quality. But in the other arts, the gallerys and performances have lent a kind of validity and recognition that encourages more and better work.

When a person works alone, unrecognized, skill comes more slowly. A person does better with the goading that comes from seeing and hearing others nearby who are more advanced in the art.

So, being a first child who thinks she needs to fix things, I found myself irresistibly attracted to seeing what I could do. First of all, I thought I ought to do something for the art itself, and contacted the News Journal about writing a poetry column. It was more than three years later before I was able to overcome the concern of the editors that no more (see page 11)
Letters and Notes from Our Readers

(The following is a note from Maryanne Khan, whose story, “Sweet My Infant, Born to Die” appeared in issue one. She has been showing me a new piece of work, one which appears to be a novel-in-progress, although she didn’t seem to recognize it as such when she began. She is now well into it.)

I really enjoyed your piece on the strange alchemy that occurs once a writer has started a piece and suddenly characters start saying and doing things ‘by themselves.’

Now when I try saying that to people who are not writers, they look askance, shuffle their feet and probably think I am completely delusional. But so very often I have been sitting at the computer, almost in a trance, literally wondering where something came from, and how, what connection is there between one little thing or other that has popped up out of nowhere and something else, seemingly unrelated, and why one of the living creatures under my typing fingers has decided (yes, if God gives freedom of choice, why shouldn’t I?) to go do that.

And what, oh my god is going to happen to get me out of this situation, when I arrive, blind, at a word like “and” and know that some solution/explanation/motivation/development is going to have to be provided, and suddenly, wondrously, there it is. That is the moment that makes the writing worthwhile, that staggering feeling that the thing is real — haven’t I just witnessed the characters I have created making inexorable choices, or where in one surprise sentence, I can hammer in the nail that holds everything together. Do you remember the first time you read “Lacey”? You read it aloud to the others in the workshop, “Caroline had the matches.” When that happens, I leap out of my chair and whoop.

Maryanne Khan

(Maryanne’s first published story, “Lacey” which she brought to the workshop at Georgetown University, appeared in The Sulphur River Literary Review. She’s very kind. I remember tearing off the first seven or so pages or her story and throwing them over my shoulder dramatically for the benefit of the other workshop participants and telling her to start where the story actually began. She understood, smiled while the others in the workshop all tried to recover their equilibrium, and said, “Too much build-up, eh?”)

My response to her note...

“The Hat” happened that way. Half of the difficulty is in learning how to let it happen, in other words, to unlearn what we think we know about writing, and understand that that discovery is the essence of the creative process, by which I mean the point, the nexus, where subconscious and conscious mind intersect.

-Jamie

(Note: “The Hat” also appeared in The Sulphur River Literary Review — see the display ad for James Michael Robbins’ wonderful publication on page 1)

Here are some of the responses to our second issue.

Another winner!!
- Linda Blasky

Wow, this issue is even more wonderful! Illuminating!
-- Ernie Wormwood

What a splendid issue. Informatively enlightening, and refreshing in the way good poetry always is. The presentation is just right, as well. The combo of text, white space, ads, etcetera, makes for a very readable e-mag. My subscription check will be in the mail on Monday, this being Saturday afternoon, and the USPS

Credo

By Jamie Brown

Let’s talk about the “rules” of participation in a poetry reading. It has happened to all of us at one time or another, and can be especially distracting when one is trying to present one’s work. The one poet on the program who thinks he or she is so much superior to the others on the program, having done with their portion of the program, gets up with his or her crowd of friends and departs long before the event is over, and frequently right in the middle of the reading by the next participant. The fact is that this is a shameless sort of grandstanding, and suggests that, in reality, the departing reader is neither as great as he or she thinks he or she is, nor as sophisticated as they wish to be seen. It tells the other people there that that sort of behavior is acceptable — it is not — and teaches them that to be taken seriously one must be dismissive of others. This is, to quote Dr. Ed Kessler, “Pompous, haughty, (and) arrogant.” To think that there is nothing you can benefit from by listening to others read who may not be, in your estimation, of your caliber, is short-sighted, narrow-minded, and pessimistic. Why should non-writers respect writers if they don’t even demonstrate respect for each other? You only embarrass yourself when you do this.
DOGFISH HEAD POETRY PRIZE WINNER
STEPHEN SCOTT WHITAKER’S
CHAPBOOK FIELD RECORDINGS NAMED
2006 BEST VOLUME OF POETRY BY
DELAWARE PRESS ASSOCIATION

Award Presentation made at DPA’s 30th Anniversary
Celebration Banquet in Wilmington, April 24th, 2007

“It’s important to reward people who are doing good work,”
Dogfish Head Craft Brewed Ales Founder and CEO Sam Calagione said last December when he presented Stephen Scott Whitaker of Onley, Virginia, with the Fourth Annual Dogfish Head Poetry Prize at the Eighth Annual John Milton Memorial Celebration of Poets and Poetry in Milton, Delaware. “A prize like this can help move them from this level to the next.”

Calagione reiterated those sentiments when the news was released that Whitaker’s Dogfish Head Poetry Prize-winning chapbook, Field Recordings, was named Best Book of Poetry for 2006 by the Delaware Press Association.

“(His poetry) is terse and sinewy,” Calagione said. “Scott’s work reminds me of a both Raymond Carver and Ernest Hemingway.”

The judge found Whitaker’s poetry to be “wide-ranging in subject matter, and compelling, with its somber emotions. His poems can stand with other(s) throughout the country.”

DOGFISH HEAD POETRY PRIZE ENTERS FIFTH YEAR; READING PERIOD TO RUN MEMORIAL DAY TO LABOR DAY

The Fifth Annual Dogfish Head Poetry Prize will be presented to the winning chapbook-length poetry manuscript, written by a poet residing on the Delmarva peninsula. The Prize will once again consist of: 1) a check for $200, 2) Two Cases of Dogfish Head Craft Brewed Beer, 3) Chapbook publication, 4) 10 copies of the Chapbook (in lieu of royalties on the first one hundred copies), and 5) participation in the Ninth Annual John Milton Memorial Celebration of Poets and Poetry in Milton, Delaware, where the Prize will be officially awarded by Sam Calagione, Founder and CEO of Dogfish Head Craft Brewery and Distillery.

Send a chapbook manuscript of no more than 36 pages of poetry to: Dogfish Head Poetry Prize, c/o John Milton and Company Books, 104 Federal Street, Milton, DE 19968.

Send two cover pages: one with the title of the manuscript, your name and address and phone numbers and e-mail address if you have one, the second with just the manuscript title. This is a blind judging by a jury of prominent, published poets.

Include one page with dedication and acknowledgements, and another with the table of contents.

Manuscripts will not be returned. Include self-addressed stamped postcard for acknowledgement of receipt of your manuscript.

Include a check for $12 for a copy of the winning chapbook. The reading period for the Dogfish Head Poetry Prize Competition runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day, 2007.

The winning author agrees to submit a B&W photograph suitable for use in promotion within five days of notification, and agrees to appear in person at the Ninth Annual John Milton Memorial Celebration of Poets and Poetry, Saturday evening, December 8, 2007, in Milton, Delaware, for awarding of the Prize. The Publisher reserves the right to reprint and distribute the chapbook as demand warrants. The prize is in lieu of royalties on the first one hundred copies of the chapbook. The publisher’s standard royalty agreement covers all subsequent reprints.
Robert Pinsky was appointed the thirty-ninth Poet Laureate and Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1997 and served for three years. During his appointment (the popular title is Poet Laureate of the United States) he started the still ongoing Favorite Poem Project in which Americans from every state submitted their favorite poems to be included in an anthology.

Mr. Pinsky was born in 1940 in Long Branch, New Jersey, and attended Long Branch High School. He received his undergraduate degree from Rutgers University and his master’s and doctorate from Stanford University. He taught at Wellesley College and the University of California, Berkeley before coming to Boston University where he teaches in the graduate writing program.

He is a poet, essayist, translator and literary critic and has published numerous books, including seven volumes of poetry and a translation titled The Inferno of Dante for which he was awarded the Academy of American Poets’ Translation Award. Among other awards are a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, the Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing, the William Carlos Williams Award, the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. He was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism for Poetry and the World and also nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for The Figured Wheel: New and Collected Poems, 1966-1996.

Mr. Pinsky writes a weekly column for The Washington Post titled “Poet's Choice” and is poetry editor of the online magazine, Slate – and still has time to appear in an episode of The Simpsons.

The Editors of The Broadkill Review (TBR) express their gratitude to Robert Pinsky (RP) for this interview. This interview was conducted during Feb./March 2007 via email.

TBR When did you begin to describe yourself as a poet?

RP Early on, I was struck by Robert Frost’s remark that you should not call yourself a poet: that was for other people to say about you. So for many years I avoided that, sometimes walking around saying “I write poems.”

But in the world where “poet” has become among other things an academic job category, that avoidance came to seem an affectation. So pretty late on – it may have been after I published my first book, I started using the word about myself. Sometimes I still avoid it, which does seem a bit silly.

And yet there's something to what Frost says, something reverent, if not superstitious, about the art.

TBR How did you feel when your first poem was accepted for publication (which poem, when)?

RP Poetry accepted some poems when I was in my early twenties. I knew that Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Moore, Williams had published important work there. Its page design had authority. I remember feeling consciously that I was at least on the record. It was a magazine that could be found in libraries, the back issues bound as books. In some sense, I now existed.

TBR After taking an informal survey, it seems that writers are very curious about other writers’ work habits. I suspect that is so they can compare and perhaps improve their own habits. What do you think?

RP I have no habits. I think any set of habits you name – early riser or sleeps all day; tireless reviser or first draft only; longhand or machine; planning or impulse – someone has written great work with those habits.

But I myself have no patterns of behavior.

… (Or so I habitually tell myself.)

TBR And so…. when do you write? every day? pen, pencil, computer?

RP I write whenever it is inconvenient.

Too much time or too quiet a space, the inviting cabin in the woods – that kind of thing gives me stage fright, or bores me. I like to compose in my head while driving, or in the shower. Sorry to boast, but my prose book The Sounds of Poetry was written almost entirely in airport lounges and on airplanes.

Poetry for me, before it is written with pen or pencil or computer, is written with my voice, my actual or imagined voice trying out the words.

TBR What are you reading now?


TBR Tell us about Slate and your duties as poetry editor.

RP I pick the poems, with the assistance of Maggie Dietz. Occasionally, I do a mini-anthology for Valentine’s day, or an anthology of poems against poetry for Poetry Month. Readers can click on an audio file and hear the poet read the weekly poem. Coming up, an anthology more or less celebrating difficulty.

TBR Kathryn Starbuck, in an interview with (continued, Page 6)
Poets and Writers, said that through grief (the loss of her parents, brother and husband) she began “scribbling things” and that “they looked like poems”. She has since published a book of poems. Is that enough to start with – that writing takes the shape of a poem?

RP Where else would one start? With reading something that feels great, I suppose. But isn’t that how a very young gent wandered into his back yard one evening and wrote “Ode to a Nightingale”? Kathryn’s account sounds right to me. I might substitute “hearing” or “sounding like a poem” for “looking like.”

TBR She began writing and publishing at 60. This seems to be a great encouragement to late starting writers. Is it ever too late to begin?

RP There are no rules in these things, I think.

TBR Camille Paglia, in the Winter 2006 – 2007 issue of Philadelphia Stories, says that she is “appalled at how weak and shoddy so much poetry has become – including the work of tediously over-praised figures……. those pets of the academic elite.” And “No wonder the general public has lost interest in reading poetry...” How do you feel about that?

RP Shallow nostalgia, a cliché. Does she yearn for the days when the “general public” read Edgar Guest? Or is it Rod McKuen’s heyday she longs for? Or is it the days when the general public read Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams?

I agree with over-praised pets of professors, but has she read James McMichael? Anne Winters?

Has Prof. Paglia seen the Favorite Poem Project video of Seph Rodney reading Sylvia Plath?

A forthcoming book by the historian Joan Rubin, Songs of Ourselves, is a history of American taste in poetry. It dispels the myth of a Good Old Days pretty thoroughly.

TBR This makes me think of your essay “Poetry and American Memory”. In it you mention a lack of myth of origin and that our founding fathers were “intellectually inclined planters and merchants” that gave us “great national documents”. You ask the question “How are they (documents) related to people, or us as a people?” Do you think that American poetry needs to leave the academic and return to the people? Be more accessible to the general public?

RP No, that doesn’t make any sense to me. Is it that “the people” are reading “Paradise Lost” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”? Well, in fact, many of them are. But “accessible to the general public” characterizes Lawrence Welk, not Sid Caesar.

Anti-intellectualism is an unattractive, persistent strain in American life. Disguised as “getting back to the people” it remains obnoxious to me.

Dumbing-down is not the alternative to an equally obnoxious elitism.

The best demonstration of what I mean – and I guess of what I advocate—is my new anthology from Norton, An Invitation to Poetry, with the DVD in the back: on the DVD, video segments of a construction worker discussing Whitman, the segment on Plath’s “Nick and the Candlestick” that I mentioned in my response to the previous question.
Since The Situation of Poetry was published in 1976 (and reprinted in paper in 1978) has anything in contemporary poetry changed, or anything in your opinion of it since then?

Styles and tastes change; essential matters endure. In Poetry and the World (1988 or 89?) I tried to take up some things that the earlier prose book left out.

You wrote in The Situation of Poetry, that contemporary poets have “a dissatisfaction with the abstract, discursive and conventional nature of words as medium for the particulars of experience.” Have contemporary poets, in your view, moved beyond their rejection of the Moderns’ modeling of meaning? (Is contemporary poetry of today still the same contemporary poetry it was then?)

Maybe this is a good question for someone who is now the age I was — early thirties — when I was working on The Situation of Poetry. If I write another book about poetry, it would be about a different set of ideas, maybe picking up ideas that have been in my “Poet’s Choice” columns for the Washington Post.

Speaking of your column for The Washington Post, it is a wonderful “textbook” on how to look at poetry, how to read it and how, even, to become a better writer. Do you intend that?

What you say pleases me a lot. The “Poet’s Choice” column above all must be interesting. It must choose and present a poem or two in a way that attracts and rewards the newspaper reader. In addition to that primary responsibility, I do want to make the column a welcoming, teacherly means for readers to enhance their ways of reading and hearing — and yes, of writing.

I hope someday to expand ideas in some of the columns into a book of that kind: not a textbook, but an essay that would take a fresh, helpful approach to the art.

In your poem “First Things to Hand” I love the lines: And if Socrates leaves/His house in the morning/When he returns in the evening/He will find Socrates waiting/On the doorstep. These lines are like a koan, wonderful to ponder. How did you come to them?

In Samurai Song When I had no roof I made Audacity my roof When I had No supper my eyes dined.
When I had no eyes I listened. When I had no ears I thought. When I had no thought I waited. .
When I had no father I made Care my father. When I had no mother I embraced order.

When I had no friend I made Quiet my friend. When I had no enemy I opposed my body.

When I had no temple I made My voice my temple. I have No priest, my tongue is my choir.
When I have no means fortune Is my means. When I have Nothing, death will be my fortune.

Need is my tactic, detachment Is my strategy When I had No lover I courted my sleep.

-from The New Yorker
something into place with a wrench.) Your scaffolding is how it sounds…

(continued next page)

literally or physically.

TBR Do you feel that by paying close attention to and by writing about the everyday things in life, like a shirt, that poems can lead us to the sublime?

RP Yes. As the achievement of W.C. Williams demonstrates, the ordinarily unremarked can be a doorway or path to the sublime.

TBR Are you still influenced by your years as Poet Laureate? Tell us what it was like being appointed.

RP I have never thought highly of titles, honors, official grades, prizes. Am I vain to think that the title was an anomalous, uncharacteristic episode in my life? In high school, I was very, very far from and all-A’s student.

Definitely not National Honor Society or the Good Kids Club. My destiny, I have always felt, was not to be the darling of committees or officials.

Yet here was that title. Some practical, brisk side of me found a way to use it, by which I mean that it made possible the Favorite Poem Project.

SHIRT

The back, the yoke, the yardage. Lapped seams, The nearly invisible stitches along the collar Turned in a sweatshop by Koreans or Malaysians

Gossiping over tea and noodles on their break Or talking money or politics while one fitted
This armpiece with its overseam to the band Of cuff I button at my wrist. The presser, the cutter, The wringer, the mangle. The needle, the union, The treacle, the bobbin. The code. The infamous blaze

At the Triangle Factory in nineteen-eleven. One hundred and forty-six died in the flames—

The witness in a building across the street Who watched how a young man helped a girl to step Up to the windowsill, then held her out

Away from the masonry wall and let her drop. And then another. As if he were helping them up To enter a streetcar, and not eternity.

A third before he dropped her put her arms Around his neck and kissed him. Then he held Her into space, and dropped her. Almost at once He stepped to the sill himself, his jacket flared And fluttered up from his shirt as he came down, Air filling up the legs of his gray trousers—

Like Hart Crane’s Bedlamite, “shrill shirt ballooning.” Wonderful how the pattern matches perfectly Across the placket and over the twin bar-tacked Corners of both pockets, like a strict rhyme Or a major chord. Prints, plaids, checks, Houndstooth, Tattersall, Madras. The clan tartans Invented by mill-owners inspired by the hoax of Ossian, To control their savage Scottish workers, tamed By a fabricated heraldry: MacGregor, Bailey, MacMartin. The kilt, devised for workers To wear among the dusty clattering looms. Weavers, carders, spinners. The loader, The docker, the navvy. The planter, the picker, the sorter Sweating at her machine in a litter of cotton slaves in calico headrags sweated in fields:

George Herbert, your descendant is a Black Lady in South Carolina, her name is Irma And she inspected my shirt. Its color and fit And feel and its clean smell have satisfied Both her and me. We have culled its cost and quality Down to the buttons of simulated bone.

The buttonholes, the sizing, the facing, the characters Printed in black on neckband and tail. The shape, The label, the labor, the color, the shade. The shirt.

-from The Want Bone
(The Ecco Press)
blend of relief and regret at the survival of something from the past.

I felt very moved. At the same time I was thinking that I don’t know how to do that thing in a poem, and I wish I did....

TBR Any final words of encouragement to fledgling writers?

RP Find works of art you love, and apprentice yourself to them.

Memorize things you admire, type them out. Take inspiration from greatness, in all arts.

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Robert Pinsky

THE SITUATION OF POETRY

Contemporary Poetry and its Traditions

THE FIGURED WHEEL

New and Collected Poems 1960-1996

ROBERT PINSKY

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A WOMAN

Thirty years ago: gulls keen in the blue,
Pigeons mumble on the sidewalk, and an old, fearful woman
Takes a child on a long walk, stopping at the market

To order a chicken, the child forming a sharp memory
Of sawdust, small curls of droppings, the imbecile
Panic of the chickens, their affronted glare.

They walk in the wind along the ocean: at first,
Past cold zinc railings and booths and arcades
Still shuttered in March; then, along high bluffs

In the sun, the coarse grass combed steadily
By a gusting wind that draws a line of tears
Toward the boy’s temples as he looks downward,

At the loud combers booming over the jetties,
Rushing and in measured rhythm receding on the beach. He leans over.
Everything that the woman says is a warning.

Or a superstition; even the scant landmarks are like
tokens of risk or rash judgment—drowning,
Sexual assault, fatal or crippling diseases:
The monotonous surf; wooden houses mostly boarded up;
Fishermen with heavy lines cast in the surf,
Bright tidal pools stirred to flashing

From among the jetties by the tireless salty wind.
She dreams frequently of horror and catastrophe—
mourners, hospitals, and once, a whole family

Sitting in chairs in her own room, corpse-gray,
With throats cut; who were they? Vivid,
The awful lips of the wounds in the exposed necks,

Herself helpless in the dream, desperate,
At a loss what to do next, pots seething
And boiling over onto their burners, in her kitchen.

They have walked all the way out past the last bluffs,
As far as Port-Au-Peck—the name a misapprehension
Of something Indian that might mean “mouth”

Or “flat” or “bluefish,” or all three: Ocean
On the right, and the brackish wide inlet
Of the river on the left; and in between,

Houses and landings and the one low road
With its ineffectual sea-wall of rocks
That the child walks, and that hurricanes

Send waves crashing over the top of, river
And ocean coming violently together
In a house-cracking exhilaration of water.

In Port-Au-Perck the old woman has a prescription filled,
And buys him a milk-shake. Pouring the last froth
From the steel shaker into his glass, he happens

To think about the previous Halloween:
Holding her hand, watching the parade
In his chaps, boots, guns and sombrero.

A hay-wagon of older children in cowboy gear
Trundled by, the strangers inviting him up
To ride along for the six blocks to the beach—

Her holding him back with both arms, crying herself,
Frightened at his force, and he vowing never,
Never to forgive her, not as long as he lived.

-from History of My Heart
Fleda Brown — Two Poems from *Reunion*

**Trillium**  
*Named for its trinity of leaves, of petals*

The universe prefers  
odd numbers. It leans,  
obssessed with  
what's next. It likes syllogisms,  
the arguments of  
sonnets: if A  
equals B, then C.  
The ground-level  
common denominator, the blood-red whorl  
at the base, is not  
an answer but  
a turning. Does that leave you  
dizzy? What can I  
say that would  
reassure either of us? Even  
our prayers have to  
catch hold  
as if we grabbed a spoke of  
a merry-go-round and tried  
to convince  
the universe of what we want  
stopped, reversed.  
What it gives us  
instead: this bad-smelling  
beautiful bloom.  
"Let go, let go,"  
is what it says, and who wants  
to hear that?

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**No Heron**

Herons are bigger than egrets, though they have the same long legs.  
My father said one with an eight-foot wingspan flew over his boat.  
I would like to be shadowed by something that big. It would seem  
like poetry, just out of reach, moving and making a bare flush  
of wings, and I would think of it long after, the way it was heading  
away from me. My longing would not be satisfied even if I could  
grab its scrawny legs in my hand, even if it nuzzled up to me.  
I would be looking up the origin of heron with my free hand, and  
when I read Greek, to creak, and Old High German, to scream,  
I would wait for it to begin, but it would not say anything to me  
in this boat which I am not in, but at my desk hoping for the heron,  
a big one, as I said, so I can say, “Wow, look at that!” as if I were  
getting up a circus. Out there are herons white and blue, not really  
blue but smoky, with wings bigger than their bodies, dipping and  
standing motionless beside lakes and rivers. Out there are universes  
expanding until the space between atoms is too far to do anyone  
any good. Thus, somewhere this minute one heron is calculating  
the distance between his beak and a fish, the way it shifts. It is  
as if he travels in space until heron and fish are swallowed into  
each other. There is no heron at my desk. In fact, the absence  
of heron is how I would define my study: no heron on the ceiling,  
no heron on the floor, no heron on the wall, so that of course  
I think of nothing but heron, how it floats its weight on one leg,  
for example, flying that way even when it's not.
Being Poet Laureate, Six Years Later (continued from p. 1)
by Fleda Brown, Poet Laureate of Delaware

(continued from page one) than two or three people would be interested in poetry in the newspaper. Meanwhile, my appointment, surprisingly, got a lot of media attention at first, which led to quite a few requests for me to do readings. Those have slowed somewhat, which is good, because I need time to do my own work.

It’s been interesting to me to watch my own change in attitude since 2001 when I was appointed. I began as a snob. For example, I didn’t want to sully poetry by seeming to “represent” what I considered less serious, slam-bang performance art. In fact, I had a long and very interesting e-mail argument with a colleague on that subject. I think I convinced him, and now I’d have to concede that I do see his point of view. My main argument, which I still believe, was that performance poetry is about skillful, elegant use of the language. One has to stand still and be quiet to hear the subtle music and implications of language. When performance takes over, as I’ve seen it do many times, language tends to get sloppy. My friend said that performance poetry helps people who’ve felt they have no voice. Yes, I replied, but by rewarding lazy, easy language, we keep people from growing. It’s patronizing. And so on. But what I now believe, after years of attending all sorts of readings, is that good work comes out of the whole teeming pot of poetry. Great poets don’t spring full-grown from the head of Zeus. They’re raised up out of the wild mix of lousy and mediocre poetry. I’ve seen several poets in this state move from writing mediocre poetry to writing really good poetry, with hard work and lots of reading. And I shudder to think of my own early poems. So, more power to lousy and mediocre poetry, as long as there’s really good poetry to measure it against—not only contemporary, but the eternal corrective of the great poems of the past.

Since I became poet laureate, I have read, lectured, and hosted events in secondary schools, retirement communities, libraries, bookstores, Ferris School, Rotary Clubs, several branches of the AAUW, on the radio, and of course at many universities and colleges. I’ve slept in a bunkhouse in the badlands of North Dakota with other state poets laureate, and I’ve read with cowboy poets as well as for the Governor of Delaware and for the Delaware Legislature.

I’ve come to realize, when I do a reading in a non-academic setting, that people want to talk with me as much as they want to hear me read. This is fine with me. Most people who attend my readings in Delaware aren’t poets. They’re baffled by what a poem is or should be. If they’re older, they don’t see how a bunch of words on a page with no rhyme or discernable meter can be called a poem. They want to know what makes a poem. And they want to know, specifically, how I write. Do I write on the computer or with a pencil? Do I write every day? When do I decide a poem is finished? They want to know what it is I do, as poet laureate. I used to think of this as dead time, drawing away from my real purpose, which was to read the poems. But now I think this talking is building an audience for poetry, helping people understand what it is, so they can hear it differently. And also, I represent a “poet” to them, so they want to know how I live my life differently than, as well as like, them. All legitimate questions.

I feel messianic about being a poet, not just about being poet laureate. I think our commercial culture deadens people so that they can’t hear any more, and therefore can’t discern small gradations of meaning—and they get duped politically, financially, and spiritually. Poetry—hearing it, reading it, and writing it—is a way to come alive. I believe this is a very rich time for poetry in the nation and in the world—that we’ll look back and know this—but the rich are getting richer and the poor, well, you know. The poor, and the poor in spirit, don’t have the poems. And as Williams says, they die miserably every day for lack of them.

But I have to be wary about getting too political or messianic. My work suffers when I focus an inordinate amount of my energy “out there.” It’s a danger of accepting too many readings. I start feeling nice and “public” and can’t contact that wild core of me that absolutely must refuse to give a damn what anyone thinks. I get too interested in whether an audience likes the poems I read, interested in whether they laugh, or sigh, or gasp. I start leaning toward writing poems that say “Look at me; aren’t I clever!” Such poems are like paintings that dazzle at first but when you go back to the gallery and stand there awhile, you get bored because after the first jolt, you can’t find any depth. Or a movie that’s all car crashes.

There must be an ideal balance of public and private, but I have yet to find it. I get up some days and do too much e-mail, which scatters my mind, and then when I get to the hard part, the concentration of the poems, I’m tired. I need to get better at doing no e-mail some days.

I like being poet laureate. Some wonderful changes have happened in the state since I was appointed. The beach area downstate has become a “hot” region for writers. And now the Delaware Literary Connection is hosting its first upstate all-day writer’s conference in April. Writers are becoming more visible, which is starting a chain reaction. Energy begets energy. It’s like the European Renaissance: when you get a critical mass of people with skill, intelligence, and creativity, the surroundings begin to explode with good work.
Three Poems by Buck Downs

_twist off fate

bijoux de mer
in this brief and unnatural time
barely managed apex
hands out   eyes open
first full flush
of the compact hive
plays to make sense
never counting --
every time I travel
I dream that my house
burns down
outer space
life cycle
in the shaft of the shrinking-
violet
brought me back around
black eyes next time
I got to bury you deeper

_plato tipico

seedy rave in praise
double bubble buttercup
sucking and sobbing
    in the heartland
of my heart     [a] fur coat.
what you call
t-bone outcomes     chances
become very
real all of a sudden.

own deface
owned efface
how long must I live
how long must I learn

_rubber caul

look at all these
true believers
call each other
so remotely, like a dream
but minus the eye-
movement
the least part
of the conversating
is words
elegance was a tax
we benefitted from
the paying,
the half a tab
we split
I speak a hot freeze,
it keep us close by

she has raised
the stakes
on my face

_Ladies Love Outlaws_

by
Buck Downs
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Three Poems by Sherry Chapelle

in the sonogram you are head down
doubletons that face each other
you fill the globe of your another
flutter kick through a water world

like an earthquake in Alaska
a glacier in Antarctica
one to always affect the other

beneficiaries of blonde,
auburn, brown, sapphire,
steel, drunk, southpaw

scholar, joker, carver
genes so heavy
babes of my baby

you twirl and swivel into view
suck nubbed thumbs
invent languages

cushioned in Eden before the fall.

Launch

The pack boat
inverted cradle of sea green
arrives by car
for Judy's seventieth birthday.
Its wood trimmed Kevlar
fitted with floorboards,
footrest and oars,
caned seats and backrests,
hand crafted in Vermont,
is forty six pounds of fleet.
The captain-crew of one
oils, rubs, polishes and pats her gift,
baptizes it in the lake.
Oars flash as she skims through
the evening chop
and chases a fishing loon
into the pulse of sunset.

Travelers on The Way

We walk
this labyrinth,
age old pattern
set in stones,
an om of granite
circled by hushed trees.
Each pilgrim is bent
by invisible burdens.
We negotiate the
hardscrabble road
mindful, mindless
footfall by footfall
seekers
of the night.
Theseus like,
we hope for our
thread of salvation -
our trip to be lighted,
our load lightened,
before we leave
the entry portal.

2nd Saturday Poets
at Genelle's on 8th & Market Street

your Poetry headquarters in Wilmington,
Delaware

Readings occur the 2nd Saturday of every month at 5pm. Featured readers followed by an Open Reading, allowing up to 5 minutes per person.

MAY 12, 2007  The Twin Poets
JUNE 9, 2007   Beverly Andrus
JULY 14, 2007  Poetry contest--on the theme of "Independence"
AUGUST 11, 2007  TBA
After my 18th birthday, and happy childhood. My mind all together. I had a new position within the chain did not. Outside my exams barely fazed me. Hockey, movies, and music interested me; history could not do that.

But once I turned thirteen and achieved "manhood" according to the Jews, I joined my father at home on Friday evenings and slept late on Sundays. When Mom left for services alone she gave Dad and me a sharp look as she went out the door, but only after she kissed us each on the forehead first. We never told her not to go. We would.

Through high school I lived the way any other suburban American boy would. Hockey, movies, and music interested me; history outside my exams barely fazed me, my place within the chain did not, and God's position stopped crossing my mind all together. I had a happy childhood.

After my 18th birthday, and only a few months away from leaving for college, my mom changed things when she decided I should see Israel. "I want my son to be proud of his heritage," she told me, "I want you to understand why you're here. You're old enough now to be open to God. He gave you to me, I want you to understand that, to be proud and thankful. I'll always be thankful. You're a miracle, we're a miracle." My mother obsessed over her only son's Jewish identity, but I always forgave easily.

Despite my secular nature, a free trip to Israel and a week out of the Boston suburbs was too much to pass up. She sent me over with Rabbi Simon from our local synagogue. Mom was good friends with him, being over-active in the congregation's sisterhood since she only worked part time. The Rabbi had some business in Tiberias, and booked me a room in his hotel on the Sea of Galilee, a short drive from the city.

We got along well enough. Rabbi Simon was young for his position, around 40 years old, and practiced Reform Judaism. We only saw each other at the beginning and end of our days in Tiberias; he drove me to town in the mornings and took me back at night. All day while he had appointments and meetings I wandered the old city, eating falafel and shawarma, and ducking into little shops to search for interesting treasures from the Middle East. The shopkeepers expected tourists, so most everything they sold was mass produced, overpriced, and meant to be bargained for. Haggling over the cost of a stone model of Jerusalem or Haifa, with a gold sticker on the base reading "Made in Taiwan," seemed like a waste of time.

Tiberias was a beautiful city, full of magical little nooks where thousands of years of history concealed and stuck to the walls. It looked nice, but I found that the modern spas trumps the massive past of the town. Seeing holiday makers and the locals, on their way to the steam room or a massage, walk by shrines to the ancient Rabbi Akiva and Moses ben Maimon without glancing at the carvings didn't settle well.

As I now write, so far removed from that time in Tiberias, I understand why those feelings stirred in my belly, though back then I had no reason to get offended when people disregarded history. The whole scenario just seemed wrong, like a gulp of musty tasting water.

Still, during those five days I felt connected to something. Not so much immersed in Judaism, but sitting at the end of a line of billions of people who had passed through on their own business. It is impossible to be in the city where the Jewish councils of the second and third centuries were held, near the banks of the river where Jesus was baptized, and feel nothing. Regardless of saunas and luxury hotels.

After Rabbi Simon finished in Tiberias he drove me to Jerusalem for the end of our trip. We took a full day to get there, going the long rout down the Eastern border of Israel, spending an afternoon at the Dead Sea and Masada, then arriving at the capital after nightfall.

Jerusalem was sublime. I woke up that Saturday morning and saw it flooded with bright white light, as if the sun reflected off a pearl mirror and shone onto the city. Rabbi Simon and I parted ways, and we decided to meet after dinner to get to the airport for a 10:00 flight back home.

Everything began straying from a standard trip to the Holy Land in the early afternoon of my one day in Jerusalem. I walked away from the Western Wall, the most sacred Jewish place in the world, up a large flight of stairs leading back to the streets of the Old City. At the top of the flight I looked back and saw the Wall in front of the gigantic golden Dome on the Temple Mount. Most Jews seem to take pride in this tableau, as if the Wall represents the people of Israel, still standing despite the
oppression so close to them. At the time, though, I had never felt more autonomous from any religious group than while looking at the bright yellow stones in front of the glistening dome atop the mosque. I cursed tenants that forced people to choose between the two, lauding one and damning the other. They were both beautiful.

A few hours out in the sun had robbed me of my energy, so I bought a few water bottles and began wandering through the streets and markets. The city was probably the leading cause of death over the past 2000 years. I thought about what Jerusalem meant for Jews, Christians, and Muslims; the wars each groups had waged to control it. Not even the beautiful white city could justify the wrathful, God-fearing people who had occupied it for so long. And God had always seemed to me like He should bring enlightenment to the faithful.

The sonic boom of an Israeli Air Force fighter jet over the city interrupted my thoughts. I made my way through a few markets, drinking from one cold bottle, and holding the other on the back of my neck. Sweat dripped from my hair, rolled over my fingers, and fell down the back of my shirt. Off one market I saw an interesting, shaded side street that had to be cooler than the scorched squares, so I passed homes made of weathered, almost white stone, and slipped into the coolness.

Bricks reflected the sun they saw, and seemed to release their own, slightly dimmer radiance while in the shade. The structures blended so unaffectedly from house to house that the rows seemed natural as the rolling dunes in a desert. Most of the homes appeared empty, and one at the end of a street had a flight of stairs on the outside, leading to the top. I climbed up the steps.

The roof provided a magnificent view of the sun drenched city. At that moment, I wished I could paint the image. A photograph does no good for such a scene, its power comes from the way it makes you squint at the bright sunlight, and yet force your eyes open to see the complete city. Everything is distorted at first, because pupils remain too dilated to focus, but that distortion shows the impossibility of one person taking in thousands of years of history from a perspective on a rooftop. Eventually focus becomes possible, but only specific focus, there is no panoramic of Jerusalem. The smallest aspect of the Holy City demands its own time spent in consideration, completely apart from the rest of the canvas.

While on top of that house I lost sight of everything except the ancient looking buildings. They didn't seem necessarily Israeli, just old, old enough to eschew identity and become the common history of humanity. I moved my eyes from one to the next, considering who may have lived there, trying to think of them as the houses of Adam, and Eve, and Lucy. The city so wholly rapped me that I didn't notice a young Arab boy climbing on to the roof.

"Off our house!" he screamed in a thick accent. I whirled around and saw him on the opposite side of the roof. There must have been another set of stairs, or a ladder I had not noticed. The boy couldn't have been ten years old, but he had a face colored with destitution, sorrow, and the knowledge that I had never suffered like him.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I'll leave now." I hoped to avoid any real trouble, but after moving towards the stairs a small rock hit the back of my neck. I scowled back at the boy, but then as I turned to leave again, a bigger rock hit my shoulder. The boy had a handful of stones to throw, and good aim.

Today, long after the story has played itself out, I would continue down the stairs, accept the abusive stones, and probably laugh about it later. At 18 years old, though, my youth unleashed a howl in the small boy's face. He didn't stop throwing. I approached him as stones bounced off my torso, making the size difference between us clear. When I stood directly over the boy, and our two sets of singing eyes met, someone else climbed on the roof. The new man may have been the child's older brother, or just a family friend, but he was a large man, tall and muscular, his broad shoulders stretching his t-shirt. And he wasn't pleased that I towered over the boy with obvious menace.

I spun around and sprinted to the stairs I'd ascended a few minutes before. The older Arab man yelled at me in a Middle Eastern tongue I couldn't understand or name; Hebrew and Arabic have always sounded very similar to me. At the edge of the steps I looked back at the roaring man and the boy next to him. The man gestured at me to come over and fight. Considering his size and the fear saturating my very being, I twirled around and ran down the stairs at top speed.

Taking the steps two at a time, I hit the bottom in an awkward stride which morphed into a scramble through the shaded street of houses, towards the bright market. At the border of the avenue's shade and the market's sun, I turned around to see the large Arab man following me at a full sprint, then scampered into the tumult of the mid-day Jerusalem bazaar.

The thick crowd of people didn't easily consume me as I hit them at full speed, fuelled by the adrenaline of danger. The caustically bright light stained my bare eyes, causing me to bowl over several people.

I didn't think about it at that time, but the only people in a Jerusalem market on a Saturday afternoon, the middle of the Jewish Sabbath, are Muslims and Christians. None of them saw me, an obvious and very white American tourist damaging their goods, as a
friend. My pursuer followed a trail paved with pointing fingers and knocked over goods. I saw an alley on the opposite side of the square from where the chase had emerged, and bolted straight for it.

Once in the shade again my eyes re-adjusted, and I slowed my pace to look behind me. The Arab still followed, so I continued running without taking my eyes off him, my head turned as far around as it could stretch. The trails of sweat on my face caused a terrible itching, and my dehydrated eyes burned in the heat, but the chase ended as the Arab slowed down and eventually stopped about thirty yards from his target. I was barely moving, but completely stopped to face the pugnacious man once he stood still. He wouldn't cross into the shade of the alley, and toed the line where the shadows began. We looked at each other, me in complete confusion, and he with anger at my discovery of something that forced him to halt.

"They don't come down these paths," said someone with a raspy voice crouching in the shadows behind me. Startled, I jerked my head to look at an older man, maybe in his 50's, dressed in rags and blending perfectly into his dirty little nook of the alley.

"Who," I asked with a rapid exhale, still recovering from the run, "Arabs?"

"Arabs from the streets on that side of the market," he answered, gesturing in the direction I had come from. I looked at the hunter, still standing in front of an uproarious market population hoping that the prey would somehow try to escape.

"Why... won't he... come-down-here?" I spat out between sucks of air.

"Because," the ragged man said, pulling himself up with a groan of age, "it's trouble down here." He walked to a nearly invisible door on the wall, and then surveyed me, "more trouble than you're worth. The people here hold different views than those you ran into, and we have an agreement not to bother each other." He opened the door and said, "won't you come in? I can heal your wounds."

The man seemed sincere, and far more amicable than anything awaiting me back in the market. I thought he wanted to make me feel better about the chase, to tell me I wasn't in the wrong, or just ignorant to the ways in his part of the world. But then I noticed a sizable cut on my forearm leaving a small puddle of blood at my feet. I followed him through the door.

My host had a Middle Eastern accent, but Hebraic or Arabic I couldn't tell. He was clean shaven and bald, so the lack of peyos, long beards, or other hairstyles usually available as the fastest way to distinguish Jews from Palestinians left him a mystery for me. He was tan and thin, wore formerly white pants, now a cream color with patches of soil, and no shirt. He looked un-washed, but did not smell bad at all. His home was the basement of a larger house, and had only one door. The main room had two chairs made of rotting wood, an equally decrepit table, and a dirty kitchen. The ground made of cement was covered in sand people had trekked in. It seemed like a trench dug into the city.

"Have a seat young man, I'll be back soon," he said, and walked behind a curtain hanging in the only doorway to another room.

One of the chairs had a short leg, causing an uncomfortable wobble. I tried the other one with the same result, finally opting to sit on the floor and lean against the wall farthest from the curtain separating the rooms. I began wondering, as a suitable supply of oxygen returned to my brain, why I would come into this man's house and so easily trust someone who didn't exactly appear to run the Jerusalem branch of the Red Cross. It was like entering a family member's house: not my home, but safe. While I pondered those questions, and the utter lack of fear which should have accompanied them, the host emerged through the curtain.

He walked back into the room with a book, hardback cover cracked and bent, and placed it on the table. He then pulled the chair up in front of me and sat down.

"You're young," he said, leaning and getting closer to my face, "Eighteen years old, yes."

"Yes," I answered.

"And American too," he continued, "correct?"

I nodded. "I am," I replied again.

"Let me guess, you wanted the view from his roof, and he chased you down, across the market, and in here. And you weren't harming anything, were you?"

"That's basically what happened," I said. "Has it happened before?"

"A few times, but you're the only one that made it here. Congratulations."

"Thanks, I think."

He gave me the book from the table behind him. It had no title on the cover, and the glue in the binding flaked away as I looked at it.

"This is the story of the great Exodus," he told me, "not from Egypt exactly, but from Moses' little band. I can't vouch for the facts, but the truth will serve."

"A few times, but you're the only one that made it here. Congratulations."

"Thanks, I think."

I ran my fingers over the cover of the book. It seemed so far past its prime that its best days were inconceivable. The cracked leather looked more like cloth, making a fresh, smooth surface unimaginable. I didn't want to open it. I thought it would crumble.

The blood from my cut had dried and crusted over most of my wrist. "What about my arm?" I asked. "I thought you could heal my wound."
I held up my cut arm, which despite the dried blood remained an open laceration. "Oh, you're bleeding," he said, "let me get you a bandage."

He walked over to a cabinet, got a gauze strip, and then sat down on the floor in front of me to begin covering the wound. As he circled the white cotton around my arm I told him I thought he had invited me in to mend the gash. "Not the bodily wound," he said, "the mental one. Not too many mentally sound and confidant people come to this part of the world, that's not what it's here for." He sealed the dodgy bandage with a piece of tape.

I looked at him, afraid of having strayed too far from the beaten path of a foreigner in Israel. The room's unexpected familiarity kept me calm, though. I asked, "what is this part of the world here for, then?"

"Awakenings of some sort," he said as he reclined to sit cross-legged, then leaned back on his two hands and looked directly in my eyes. "Or revelations, whatever you want to call them. I've never had an epiphany at the hands of the Middle East, even Jerusalem, but everyone else seems to while they're here. Have any of your friends ever come back from this place saying that it only reaffirmed their former beliefs?"

"Not exactly," I replied. "Most of them said that their trips changed them, right?"

"Well, yes," I said, getting a little tense at the way he knew so much about foreign travelers my age.

"And then," he began again, with a smile, "a week after they got back from Israel, they were all normal, as if they'd gone to Detroit instead, right?"

"Actually, yes, that's usually the way things happen," I said, "but sometimes people come back and become religious zealots."

"Overkill," he said, "I've seen that, it happens once in a while, to those really confused people who come here and accept the made up face of things. They ignore the planes overhead, holding bombs big enough to kill everyone in the city." I loosened up some as we spoke and agreed on the topic, but kept my guard up.

"How do you know about all this," I asked, "about these American kids that come here and have the same experiences? Do you see a lot of them here?"

"Yes," he said, "and I saw a lot when I was in America, years ago."

"Well," I said, "that explains how you speak the language so well."

I learned English well before I went to your country," he said, "but thanks.

I began wondering what time it was. The old man's company was no excuse for meeting the Rabbi late.

"Time to leave?" the man asked, probably seeing my eyes glancing toward the watch I wasn't wearing. Moments slipped through the cracks in that tenebrous apartment, and while I had lost track of seconds slithering away, a feeling of the time to go took their place. He walked me out the door and back into the alleyway. "Go down to the market and turn left, you'll find your way back to the main streets. It's dark enough that no one should pay attention to you, but stay alert regardless."

I thanked him and gripped the book tightly in my hands.

"Where did you get this?" I asked him.

"Someone gave it to me a long time ago, probably when I was about your age."

"Why are you giving it to me?"

"It's meant to be passed on. It will help with that mental wound. Besides I know every word of it, as I'm sure you will in time."

I looked down at the book, which may have traded hands hundreds of times before it came to me. "This came to you by some strange consequence," I said to him, "like my showing up here. Right?"

"That's the only way it moves," he said.

"Well, how do you know it's supposed to go to me?" I asked.

"Yesterday I was paging through it and thought nothing new," he said, "It's one of those books that has something new to offer every time it's read, like a classic play, like Shakespeare. But yesterday it got stagnant, and I couldn't stand looking at the thing. Today, you showed up."

"That's fair enough," I said, having some sort of innate understanding of the situation, as if the two of us shared an experience years before. For no reason, my having been in this man's home, and leaving with the book, made sense.

"Thank you," I said with a wavering voice, not quite sure how to end such a strange encounter.

"Make haste," he said, and walked back into his room. I strode down the alley, and once in the market looked back down the street where an old man had just invited me into his little house. There was no door on the wall. Or, so it looked to me, though my eyes may not have adjusted to the dark. But I remember vividly the disbelief of that moment: there was no trace of the room, its entrance, or the man who lived there; just a solid brick wall looming in the shadows of a Jerusalem evening. And an ineffably old book in my hands to prove everything had happened.

When I turned around to walk back through the empty market in the late twilight, my first footstep caused a crunch. Someone had spilled a bag of salt on the ground and not picked it up. I walked over the pile of wasted salt, my boots driving granules into the earth, and didn't look behind me for some time after that.

© Joshua Isard
Bird Lookout, Cape Henlopen, 6:00 AM

No one’s here mornings.

Maybe a busload of binoculared
birders come fall --

passing over
like their birds of prey,

filling their books.

None care
to see who’s here
now:

little brown ladies,
bustling, scolding --
wren, house sparrow,
thrush. Domestic,
anonymous.

Otter

-- for Nathan

In the slick green pool across the road,
the otter raises his startled head
to watch you pull the little blue gill in.

Your rival fisherman, quick, like you;
like you, haunting the spillway
at dusk, dawn.

If you come late,
fry ripple toward you in a V,
his dark head their driving wedge.

Tonight, our human voices -- our gestures, our smell –
keep the otter still, a standoff in the chill of late March.

He’s newly awake and hungry, as we are,
for warm days coming, long sunsets of lush summer.

But this colder dusk has its beauty, sky brittle
and clear as grey glass, trees’ intricate lace,
my hands cold and red in my pockets.

You cast and cast again, saying,
over your shoulder, “Stay still.”

In the bucket, the minnows you found in the puddle
wriggle over each other and dart from your hand.

“They done for the night, you think?”
This not to me, but to the real fisherman behind us,
who stretches higher and sniffs like he’s considering.

If he knows, though, he’s not telling. I watch him watch
you. So, I’m betting he’d cast again. Cast until

it’s so dark you bait the hook in the headlights
of passing cars. Cast one more time
into whatever’s stirring.
There’s nothing more to recommend these black cherries at dusk, nothing, nothing more than their not being there.

2Sep06

itsa
tone
deaf
day.

2Jan06

I’m driving her my secret concubine into the hills beyond time.

12Dec05

how bad a rain these tangled urges falls

3Jan06
Five Poems by Jo McDougall

POVERTY

Every visit to that farm,
I smelled it:
sun flailing the flint rocks;
the red dirt;
the Garrett snuff my grandfather dipped.
The too-small suit they buried him in,
the Church of the Newborn,
the young preacher late,
borrowed from another county.

Sometimes, seeing a piecework quilt
or crows calling a field,
that house comes back to me--
its old linoleum and cooking grease,
its blue porch
where I was never happier.

YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF A DAUGHTER,
A WOMAN REFLECTS UPON SOME ASPECTS OF GRIEF

At first I prayed
for the pain to keep its distance
that I might eat, might sleep.
Distance granted,
another fear has found me:
without such pain to keep us close,
will she not forget me?

AT THE SHELL STATION

The girl at the check-out counter
smiles at somebody
in line behind me.
“Where’s your pickup at?” she laughs.
“You look like an orphan.”
I turn. He’s young.
“I do?” he stammers,
taking off his helmet.
Earth Mother has found Lost Boy.

Leaving, I see the sun has come to rest.
on the girl—her arms, a button of her dress.

BAD FARMER

Nobody says it
but everybody knows--
grass high in the turn rows, fences down,
combines late to the fields.
Everybody shakes their heads:
How does he feed his kids?

He curses the weather, the sad machinery,
politics, his father’s last will
that chains him to this dirt
persisting under his fingernails.

Every morning he goes for coffee,
gossip,
talk of crops and prices
at the Daylight Donut.
When he leaves,
the men finish their coffee,
stub out their cigarettes,

remind themselves
that the man’s got a son,
strong as an ox and never set foot
on a tractor.

DINNER FOR TWO

AT AN OUTDOOR CAFÉ

This is one of those moments
one or the other will remember
when one or the other is gone.
It’s April—dogs, grass, trees
as young as they will ever be.

A blue sky narrows to rust.
They linger over coffee,
reluctant to go home
to the predictable chairs and tables,
the dozing cat,
the family photographs.
2 Poems by Debby Creasy

**Sun or Star**

Sometimes you scare me.

You name your scars
after people who’ve hurt you.
Like a sailor’s tattooed Mother on his tricep,
there’s the jagged curve of your ex-wife
across the knuckles of your left hand,
the Y—shaped mark on your jaw
where you caught your father’s ring.
I am certain there are more,
beneath your clothes, places
I haven’t seen.
But you can’t see how many times
you have handed them the blade,
how often you have mistaken
your shadow for theirs,
the way you step into the light
and invite the blow.

I see you tracing a fresh wound,
like a black wire along your forearm.
This is --------, you say.
I know her name.

I won’t touch this one, can’t
risk becoming lost again,
unable to find my way back.
I’m still carrying bread in my pockets.
I need to learn to carry pebbles....

I have traveled so far and learned so little,
it seems. This morning I find myself
on the beach, looking for stones again.
I palm smooth fragments of purple
clam shells, a rare bit of colored glass;
even the smallest thing glistens with possibility.

I think about what you told me yesterday,
the quarry in Florida where you went
with your friends. You all stood on the rim
one night, shining flashlights on the water
forty feet below. You each took your turn,
the others flicking their lights off
the moment you jumped.

How strange,
falling in the dark:
no quarry walls rising above you,
no clear water rising up to meet you.
Just you, suspended in darkness,
hanging for endless seconds over that water,
no way to know
you were about to enter it.

And your friends in an invisible circle above,
their love for you shining as brightly
as any sun or star.

**Miles**

She drove through a snowstorm this morning
to get to work, to bring in the Sunday papers
and brew the coffee—hot, strong—in the hope
that you, too, would brave the storm, drive
a distance far shorter than she did, but would,
anyway, even though she has never seen you
buy or read, even, a newspaper, but still,
you always have your coffee, and she
would reach across the counter and hand you
the 12-ounce paper cup you always get,
and probably, she thinks, she knows this now,
your fingers would touch, just for a moment
as the cup was passed, and maybe
you would lean against the counter and talk
because the snow is swirling and blowing outside
and you would be alone in the store on
this Sunday morning, talking easily,
nobody else around.

But you don’t come.
She waits, a while longer, longing
to see your old blue truck swirling around
the corner, swirling through the blowing snow,
and the slow, graceful way you come through
the door and she already has your coffee ready,
waiting on the counter.
You don’t come, though, today.
You are probably still sleeping
and the snow is blowing and falling hard
and getting deeper, but it’s OK,
she’ll close up and go home,
home where it’s kind of cold and
kind of dark, but it’s OK, she’ll
put on Miles, Kind of Blue,
and burrow deep into her quilts,
deeper now, while the snow keeps
swirling.
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**DEADLINES**

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Ask any layperson to explain what a haiku is, and almost immediately the person will say, “Oh, that is a three-lined Japanese poem with the first line having five syllables, the second with seven, and the final with five.” This definition is not entirely remiss but certainly pales to the magnitude an authentic haiku comprises. Just ask any serious haiku writer. In fact, writers from the United States have struggled for decades to solidify the structure and nature of English-language haiku. Members of the Haiku Society of America (HSA) gathered in 1973 and drafted, what they had intended to be, a definitive answer to the English-language haiku enigma. This work was later revisited in 1993, adding haibun and renga descriptors, and again in 2003; the latter edition serves as the current guidelines. Now, ask the same person what a haibun is, and wait for the moment of silence. So often is the case that popular poetic forms eclipse their equally important relatives. It is not the hope of this writer to illuminate the nuances of writing haiku but, instead, to spark interest in one tributary form sprung from the iconoclastic haiku model, known as haibun. Haibun, literally translated as poetry prose in the Japanese language, are “autobiographical, poetic prose accompanied by haiku” (Mair, 2006, para 3). The modern haibun can be a rewarding form for the contemporary poet that, as Catherine Mair notes, “can offer…a way of expressing [an] intimate lyric consciousness in a profound way” (para. 5).

Surprisingly, one of the preeminent masters of haiku, Matsuo Basho, popularized this Japanese form in the seventeenth century by combining a prose selection with one or more haiku. Basho, well known for his walking trips throughout Japan, recorded his thoughts and observations of specific events, vivid images, or memorable moments or people in a sort of travel journal entry. These writings were often revised, or even altered factually, to enhance the poetic intent. The prose portion in Basho’s haibun often varies in tone, length, and construction, but always remains cemented in a clear descriptive narrative. His verse usually addresses the prose subject only obliquely, “evoking the essence of an experience, adding to it, or going beyond it, with little or no causative or chronological relationship” (Jones, 2006, para 7). The Narrow Road to the Deep North and The Hut of the Phantom Dwelling by Basho are good examples of this unique travel journal writing style. Issa’s My Spring, another well-known example of haibun, appeared two hundred years later.

The following excerpt from The Narrow Road to the Deep North, translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa (2002), is an example of a Basho haibun:

Station 18 - Sendai
Crossing the River Natori, I entered the city of Sendai on May the fourth, the day we customarily throw fresh leaves of iris on the roof and pray for good health. I found an inn, and decided to stay there for several days. There was in this city a painter named Kaemon. I made special efforts to meet him, for he was reputed to be a man with a truly artistic mind. One day he took me to various places of interest which I might have missed but for his assistance. We first went to the plain of Miyagino, where fields of bush-clover were waiting to blossom in autumn. The hills of Tamada, Yokono, and Tsutsuji-ga-oka were covered with white rhododendrons in bloom. Then we went into the dark pine woods called Knoshita where even the beams of the sun could not penetrate. This darkest spot on the earth had often been the subject of poetry because of its dewiness - for example, one poet says that his lord needs an umbrella to protect him from the drops of dew when he enters it. We also stopped at the shrines of Yakushido and Tenjin on our way home. When the time came for us to say goodbye, this painter gave me his own drawings of Matsushima and Shio-gama and two pairs of straw sandals with laces dyed in the deep blue of the iris. In this last appears most clearly perhaps the true artistic nature of this man.

It looks as if
Iris flowers had bloomed
On my feet --
Sandals laced in blue
(from 18 Sendai chapter)

Modern haibun seem to have retained much of their original character as first set by Basho. Makoto Ueda, a contemporary haibun authority, sets four criteria for the modern haibun model. He identifies a haibun’s need for brevity and conciseness, dependence on imagery, writer’s detachment, and deliberate use of “ambiguous particles and verb forms in places where the conjunction ‘and’ would be used” (2006, para. 4). While Jones notes the need for haibun to utilize “direct, concrete, economical imagery infused with life and energy and eschewing abstraction and intellection,” he proposes three additional Haibun criteria (para. 7). A well-constructed haibun must be light in nature, but show a complexity of literary merit that, as a final bonus, adds an insight to life (Jones, 2006).

The haibun pattern can best be described as a poetic diary, the marriage of literary journal and haiku interacting on the page. George Marsh adds that “the relationship between the prose and the haiku...may be tangential, implicit” as “the prose deals with complexity and the haiku reveals the thing in itself, stripped of complexity, palpable in its suchness, like an epiphany” (2006, para.11). Marsh points out the economics of word usage and adds, “a new haibun cannot afford any sentence that does not (Page 16) contribute to the effect at the ending, and builds to its last words” (para.12). Similar to its haiku relative,
I walk behind my in-law’s house where dormant trees border a gray sky. Through the shallow tree line—the white and gray of the iced-over creek. I walk slowly to the half-dug grave my Father-in-law has worked. I pass smooth tree bark, then rough bark, then smooth, but always the shade of gray. My father-in-law sits next to the grave he has dug through the layer of frozen, dark peat. Two piles of yellow-orange sand set nearby. Two shovels, one flat the other curved, lean against the sycamore tree. He breathes hard, then nods to me. I push the curved shovel into yellow-orange sand. The cold day does not freeze this deep. I stand waist deep in the hole. I unbury a flat river stone.

“This will be her head stone,” he says. I continue to shovel. He stops me. We place the wicker bed in the hole. It is too large; I adjust the hole. He lies flat, places four stuffed toys in the empty bed.

“She will be our last dog,” he says. We wait out the moment, then continue on.

river’s bend—
still water meets
main flow

—Michael Blaine

References


Calling Card

I place a tiny stone
between my daughter's wings
a tiny, heavy stone
between stone wings
Summer, 1956

I'm to shuck corn--
my chore, with swatting houseflies.
It's store corn,
not like the field corn
bristling behind our cottage,
hard kernels that sting
when my brothers scale them at me.

Weekends at the farm
we wallow in the river.
The boys swim out deep, fling
jelly fish at each other.
After, we rinse under the cold hose,
redress in the same clothes, sweat-damp.
My parents and all their friends
like Ike.
I would never vote for Adlai.
I like names like Arthur,
the boy in the book I read
whenever I can.

The tractor growls--
men going to put away the boat.
I mark my book,
run down to the dock,
road dust silken-slippery under my feet.
My brothers slog into the river mud,
ignore the blue crabs lurking,
line up the boat straight,
winch it onto the trailer.
After dinner they'll shoot trap,
yelling 'pull',
the yellow plates flinging into humid evening
to be chipped or missed
or blown to smithereens.
I never try,

the gun would knock me down.
I run into the field after,
search for missed ones
pooled in the hot grass
like dollops of butter.

Ambush

Early mornings as a girl
I tagged along with my dad goose-hunting,
trying to learn what it was all about,
the killing.
He waded in hip boots down the dark shore,
moored decoys against the tide with lead sinkers
so they bobbed like toys in the bath.
We cooed into the straw blind,
nest with a hard seat,
peered through the secret turret
at the salt waves shushing before us.
When the first high call of the geese came
we held breath
and they circled, questioning,
slackened to coast in.
Then my father stood up
and the air exploded.
Afterward bodies floated on the river.
Our retriever paddled through the decoys,
carried the corpses in his mouth to shore,
shook himself after each retrieve.
I watched the pile grow.

It was bide your time then kill.
Same methodology as
ending a marriage.
Poetry At The Beach

Poetry At The Beach is a reading series now entering its second year. The program is sponsored by the Rehoboth Art Guild, South Coastal Library (Bethany Beach), Rehoboth Beach Public Library, and the Lewes Public Library, and funded in part by the Delaware Division of the Arts. All readings are at the three libraries at 7:00 PM on the dates scheduled.

May 9 (Rehoboth)  H.A. Maxson, Carol Bruce, Russ Endo
June 14 (Bethany)  Anne Colwell, Joe Allen, Carol Bruce
July 12 (Lewes)    H. A. Maxson, Carol Bruce, Joe Allen
Aug. 9 (Rehoboth)  Anne Colwell, Joe Allen, Wendy Ingersoll
Sept. 13 (Bethany) H.A. Maxson, Wendy Ingersoll, Russ Endo

http://www.shakespeareco.org/index.htm

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Upcoming Events

Please join us at the following events!

May 4
Dr. Cara Lee Blume, Delaware’s Cultural Heritage Program Manager for Archaeology and Historical Architecture The People Who Stayed Behind: a history of the indigenous people of Delaware, 1630-2006 Drawing on current and recent research, Dr. Blume argues that Delaware's native peoples did not leave the area as had been widely supposed, but remain a vital and vibrant part of Delaware's cultural landscape even to this day. We know this to have been the case in Milton and Broadkill Hundred, so come and hear the larger story.

June 1
Michael Morgan, author and local historian Ships of the Broadkill Mike Morgan, author most recently of Pirates and Patriots, writes a weekly column on local history in the Delaware Coast Press. He'll share his discoveries about shipbuilding on the Broadkill.

June 9
Exhibit Opening at the Lydia Black Cannon Museum “The World of 1807.” This exhibit places Milton's bi-centennial in its historical context. Opening: 1:00-5:00 pm. Exhibit runs through September 9th
Biggs Museum of American Art
Neighborhood Museum, National Treasure

406 Federal Street,
Dover, Delaware
302-674-2111,
fax 302-674-5133
admin@biggsmuseum.org

The building and Museum are barrier free. There is an elevator in the Museum, and a wheelchair is available. There are no steps to gain access to the building, and there are 4 parking places designated for handicapped parking, including one for a van. The Biggs Museum’s programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency committed to promoting and supporting the arts in Delaware, by Delaware Humanities Forum, Delaware Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs, First State Heritage Park at Dover, Yellow Book, and Kraft Foods. For additional information on arts activities in Delaware, visit the Delaware Division of the Arts homepage, www.artsdel.org.
Making the Case for Delaware’s Literary History
by Steven Leech

On the surface it might seem that there are more Delaware visual artists than literary artists either living and dead who are known by their works. Most of us have heard of N.C Wyeth and Howard Pyle or Gayle Hoskins, Frank Schoonover and Edward Loper. Yet, our past literary community seems to be missing. Certainly, these literary artists must have existed beyond those hazy stories that have come to us from the periphery. Somewhere we’ve heard that Howard Pyle wrote stories. After spending several years of researching the subject of past literary art from Delaware what I found was a little surprising, and delightfully so.

Going back almost to the American Revolution I found a slew of Delaware authors and poets who made significant contributions to American literature, and who have made some small, though significant, contributions to the American literary canon. I found authors from Delaware who had interacted with and even influenced such American literary luminaries as Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Paul Laurence Dunbar, H. L. Mencken, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, among others.

About seven years ago, while writing an article on John Lofland, Delaware’s first notable literary figure, for the Wilmington magazine Out & About, my editor asked me to quote someone from the University of Delaware. I could find no one in the University’s English Department who knew anything about Lofland. The best I could come up with was some one who was an expert on Delaware folklore. However, poet, playwright and University of Delaware English professor Jeanne Walker did say for my article, “Looking at the life and work of a minor writer can give you information that provides a context for the writers we know better.” Her quote provided me with a valuable perspective about how I ought to view my future research.

I later learned, and related in my article in Out & About, how Lofland, while living in Baltimore between the mid 1830s and mid 1840s, had bested Edgar Allan Poe in a poetry writing contest held in the Seven Stars tavern. According to one Poe biographer, Mary E. Phillips in her 1926 book, Edgar Allan Poe, The Man, Lofland may have had an influence on Poe with his story “Berenice.” Later on, it dawned on me that Lofland, who studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania before being expelled after a dispute with one of the University’s professors, may have even been the person in mind, and was thus the model for, “Mr. L—l,” a medical student in Poe’s story “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.” It was a tantalizing prospect that fueled my curiosity.

Lofland was not the only Delaware literary artist to have influenced Poe. The work of Delaware’s first novelist, Robert Montgomery Bird, was much admired by Poe. Bird’s 1836 novel, Sheppard Lee, which uses the concept of metempsychosis to propel the plot, contains themes and plot routines that are similar to those in many of Poe’s tales. Poe even invited Bird to submit some fiction to the The Southern Literary Messenger. Bird, who was something of a cynic, evidently did not respond to Poe’s solicitation.

Another 19th century writer from Delaware, George Alfred Townsend, who was a journalist popularly known as “GATH” and whose reputation rivaled his early contemporary Horace Greeley, evidently knew and interacted with Mark Twain. There exists a photograph, taken by Matthew Brady on February 7, 1871, of Townsend and Twain sitting together. Mark Twain considered Townsend a friend and colleague. In fact, the two shared a house in Washington D. C. during the winter of 1867-8, while Townsend acted as correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and Cincinnati Enquirer. There are some curious parallels in the literary careers of both authors. Townsend’s first novel Lost Abroad, published in 1870, echoes much of the literary intent found in Twain’s 1869 novel Innocents Abroad. Only a few months before Twain’s Huckleberry Finn was published in 1885, Townsend published his best known novel, The Entailed Hat (Harper & Brothers, 1884). The novel is still in print from Nanticoke Books in Vienna, Maryland. Both Twain’s and Townsend’s novels grapple with the question of slavery and, in their own way, its relationship to white society. In Townsend’s novel, he relates the true story of the infamous Delaware serial murderer Patty Cannon who made a living kidnapping Black people and selling them into slavery. One must wonder whether the two had influenced each other in the writing of their respective novels, especially considering the assertion that Twain purportedly developed his anti-slavery theme over the course of writing Huckleberry Finn.

The crosscurrents among works by Twain, Bird and Townsend show up in some tantalizing ways throughout the 19th century.

So the story goes, after Patty Cannon was captured and she cheated the hangman by poisoning herself, her head was severed and sent to a phrenologist in Philadelphia to discern her criminal motivation from the bumps and characteristics of her skull. Bird, who also studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, had earned his medical degree two years before Patty Cannon’s demise in 1829. Bird, then a physician in Philadelphia, had developed a keen interest in phrenology and may have had some hand in the macabre inspection of Cannon’s severed head. In Bird’s novel Sheppard Lee, the severed head of a woman who fits the description of Patty Cannon makes a brief appearance. Another of Bird’s novels from 1835, The Hawks of Hawk Hollow, actually delves a little deeper into the fine art of phrenology. Incidentally, for anyone wanting to make their own phrenologic inspection of Patty Cannon’s skull, it now resides in the public library in Dover.

Mark Twain evidently was also familiar with Bird’s novels. Twain makes passing reference to Bird’s most popular novel Nick of the Woods from 1837 in Life on the Mississippi, published in 1883, when he charges an old acquaintance with plagiarizing Bird’s work.

Probably the best and most recent example of a literary figure, who had lived in Delaware, having had an influence on a major American literary artist can be found in Eleanor Alexander’s 2002 book Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow, about the stormy relationship of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Alice Ruth Moore. After Alice Dunbar’s marriage to Paul Laurence ended, she
moved to Wilmington where she had family. Her own literary career did not end there. Her literary work showed up, both before and after her marriage to Dunbar, in places like George Jean Nathan’s and H. L. Mencken’s *Smart Set* as well as in *Crisis* when it was edited by W. E. B. duBois. In Wilmington she married Robert Nelson and is better known today as Alice Dunbar-Nelson. Her literary and journalistic works inspired many who participated in the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s.

*The Works of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* was published in 1988 by Oxford University Press and, like *The Entailed Hat* by George Alfred Townsend, is among the few Delaware literary artists still in print.

In the 1920s Wilmington was, during the time Alice Dunbar-Nelson and her husband Robert published the African American newspapers *The Wilmington Advocate*, a hot bed of literary activity. Much of this literary excitement was generated by the on- and-off residency of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. The reason behind the Fitzgerald’s stay in the suburbs just outside the city was F. Scott’s roommate from his college days at Princeton. Fitzgerald’s roommate, John Biggs Jr., was also a novelist and two of the four novels he wrote and published received critical acclaim; *Demigods* (Scribner, 1926) and *Seven Days Whipping* (Scribner, 1929). Later, Biggs turned in his literary career for a defense attorney, but some of his stories remained unpublished.

Also part of Wilmington’s literary life during the 1920s was the Wertenbaker brothers, Charles and Peyton.

Better known of the two was Charles, who spent a considerable part of his career as a journalist for *TIME* magazine. As a novelist he tackled subjects that could be considered controversial today. For example, the arch villain of his final novel, *The Death of Kings*, (Random House, 1954) is modeled after Whittaker Chambers, and his 1950 novel, *The Barons*, also published by Random House, is a thinly disguised, and somewhat scandalous, account of the rise of the DuPont Corporation just after the turn of the 20th century.

Wertenbaker lived in Delaware from the time he was 14 years old until the mid 1930s when his marriage to his first wife, the Wilmington artist Henrietta Hoopes, failed.

A fictional account of his first marriage, but more importantly, the influence State of Delaware had on Wertenbaker was made pretty clear in his 1936 roman a clef, *To My Father*, published by Farrer & Rinehart. Wertenbaker may have turned his back on Delaware, but the weight of the state’s influence dogged him to the end, an end depicted in the Carson Kanin Broadway play from 1962, *A Gift of Time*, based on the account that Wertenbaker’s widow, Lael Wertenbaker, made in her gripping 1957 book, *Death of a Man*, published by Random House.

Charles Wertenbaker’s younger brother Peyton was also a talented writer. His only two novels, *Blach Cabin*, published in 1933 and *Rain on the Mountain* from 1934, were both published by Little, Brown & Company, and written under the name “Green Peyton.” Both garnered good reviews. The younger Wertenbaker also wrote fiction using his actual name. Early in his career Peyton wrote science fiction which was published in the earliest issues of the ground breaking journal *Amazing Stories*. In these stories, dating from the late 1920s to early 1930s, he utilized subjects familiar to us today, ranging from Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity to parallel universes, time travel, and virtual reality.

It is difficult to be brief concerning writers and poets from Delaware. There’s so much I’ve left unsaid. The works of Delaware’s most prolific and seriously literary novelist, Anne Parrish, have all but been forgotten. It’s hard to find work still in print from Delaware’s only Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, John P. Marquand, whose *Our House* most likely recounts the true life romance with another Wilmington literary figure, the poet Marion Gause, who later became Canby’s wife. Canby is most remembered as the founder of *The Saturday Review of Literature*.

Except for Townsend’s *The Entailed Hat*, the anthology of works Alice Dunbar Nelson, a couple of titles by Robert Montgomery Bird and Thaddeus’ *Voltaire* issued in expensive editions by Kessinger Publishing, and some editions of children’s novel by illustrator Howard Pyle, nothing is still in print by Delaware’s past authors. The good news is that between the Morris Library at the University of Delaware and the Wilmington Institute Free Library, nearly all books so far mentioned are available. The bad news is that most do not circulate, so reading them will be difficult.

The University’s library has some circulating editions by Bird, Lofland, Townsend, Canby, Ward, Parrish, Biggs and Wertenbaker, but borrowing privileges cost $25.00 a year. Only

exploits there, especially with the American poet Harry Kemp who made off with Sinclair’s wife Meta in a true life adventure in “free love.” Kemp’s novel, *Trampling On Life*, published in 1922 by Boni & Liveright, in which his exploits in Arden with Sinclair are recounted, is long out of print and nearly forgotten.

Totally forgotten are two books of narrative poetry by Wilmington poet James Whaler. Whaler’s 1927 book, *Hale’s Pond, and Other Poems*, published by Harold Vinal, Ltd., was praised for its “coiled vigor” by Louis Untermeyer in the 1942 edition of *Modern American Poetry*. Whaler’s *Green River — a poem for Rafinesque*, published by Harcourt, Brace in 1931 garnered a glowing review by the American poet Hart Crane in the April 1932 issue of *Poetry*. There is strong evidence that Whaler and Crane knew one another.

In a somewhat similar fashion to the way the city of Wilmington influenced Charles Wertenbaker, the same might be said of Henry Seidel Canby’s only novel *Our House* (1919, Macmillan). Some critics of Canby’s novel considered Wilmington, depicted as “Millington,” to be one of the main characters in the novel because of the influence it exerted over the novel’s protagonist, Robert Roberts. *Our House* most likely recounts the true life romance with another Wilmington literary figure, the poet Marion Gause, who later became Canby’s wife. Canby is most remembered as the founder of *The Saturday Review of Literature*.

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Dreamstreets Press has published small samples in their limited edition chapbooks and magazine. Oak Knoll Bookstore in New Castle may have some copies for sale.

Delaware’s literary canon, if you will, is good enough to stand up to literary criticism and scholarship. The subject, in whole or in parts, would be a worthy subject for a doctoral thesis. This would certainly help to create awareness. Finding greater publication, or republications, of new editions would create new readers of works by Delaware authors, and lectures and courses in the community would generate greater interest in this fascinating part of our local culture. There is still some catching up to do.

Delaware Literary Works (some available for Republication):

John Lofland -- Collected Prose Works of John Lofland: Written mostly during the last three years of his life in Wilmington while Literary Editor for the Blue Hen’s Chicken. His prose is lucid, still relevant and even entertaining.

Robert Montgomery Bird -- Sheppard Lee: This innovative novel is as close to having a novel that takes place nearby.

George Alfred Townsend -- The Entailed Hat: Still in print. It ought to stay that way.

Elizabeth M. Chandler -- poetry: antebellum, abolitionist inspired poems

Stanford Davis -- poetry: Delaware first poet of note in the early 20th century

Alice Dunbar-Nelson -- Her work is still in print and needs to remain so.

Henry Seidel Canby -- Our House: Canby’s only novel, which transform Wilmington into a breathing city.

Christopher Ward -- One Little Man: His first Wilmington novel about a naïf looking for romance and culture.

John Biggs, Jr. -- Demigods: About a religious fanatic who makes it to Wilmington to run a newspaper

and run for Governor.

— Seven Days Whipping: About a Wilmington Judge and a local Native American boy.

Mary Biggs -- Lily-Iron: A sublime and imagist novel written by John Biggs’ sister.

James Whaler -- Hale’s Pond & Green River: The best poet ever to have come from Wilmington

Anne Parrish -- Perennial Bachelor: A prize winning novel about obsessive insularity set in Claymont

— A Clouded Star: About Harriet Tubman’s final trek north to Canada. Some of the story takes place in Wilmington.

Charles Wertenbaker -- To My Father: Life in Wilmington, and other places, in the early part of the 20th century.

— The Barons: Thinly disguised novel about an industrial family at the beginning of the 20th century in a place that sounds like Wilmington.

G. Peyton Wertenbaker -- First Crash: Peyton’s collected science fiction, which he wrote in Wilmington in the 1920s and 1930s.

Victor Thadeus -- Leo Rex: His unpublished Depression era novel.

— Voltaire: Genius of Mockery: His best non fiction book.

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Erica Jong and Francine du Plessix Gray at the 92nd Street Y

Erica Jong is the author of *Fear of Flying*, and the memoirs *Fear of Fifty: A Midlife Memoir* and *Seducing the Demon: Writing for My Life*. In the 1960s, she began publishing fiction and political essays in *The New Yorker* and is still a frequent contributor. Francine du Plessix Gray won the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Them: A Memoir of Parents* (2005). She has been honored with a National Magazine Award and has been named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Date & Time: Thu, May 10, 2007, 1:00pm
Location: Lexington Avenue at 92nd Street, 92nd Street Y, Code: T-TP5NT05-01
Price: Tickets are $17.00 (All Sections); $10.00 Student; $14.45 for Poetry Center members.
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We who have crab cages, we who row out with piles of chicken necks to throw to our corrals out in salt water, know the crabs in the water do as vultures do: they love a body and with beak of claw, with fine serrated fingers pick it raw.

And I may even drown someday in a squall and roll in sea grass, in those sober curls, and be relieved of my old put-on soul and all the bull that I once told to girls, all my poses and my noble saws, and have my old eyes sea-changed into pearls

and get right down to bare me at the bone, even if it turns out crude and mean.

My fat was padding. Only bone is lean. Then Lord, our Crab of Crabs, for Thee I drown to be dissected in the ocean clean.

I need to be eaten by something like a machine.

---

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Just dropping a line
Hoping you're fine
No real news to report
I feel like writing
And while not that exciting
It's easier than playing a sport
I can't write a letter
So it won't get better
You'll just have to read with a beat
If you had a buzz
The way that I does
It might be construed as a treat
Don't mind me
'Cause as you can see
I'm just running off at the pen
If you're annoyed
Or other than joyed
I won't let it happen again
Just got off work
And don't want to shirk
My obligation as a poet
Wrote out some checks
To pay on some debts
But that's no fun and you know it
You guys take care
And though it is rare
Live happily ever after
One small key
Made evident to me
Is lots of healthy laughter
I've worn out my wit
So I have to quit
If this letter I'm to be sending
With no further ado
I bid you adieu
Now how was that for an ending?

— “Stonecarver”

Literary Birthdays

May

May 3, 1912    May Sarton
May 5, 1867    Nellie Bly (Elizabeth Cochran)
May 6, 1861    Rabindranath Tagore
May 7, 1812    Robert Browning
May 7, 1857    Jose Valentim Fialho de Almeida
May 7, 1776    Daniel Berzsenyi
May 8, 1698    Henry Baker
May 9, 1860    Sir James Matthew Barrie
May 12, 1907   Daphne Du Maurier
May 12, 1812   Edward Lear
May 15, 1890   Katherine Anne Porter
May 17, 1873   Henri Barbusse
May 20, 1799   Honoré de Balzac
May 22, 1688   Alexander Pope
May 26, 1799   Alexander Pushkin
May 27, 1867   Arnold Bennett
May 30, 1835   Alfred Austin

June

Jun 2, 1816    Grace Aguilar
Jun 3, 1867    Konstantin Dmitrievich Balmont
Jun 8, 1874    Jose Martinez Ruiz (Azorin)
Jun 10, 1832   Sir Edwin Arnold
Jun 12, 1827   Johanna Spyri
Jun 13, 1752   Fanny Burney
Jun 13, 1574   Richard Barnfield
Jun 14, 1811   Harriet Beecher Stowe
Jun 18, 1896   Philip Barry
Jun 20, 1905   Lillian Hellman
Jun 20, 1743   Anna Laetitia Barbauld
Jun 21, 1912   Mary McCarthy
Jun 21, 1813   William Edmondstoun Aytoun
Jun 23, 1910   Jean Anouilh
Jun 24, 1842   Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce
Jun 25, 1875   Sir Ernest John Pickstone
Jun 29, 1809   Petrus Borel
Jun 30, 1803   Thomas Lovell Beddoes

July

Jul 3, 1883    Franz Kafka
Jul 3, 1860    Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Jul 9, 1843    Bertha Felicie Sophie
Jul 12, 1602   Edward Benlowes
Jul 19, 1863   Hermann Bahr
Jul 21, 1899   Ernest Hemingway
Jul 22, 1898   Stephen Vincent Benet
Jul 24, 1900   Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald
Jul 26, 1856   George Bernard Shaw
Jul 27, 1870   Hilaire Belloc
Jul 29, 1869   Booth Tarkington
Jul 30, 1818   Emily Bronte
Jul 30, 1888   Jean Jacques Bernard

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May 13: Sandra Beasley & Ellen Cole
June 10: Nathalie F. Anderson & Maria Terrone
July 8: Donald Illich & Neelam Patel
Aug. 12: Special All-Open Reading (no featured readers this time)
Sept. 9: "Lucky Thirteenth" Anniversary Show with readers from the past year

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MILTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WILL HOST AN "ANTIQUES ROADSHOW"—TYPE EVENT

3:30 TO 5:30 P.M. - MILTON MEMORIAL PARK WITH NATIONALLY KNOWN ANTIQUES' APPRAISER RICHARD C. DRISCOLL TO ASSESS UP TO THREE ITEMS PER PERSON, @ $5.00 PER ITEM (@ FAIR MARKET VALUE) INCLUDING AMERICAN, ENGLISH, & SPANISH COLONIAL ANTIQUE FURNITURE, GLASS, FURNISHING, DECORATIONS, SILVER, PORCELAIN, JEWELRY, PAINTINGS, GRAPHICS, TAPESTRIES, & PEWTER, SCULPTURE, ANTIQUITIES, TAPESTRIES JUDAICA, RUSSIAN, OCEANIC AND ORIENTAL ART INCLUDING CARPETS AND JAPANESE WOODBLOCK PRINTS, GENERAL HOUSEHOLD CONTENTS, OFFICE FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT.

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6:30 TO 10:00 P.M. A LIVE AUCTION - WITH "BUTCH" EMMERT $2.00 PER PERSON SUGGESTED ENTRY DONATION.

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THESE THREE EVENTS ARE DEDICATED TO THE JOHN MILTON STATUE PROJECT.
RESIDENCIES

Fine Arts Work Center Summer Workshop Program The Fine Arts Work Center’s annual summer workshops will be held from June 17 to August 24 in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The center offers weekend & weeklong workshops in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. This year’s writing faculty includes poets Catherine Bowman, Henri Cole, Daisy Fried, Terrance Hayes, Marie Howe, Galway Kinnell, Maxine Kumin, Carl Phillips, D. A. Powell, and Alan Shapiro; fiction writers Dean Alabarelli, Amy Bloom, Julia Glass, Pam Houston, Alice Mattison, and Jim Shepard; and creative nonfiction writers Jane Brox, Robin Hemley, Cynthia Huntington, Michael Klein, and Richard McCann. Tuition for weekend workshops is $295; tuition for weeklong workshops ranges from $600 to $725. Housing is available at nearby guesthouses and may be available on campus. A limited number of scholarships are available. A deposit of $150 per class is required for registration and is nonrefundable after May 4. Call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for more information. Fine Arts Work Center Summer Workshop Program, 24 Pearl Street, Provincetown, MA 02657. (508) 487-9960, ext. 103. Dorothy Antczak, Education Coordinator. workshops@fawc.org www.fawc.org

The Frost Place The Frost Place, a museum and poetry center located at Robert Frost's homestead in Franconia, New Hampshire, hosts two conferences for poets each summer. The 29th annual Festival and Conference on Poetry will be held from July 29 to August 4 and features workshops, lectures, and readings. Participating poets include Kazim Ali, Martha Collins, Ellen Dudley, Edward Hirsch, Mart’n’Espada, Jody Gladding, Fred Marchant, Barbara Ras, Ellen Bryant Voight, & Eleanor Wilner. The cost is $900. Submit three pages of poetry with a $25 application fee by June 1. The 9th annual Frost Place Seminar will be held from August 5 to August 10 and features workshops, lectures on craft and technique, and readings. Participating poets include Jeanne Marie Beaumont, Suzanne Cleary, and David Graham. Attendance is limited to 16 participants. The cost is $725. Submit three poems and a one-page cover letter (including a brief biographical note) with a $25 application fee by May 1. For both conferences, meals are provided for an additional cost, and housing is available at a number of local motels and inns. Send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for applications and complete guidelines. The Frost Place, P.O. Box 74, Franconia, NH 03580. (603) 823-5510. Jim Schley, Executive Director. rfrost@ncia.net www.frostplace.org

Hurston/Wright Foundation's Writer's Week The Hurston/Wright Foundation's annual Writer's Week for black writers will be held from July 15 to July 21 on the campus of American University in Washington, D.C. The program features panels and workshops in poetry and fiction. Participating faculty includes poets Kwame Alexander and A. Van Jordan and fiction writers Chris Abani and Mat Johnson. The cost of the conference is $1,250 (or $1,400 for the Advanced Novel workshop), including room and board. Submit 5 to 10 poems totaling no more than 20 pages or 25 pages of prose (or 50 pages for the Advanced Novel workshop) with a $15 application fee by April 20. Financial aid is available. Send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for an application and complete guidelines. Hurston/Wright Foundation's Writer's Week, 6525 Belcrest Road, Suite 531, Hyattsville, MD 20782. (301) 683-2134. Clyde McElvene, Executive Director. info@hurstonwright.org www.hurstonwright.org

Virginia Center for the Creative Arts The VCCA offers residencies of two weeks to two months to writers, visual artists, and composers at a working retreat on a 450-acre estate at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, approximately 60 miles south of Charlottesville. The center can accommodate 22 artists at a time and provides separate working and living quarters as well as meals. Residents may use the facilities of nearby Sweet Briar College. The daily suggested fee is $30 to $60. The center is open year-round. For residencies from October through January, submit 6 to 10 poems, up to two short stories, or the first chapter of a novel and a résumé with a $25 application fee by May 15. The center will also host the Auvillar Writer's Workshops in poetry and fiction in June and July at its studio facility in the village of Auvillar in the Gascony region of France. The poetry workshop, taught by Denise Duhamel and Nick Carbo, will be held from June 21 to June 27. The fiction workshop, taught by Helen Benedict and Stephen O'Connor, will be held from July 11 to July 17. Each workshop includes group and individual critiques as well as trips to local sites. Tuition for each workshop is $2,195, including room and board. Submit 6 poems or 10 pages of fiction by May 1. Send an SASE, call, or visit the Web site for applications and complete guidelines. Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, 154 San Angelo Drive, Amherst, VA 24521. (434) 946-7236. www.vcca.com

Soul Mountain Retreat Residencies of two to eight weeks at the Soul Mountain Retreat located on six acres of woods and meadows in Haddam, Connecticut, are offered to poets in the spring, summer, and fall. The fall session takes place from September 1 to November 1. Residents are provided with a private room and a shared kitchen and bathroom. Submit up to 15 poems, a résumé, a short biography, a project proposal, and three letters of recommendation (sent directly to the foundation by the references) with a $30 application fee by June 1. E-mail or visit the Web site for an application & complete guidelines. Soul Mountain Retreat, P.O. Box 1071, Old Lyme, CT 06371. www.soulmountainretreat.com soulmountainretreat@yahoo.com

Lyon College Visiting fellowship in Creative Writing A six-week residency at Lyon College, including a stipend of $5,000, will be given to a creative nonfiction writer. The biennial fellowship alternates among writers of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. For the 2008 fellowship, submit a published book of creative nonfiction or photocopies of published works of creative nonfiction, a curriculum vitae, and two letters of recommendation by May 15. There is no entry fee. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Lyon College, Visiting Fellowship in Creative Writing, P.O. Box 2317, Batesville, AR 72503. www.lyon.edu/departments/creativeviewriting

Tinker Mountain Writers' Workshop The Tinker Mountain Writers' Workshop is an opportunity to develop the writing skills you've always wanted in a one-week experience at Hollins University. Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, you'll be surrounded by peace, beauty, and inspiration as you discover your full potential as a creative writer. With class sizes of no more than 15 students, you'll benefit from one-on-one interaction with your workshop leader along with in-depth class discussions. With such tranquility along with rousing discussion, the atmosphere at the Tinker Mountain Writers' Workshop is sure to bring out the best in your writing. June 10-16. For cost and more information, please call 540-362-6229.
UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Conversations and Connections: Practical Advice on Getting Published 5/5/2007 [11:00 AM - 7:00 PM]
Conversations and Connections is a one-day writer's conference designed to help you make the connections and get the information you need to take your writing -- and publishing -- to the next level. Our panelists are experts in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, writing for children, using the web, marketing, and everything in between. Over 25 literary magazines will be represented. $35 registration fee includes the full day conference, plus face-to-face "speed dating" with literary magazine editors, and a subscription to the literary magazine of your choice. Sponsored by The Writer's Center, Baltimore Review, Barrelohouse, and Potomac Review. For more information please visit the web site, http://www.writersconnectconference.com

WIW's 28th Washington Writers Conference Saturday, June 9, 2007
Living On Words: Get Inspired, Get Writing . . . Get Published
Continental breakfast and registration begins at 7:30 a.m., Awards reception finishes at 7:30 p.m. Cafritz Conference Center, The George Washington University, 800 21st St. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20052. The 28th Washington Writers Conference presents a full day of program including: Keynote Speaker Francine Prose, award-winning author of 11 novels, including Blue Angel, a finalist for the National Book Award. Her latest book is Reading Like A Writer. She has also written four children's books and co-translated three volumes of fiction. Prose is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine and writes regularly on art for The Wall Street Journal. Plenary Speaker Peter Bowerman, author of The Well-Fed Writer, detailing in a practical "how-to" manner the lucrative field of commercial freelancing. He tells of leaving a 15-year sales and marketing career to build a successful full-time freelance business in four months. His new book is The Well-Fed Self-Publisher: How to Turn One Book into a Full-Time Living. More than 75 presenters featured in 14 How-To panels Two 10-minute pitch meetings, for all conference attendees who are WIW members, scheduled with leading literary agents. Mix with and meet fellow novelists, journalists, biographers, commercial, nonfiction and freelance writers. Special package pricing for a combination WIW membership and conference registration To sign on for e-mail conference updates, send a note rsvp@washwriter.org or call the office at (202) 775-5150.

International Women's Writing Guild Conferences
The 53rd biannual Big Apple Writing Workshop and Open House, sponsored by the International Women's Writing Guild, will be held from April 21 to April 22 at Scandinavia House in New York City. Open to poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers, the conference offers the Saturday workshop "Writing the Way Home in a Fragmented World—Kindling the Hearth Fires," as well as opportunities to meet with authors and agents on Sunday. The cost, which does not include food or lodging, is $160 for both days ($130 for IWWG members), $100 for Sunday only ($90 for members), or $105 for Sunday only ($80 for members). The 30th annual Memory Magic summer conference will be held from June 15 to June 22 at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. The conference is open to women writers of all levels, offers readings, book signings, opportunities to meet with agents and editors, and approximately 65 workshops each day in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. This year's faculty includes poets Susan Baugh, Marj Hahne, D. H. Melhem, Myra Shapiro, and Kathleen Spivack; fiction writers Anya Achtenberg, Rainelle Burton, Elizabeth Kane Buzzelli, and Pat Carr; and creative nonfiction writers June Gould, Marsha McGregor, Maureen Murdock, Agate Nesaule, and Susan Tiberghien. Tuition, including room and board, is $899 for a shared room ($869 for IWWG members) or $1,034 for a single ($1,004 for members). A preregistration deposit of $45 is required. For both conferences, send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for more information. International Women's Writing Guild Conferences, P.O. Box 810, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028. (212) 737-7536. Hannelore Hahn, Executive Director. iwwg@iwwg.org www.iwwg.org

Juniper Summer Writing Institute
The fourth annual Juniper Summer Writing Institute will be held from June 24 to June 30 on the University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst. The program offers readings, craft forums, manuscript consultations, and workshops in poetry and fiction. This year's faculty includes poets Mark Doty, Thomas Sayers Ellis, James Haug, Lisa Olstein, James Tate, Arisa White, Dara Wier, and Matthew Zaprunder and fiction writers Chris Bachelder, Barry Hannah, Noy Holland, Paul Lisicky, Grace Paley, Joy Williams, and Leni Zumas. Tuition, including some meals, is $1,100. Several lodging options are offered, starting at $35 per night for a dorm room. Partial scholarships are available. Submit 8 to 10 pages of poetry or 10 to 20 pages of fiction with a $25 application fee. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Scholarship applications are due April 9. Send an SASE, call, or e-mail for an application and complete guidelines. Juniper Summer Writing Institute, c/o University Conference Services, 918 Campus Center, 1 Campus Center Way, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. (413) 545-5510. Lisa Olstein, Director. juniperinstitute@hfa.umass.edu www.umass.edu/juniperinstitute

New York Roundtable Writers' Conference
The third annual New York Roundtable Writers' Conference will be held from April 13 to April 14 at the Small Press Center in New York City. The event features panels, discussions, workshops, readings, and the opportunity to meet with literary agents. The cost is $250 for one day and $350 for both days. Individual consultations with agents are available for $50. Registration for the conference is available on a first-come, first-served basis. To register for an agent consultation, submit a 10-page writing sample by March 15. Visit the Web site for complete guidelines. New York Roundtable Writers' Conference, Small Press Center, 20 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. (212) 764-7021. Karin Taylor, Executive Director.info@smallpress.org www.smallpress.org
**UPCOMING CONFERENCES**

**Muse and the Marketplace Conference**
The sixth annual Muse and the Marketplace Conference will be held from May 5 to May 6 at the Omni Parker House in Boston. The conference, for fiction and creative nonfiction writers, features craft classes, panel discussions, and meetings with agents and editors. Participants include fiction writers Suzanne Berne, Bret Anthony Johnston, Sue Miller, Thomas Mallon, and Martha Southgate, among others. The cost of the conference is $215. For a one-on-one manuscript consultation with an editor or agent, submit two copies of no more than 20 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction with a $120 registration fee by April 11. The general registration deadline is April 30. Visit the Web site for more information. Muse and the Marketplace Conference, Grub Street, 160 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. (781) 695-0075. www.grubstreet.org/muse

**William Paterson University Spring Writer's Conference**
The English department of William Paterson University will present its ninth annual Spring Writer's Conference on April 14 on the WPU campus in Wayne, New Jersey, 20 miles from New York City. This year's conference will focus on the theme of “past and present” and will feature lectures, readings, and workshops in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. The faculty includes poets Alicia Ostriker, Joanna Fuhrman, and Rachel Wetzsteon and fiction writers Philip Cioffari and John Parras. Tuition is $40, which includes lunch. Registration is made on a first-come, first served basis. Send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for more information. William Paterson University Spring Writer's Conference, English Department, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, NJ 07470. (973) 720-3067. John Parras, Contact. parrasj@wpunj.edu euphrates.wpunj.edu/faculty/parrasj/conference/writersconferencemain.htm

**Prague Summer Program**
The 15th annual Prague Summer Program will be held from June 30 to July 27 in Prague, Czech Republic. This year's conference, "Love Makes the World Go Round: Love as Cultural Construct," offers intensive two- and four-week workshops in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, as well as literature and culture classes and a lecture and reading series. Graduate and undergraduate students who complete four weeks of study may earn up to seven hours of fully transferable academic credit. Faculty and guests include poets Michael Collier, Gerald Costanzo, Alison Hawthorne Deming, Mark Jarman, Thomas Lux, Anne Marie Macari, and Gerald Stern; fiction writers Robert Olen Butler, Elizabeth Drewberry, Stuart Dybek, Jaime Gordon, Richard Katrovas, and Bret Lott; and creative nonfiction writer Robin Hemley. Tuition is $2,145 for one two-week course, $2,645 for two two-week courses, $3,095 for one four-week course, or $3,595 for two four-week courses. Accommodations range from $250 to $825 for each two-week period. Submit up to 5 pages of poems or 10 pages of prose with a nonrefundable $250 deposit by May 1. Send an SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site for an application and complete guidelines. Prague Summer Program, Western Michigan University, 1903 West Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5331. (269) 387-2594. Richard Katrovas, Director. prague@wmich.edu www.pragusummer.com

**Wesleyan Writers Conference**
The 51st annual Wesleyan Writers Conference will be held from June 17 to June 22 at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. The conference offers seminars and workshops in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, as well as readings, lectures, manuscript consultations, and publishing advice. The faculty includes poet Honor Moore; fiction writers Alexander Chee, Josip Novakovich, Roxana Robinson, and Amanda Stern; creative nonfiction writers Lis Harris, Gayle Pemberton, and Katha Pollitt; and many others, including editors and agents. Tuition, including room and board, is $1,190. The day-student rate, which includes tuition and meals but not housing, is $980. Scholarships and teaching fellowships are available. Participants who wish to submit a manuscript for a consultation may send 12 poems or up to 30 pages of prose with a nonrefundable $75 deposit by May 1. The deadline for scholarship and fellowship applicants is April 5. Send an SASE, call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for an application and complete guidelines. Wesleyan Writers Conference, Wesleyan University, 294 High Street, Middletown, CT 06459. (860) 685-3604. Anne Greene, Conference Director. agreene@wesleyan.edu www.wesleyan.edu/writers vabook@virginia.edu www.vabook.org

**Virginia Festival of the Book**
The 13th annual Virginia Festival of the Book will be held from March 21 to March 25 in Charlottesville, Virginia, to celebrate books and promote literacy. The festival offers readings, panels, and discussions with writers and publishing professionals. This year's featured authors include poets ConstanceQuarterman Bridges, Victoria Chang, Kimiko Hahn, Judith Hall, Ann Hudson, Frank X Walker, David Wojahn, and Kevin Young and fiction writers Gabriel Brownstein, Ravi Howard, R. T. Smith, and Luis Alberto Urrea. Most events are free and open to the public. Call, e-mail, or visit the Web site for more information. Virginia Festival of the Book, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 145 Ednam Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22903. (434) 924-6890.

**Arctcroft Creative Center**
Arctcroft Creative Center offers year-round residencies to literary and visual artists on a 380-acre working cattle ranch in the Bluegrass region of central Kentucky. The residencies, which include a private room, shared bath, and meals, are typically one to four weeks in length. Up to four residents can be accommodated at a time. Submit up to 10 pages of poetry or 25 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction, two copies of a resumé, and a one-page project description. Applications are accepted year-round. Send an SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site for an application and complete guidelines. Arctcroft Creative Center, 2075 Johnson Road, Carlisle, KY 40311. Robert Barker, Executive Director. arctcroft@msn.com www.artcroft.org
CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Lost Horse Press Idaho Prize for Poetry. A prize of $1,000 and publication by Lost Horse Press is given annually for a poetry collection. Submit at least 48 pages of poetry with a $25 entry fee by May 15. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Lost Horse Press, Idaho Prize for Poetry, 105 Lost Horse Lane, Sandpoint, ID 83864. (208) 255-4410. loshorsepress@mindspring.com www.losthorsepress.org

Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition. A prize of $1,000 is given annually for a short story by a writer whose fiction has not appeared in a nationally distributed publication with a circulation of 5,000 or more. Submit an unpublished story of no more than 3,000 words with a $15 entry fee ($10 before May 1) by May 15. Send an SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition, P.O. Box 993, Key West, FL 33041. (305) 294-0320. Carol Shaughnessy, Codirector. callico2419@aol.com www.shortstorycompetition.com

Hudson Valley Writers’ Center Slapering Hol Press Chapbook Contest. A prize of $1,000 and publication by Slapering Hol Press is given annually for a chapbook-length poetry collection by a poet who has not yet published a book or chapbook. Submit no more than 20 pages of poetry with a $15 entry fee by May 15. Send an SASE, call, or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Hudson Valley Writers’ Center, Slapering Hol Press Chapbook Contest, 300 Riverside Drive, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591. (914) 332-5953. Margo Stever, Coeditor. www.writerscenter.org/slaperinghol.html

Hunger Mountain Howard Frank Mosher Short Fiction Prize. A prize of $1,000 and publication in Hunger Mountain is given annually for a short story. Submit a story of up to 10,000 words with a $15 entry fee by May 10. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Hunger Mountain, Howard Frank Mosher Short Fiction Prize, Vermont College, 36 College Street, Montpelier, VT 05602. (802) 828-8633. Caroline Mercurio, Managing Editor. www.hungermtn.org

Espy Foundation Espy Award. A prize of $1,000 is given annually for a poem, a short story, or an essay by a writer who has not yet published a book. The award alternates among genres each year; this year, it will be given for a work of light verse. Submit a poem of 30 to 50 lines with a $20 entry fee by May 15. Send an SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Espy Foundation, Espy Award, P.O. Box 614, Oysterville, WA 98641. (360) 665-5220. info@espyfoundation.org www.espyfoundation.org

Eastern Washington University Press Poetry and Fiction prizes. Two prizes of $1,500 each and publication by Eastern Washington University Press are given annually to U.S. writers for poetry and fiction collections and a short story collection. Submit at least 48 pages of poetry for the Blue Lynx Prize and at least 98 pages of short fiction for the Spokane Prize. The entry fee is $25, and the deadline is May 15. Send an SASE, e-mail, or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Eastern Washington University Press, Poetry and Fiction Prizes, 705 West First Avenue, Spokane, WA 99201. (800) 623-4291. Christopher Howell, Contact. cnhowell@mail.ewu.edu ewupress.ewu.edu

Boulevard Emerging Poets Contest. An annual prize of $1,000 and publication in Boulevard is given for a group of poems by a poet who has not yet published a book of poetry with a nationally distributed press. All entries will be considered for publication. Submit three poems of any length with a $15 entry fee, which includes a one-year subscription to Boulevard, by May 15. Send an SASE or e-mail for complete guidelines. Boulevard, Emerging Poets Contest, PMB 325, 6614 Clayton Road, Richmond Heights, MO 63117. Richard Burgin, Editor. ballymom@hotmail.com www.richardburgin.net/boulevard

Ashland Poetry Press Richard Snyder Publication Prize. A prize of $1,000 and publication by Ashland Poetry Press is given annually for a poetry collection. Robert Phillips will judge. Submit a manuscript of 60 to 88 pages with a $25 entry fee by May 15. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Ashland Poetry Press, Richard Snyder Publication Prize, English Department, Ashland University, Ashland, OH 44805. Stephen Haven, Editor. www.ashland.edu/aupoetry

Atlanta Review International Poetry Competition. A prize of $2,007 and publication in Atlanta Review will be given for a single poem in this year’s annual International Poetry Competition. All entries will be considered for publication. Submit a poem of any length with a $5 entry fee ($3 for each additional poem) by May 11. Send an SASE or visit the Web site for complete guidelines. Atlanta Review, International Poetry Competition, P.O. Box 8248, Atlanta, GA 31106. Dan Veach, Editor. dan@atlantareview.com www.atlantareview.com

Academy of American Poets James Laughlin Award. A prize of $5,000 is given annually to honor a second book of poetry by a U.S. poet. Copies of the winning book will be purchased and distributed to over 6,000 members of the Academy of American Poets. Poets who have published one book of poems in a standard edition are eligible. Publishers may submit manuscripts that have come under contract between May 1, 2006, and April 30, 2007, by May 15. There is no entry fee. Visit the Web site for the required entry form and complete guidelines. Academy of American Poets, James Laughlin Award, 584 Broadway, Suite 604, New York, NY 10012. (212) 274-0343, ext. 17. Jennifer Kronovet, Awards Coordinator. www.poets.org/awards

New Letters Writing Awards. Send writing to the 22nd-annual New Letters Awards in fiction, poetry, and essay. $4,500 in prizes—$1,500 and publication for winners in each category. For guidelines, visit www.newletters.org or send an S.A.S.E. to New Letters Awards for Writers, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 5101 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110. Deadline May 18.


JOURNALING anthology. Essays wanted on your journaling experiences, when you began, and how journaling has helped inspire your writing process. Seeking submissions from well-published writers who journal and how they use their journaling in future works. Maximum 5,000 words. Include bio note. E-mail dinna@dianaraab.com with subject line: “Journaling Project/P&W.” Paste essay in body of e-mail. Please no attachments.

WORST AND BEST gift stories. Ever received a gift that blew your mind because it was so bizarre, disappointing, or wildly inappropriate? On the flipside, have you ever received a gift that was truly inspired? Do you have a personal theory or philosophy about gift giving? Birthdays, Christmases, Valentine’s Day, anniversaries, weddings, baby showers…share your true story in 100–5,000 words. Deadline: May 31. Best stories will be considered for inclusion in anthology. Please submit stories or queries via e-mail (no attachments, please) to: giftstories@comcast.net.
CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS


BLUE LIGHT PRESS Chapbook Contest. $100 and 50 copies of your book. We like imagistic, inventive, emotionally honest poems that push the edge. Deadline: June 1. Send 10–24 page manuscript, SASE, and $10 reading fee to Blue Light Press Poetry Prize, 3600 Lyon St., San Francisco, CA 94123. For guidelines, e-mail bluelightpress@aol.com.


2007 BURNING BUSH Poetry Prize (formerly People Before Profits Poetry Prize) winner receives $200 and online publication. Two honorable mentions. Deadline: June 1. Send 3 poems, any style/length and $10 entry fee with SASE. Name/address/poem titles on separate sheet. Mail to: BB Publications, P.O. Box 4658, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. Guidelines: www.bbbooks.com.


Another Chicago Magazine Chicago Literary Awards Two prizes of $1,000 each and publication in Another Chicago Magazine are given annually for a poem and a short story. Wanda Coleman will judge in poetry, and Steve Yarbrough will judge in fiction. Submit up to three poems of no more than 300 lines total with a $12 entry fee ($5 for each additional poem) or a story of no more than 6,500 words with a $12 entry fee by May 1. Send an SASE or e-mail for complete guidelines Another Chicago Magazine, Chicago Literary Awards, 3709 North Kenmore Avenue, Chicago, IL 60613-2905. Sara Skolnik, Senior Editor sskolnik@csu.edu

ALEHOUSE PRESS seeks submissions for its second annual issue of Alehouse. Now considering short essays (2,000 words maximum) on subjects related to poetry, plus book reviews (1,000 words maximum). For more information, send a SASE to Jay Rubin, Alehouse Press, P.O. Box 31655, San Francisco, CA 94131. Or visit: www.alehousepress.com.

Alice Walker in Conversation with Gloria Steinem, Moderated by Wilma Mankiller

Alice Walker, known for her literary fiction, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning The Color Purple, has written many volumes of poetry and non-fiction. Her most recent book is We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness, a series of spiritual and political meditations on what each of us can do to better the world and be a force for peace, hope and sanity. Gloria Steinem is a writer, lecturer, editor and feminist activist. In 1972, she co-founded Ms. magazine and remained one of its editors for 15 years. Her books include the bestsellers Revolution from Within: A Book of Self Esteem and Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebels, Moving Beyond Words. Wilma Mankiller is former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, the second largest tribe in the United States, the largest being the Dine (Navajo) Tribe. She was the first female to lead a major Native American tribe, and is an author and activist.

Date & Time: Tue, May 22, 2007, 7:30pm
Location: Lexington Avenue at 92nd Street Venue: Kaufmann Concert Hall Code: T-LC5WL08-01
Price: $25.00 All Sections
Members please call Y-Charge at 212.415.5500 to order

Günter Grass

Appearing at the Poetry Center for the first time in fifteen years, Günter Grass, recipient of the 1999 Nobel Prize for Literature, will read from and discuss Peeling the Onion, his forthcoming memoir. His books include The Tin Drum, Cat and Mouse, My Century, Too Far Afield and Crabwalk.

Date & Time: Mon, Jun 25, 2007, 8:00pm
Location: Lexington Avenue at 92nd Street Venue: Kaufmann Concert Hall Code: T-TP5MS38-01
Price: $18.00 / $10.00 Age 35 and Under
Members please call Y-Charge at 212.415.5500 to order
"Sunshine Boys"
WRITTEN BY Neil Simon
DIRECTED BY Esther Friend
March 9, 10, 11*, 16, 17, & 18*

Shakespeare’s Birthday Bash
A Celebration of William Shakespeare
DIRECTED BY Esther Friend
April 22 - Admission Free - Donations Accepted

"Glass Menagerie"
WRITTEN BY Tennessee Williams
DIRECTED BY George Spillane & Tom Sweeney
May 11, 12, 13*, 18, 19 & 20*

"Evening of One Acts II"
WRITTEN BY Various Authors
DIRECTED BY Various Directors
August 17, 18, 19*, 24, 25 & 26*

"Camelot"
COMPOSER Frederick Loewe
LYRICIST & LIBRETTIST Alan Jay Lerner
DIRECTED BY Gary Ramage
October 18, 19, 20, 21*, 25, 26, 27 & 28*

"Nuncrackers"
WRITTEN BY Dan Goggin
DIRECTED BY Tom Sweeney & Ches Warrener
Nov 30, Dec 1, 2*, 14, 15 & 16*
# Upcoming Literary Events in the Mid-Atlantic Region

## May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
<td>Michael Chabon, 92nd St. Y, Lexington &amp; 92nd, New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td><em>Paris Review</em> Poets: Mary Karr, Emily Moore &amp; Matthew Thorburn, 126 Crosby St., NYC</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Mereth Jacobs, JCC of Northern VA, 8900 Little River Tpk, Fairfax, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Laura Lippman, VA Writers Assoc., The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St, Alexandria, VA</td>
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<td>3rd</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
<td>Carol Maso, Brianna Colburn &amp; Victor Wildman, Brown University, Providence RI</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Dave Worrell &amp; Richard Bank, Barnes &amp; Noble, 720 Lancaster Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
<td>Joe Chelius, Barnes &amp; Noble, 210 Commerce Blvd., Fairless Hills, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>The Ladies Love Outlaws Spring Tour, Minas Gallery, Baltimore (for time and directions contact Buck Downs at <a href="mailto:buckdowns@dcemail.com">buckdowns@dcemail.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3 PM</td>
<td>GRADUATING MFA STUDENT READING, American University, Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>2 PM</td>
<td>Stephen Watkins, The Writer’s Center, Bethesda, Md.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8:15 PM</td>
<td>Discovery/<em>The Nation</em> Poetry Winners, 92nd St. Y, Lexington &amp; 92nd, New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Brian Evenson, Nikolai Grozdinski &amp; Michael Stewart, McCormack Theater, Brown U.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Poetry at the Beach, H.A. Maxson, Carol Bruce, Russ Endo, Rehoboth, DE Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>11 AM</td>
<td>Dorthea Frank, Franklin Lakes Library, 470 DeKorte Drive, Franklin Lakes, NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>6:30—8 PM</td>
<td>Larry Doyle, Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Student Prize Reading, Tawes Fine Arts Bldg, U of MD, College Park, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Donald Hall and Andrew Motion, Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Bldg, Lib. of Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>1 PM</td>
<td>Erica Jong &amp; Francine du Plessix Gray, 92 St. Y, Lexington and 92nd, New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>8:45 AM-4:15 PM</td>
<td>WIW Seminar: Marketing Yourself and Your Writing, Cafritz Center, GWU, Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>7 — 9 PM</td>
<td>Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge &amp; Prageeta Sharma, 520 8th Ave., Suite 2020, NYC</td>
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<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>5 PM</td>
<td>TBA, 2nd Saturday, Gennell’s, 8th &amp; Market Sts., Wilminton</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>6 PM</td>
<td>Sandra Beasley &amp; Ellen Cole, Iota Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th</td>
<td>6:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Coleman Barks and Robert Bly, Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Bldg, Lib. of Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th</td>
<td>5—9:30 PM</td>
<td>Graduate Student Readings (Fic. &amp; Poetry) Harris Theatre, George Mason U., Fairfax, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Lamont Steptoe &amp; Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore, Inst. of Sci., 11 Veterans Square, Media, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>2 PM—4 PM</td>
<td>Jami Attenberg, The Writer’s Center, Bethesda, Md.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Alice Walker &amp; Gloria Steinham, 92nd St. Y, Lexington and 92nd, New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>24th</td>
<td>6:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Philip Levine and Dolores Kendrick, Coolidge Auditorium, Jefferson Bldg, LoC</td>
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## June

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>11 AM-7 PM</td>
<td>Conversations &amp; Connections: Advice on Getting Published, Writer’s Center, Bethesda, Md.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>8 — 9:30 PM</td>
<td>Ian McEwan, 92nd St. Y, Lexington and 92nd, New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>The Ladies Love Outlaws Spring Tour, (for info contact <a href="mailto:buckdowns@dcemail.com">buckdowns@dcemail.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7:30 AM-7:30 PM</td>
<td>WIW’s 28th Washington Writers Conference, Cafritz Center, GW University, Wash. DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>6 PM</td>
<td>Nathalie F. Anderson &amp; Maria Terrone, Iota Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Poetry at the Beach, Anne Colwell, Joe Allen, Carol Bruce, Bethany Beach, DE Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>14th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Poetry at the Beach, Anne Colwell, Joe Allen, Carol Bruce, Bethany Beach, DE Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th</td>
<td>6 PM</td>
<td>Stephanie Dickinson, Chip Livingston &amp; Urayoan Noel, Cornelia St. Café, 29 Corn. St. NYC</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Storyteller Renee Enengl, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
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<td>22nd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Nancy Ruth Patterson, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>23rd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>D. Anne Love, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>25th</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
<td>Gunter Grass, 92nd St. Y, Lexington and 92nd, New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>27th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Jeanne Marie Beaumont, Princeton Public Library, 65 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ</td>
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## July

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Sharon Dennis Wyeth, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
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<td>6th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Michael Sterns, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
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<td>7th</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
<td>Paul Janecko, Wyndham Robertson Library, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>6 PM</td>
<td>Donald Illich &amp; Neelam Patel, Iota Cafe, 2832 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>Poetry at the Beach, H. A. Maxson, Carol Bruce, Joe Allen, Lewes, DE Library</td>
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Constructing a Short Story

Fiction (Part Three)

By Jamie Brown

Some writers (John Irving springs to mind) actually know where their novels are going to end before they sit down to write the novel. The same goes for some writers of short stories, but I think the joy in writing, for the writer, is in discovering what is going to happen as you go along, unpeeling the layers of plot and character and event. That discovery makes some people nervous, but I look forward to it. The rewards in being a writer are few and far between, and you might as well enjoy the experience.

I once expressed surprise that a colleague of mine had never sat down and written a story from start to finish at one sitting, just letting the words pour out of them. This colleague was offended — no offense was meant, it’s just that the act of creating in that way seems such a natural part of writing that I found it hard to believe that there was anyone who had never had that kind of creative jag occur.

Now don’t think for a moment that stories which come to you that way are “finished” just because you get to the end. Far from it. Having had the fun in the creation of the work, now you must actually sit down and force yourself to read it through as coldly and analytically as if you were someone in the dentist’s office reading the story in a magazine. Would you be so engrossed as to not want to put the magazine down when your name was called? Is every transition clear to someone who is not living inside of your head?

My friend James Michael Robbins, Editor and Publisher of The Sulphur River Review (see both his work and a display ad for the magazine in the last issue as well as a display ad in this issue) wrote back regarding a story I had sent him. The first line of “Leaving the Station,” a story set in rural Switzerland on the north side of Lake Geneva started, “Adrianna left this morning, like the trains she used to love to watch as they passed by silently in the night traveling between Lausanne and Geneva.”

I had been in the very apartment which I used for the setting of the story. I could see it clear as day, had in fact, written the first draft of that story in that apartment, and my wife and I (we were apartment-sitting for a friend) would watch those trains at night as they traveled silently between Lausanne and Geneva. I knew what it looked like.

Mr. Robbins wrote back, “One question, though. Down here in Texas, trains make a lot of noise. So are the trains in this story a) electric or b) off in the distance?”

I replied, “c) Both of the above,” and then I altered the story to make note of that fact. Sometimes the creator of a story is too close to the story to be able to have the necessary distance to see clearly how what exists in your head has not yet translated itself to the page.

As much as you may love the sound of your narrative “voice”, don’t get so carried away with the musicality of your prose that you interfere with the reader’s ability to follow what is going on.

The great lesson to be learned from reading “Modern” writers is that you need not tell everything in order to tell the story. Not everything is equally important to the story. Use your critical judgment about what are the most important pieces of information your readers will need.

Remember Ernest Hemingway’s advice to leave 80% of what you know “underwater” like an iceberg. To paraphrase Mr. Hemingway, “What you know and leave out, is just as important to the story because you left it out but knew it, as what you chose to put in.” The knowledge of those things will so infuse the choices you make regarding what details you do include, that that knowledge will color the story just as if you had, actually, included them.

Here’s another of Brown’s rules for the writer of a short story. It is easier to cut stuff out of a story that is too long than to add material to a story that is too short. In the first case, you have written exhaustively and all of a piece.

While you may have failed to leave the iceberg submerged, revision takes making hard choices about what to cut and what to leave in. In the second case, you must try to recapture that initial wave of inspiration in order to add the necessary material to the work, and that wave may not return. In other words, it is easier to cut from what is already written than to add to what you are no longer inspired to write.

Remember, also, Poe’s dictum that the short story should be capable of being read by the reader at one sitting.

One caveat, however, in line with Poe’s rule that the story should not be so short as to fail to achieve an emotional effect in the reader. Don’t let your consideration of the reader’s short attention span cause you to give short shrift to your stories.

I was in a workshop with Frank Conroy once when pursuing my MFA at American University, and a story which I had tried to keep tight (and, therefore, Modern) was, he felt, too long. I felt that he had not understood, so I revised it, fleshing it out so that the reader had a better handle on character motivation and so forth, and he praised the revision for the amount of excess verbiage I had cut out of it.

The story was a full page-and-a-half longer. Sometimes more is less. Go figure. But that lesson has always stood me in good stead. If it’s the right length, the length will seem right. If not, even if too short, it is likely to seem too long.
CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Michael Blaine (Winner of the 3rd Dogfish Head Poetry Prize) is a working poet, editor, and teacher from the Delaware Eastern Shore. His work has appeared in The Baltimore Review, Rivendell, Chesapeake Bay Magazine, English Journal, and numerous other publications. He has won awards in poetry, art, boat building, sailing, gardening, and teaching. He devotes a considerable amount of time to writing and studying Japanese verse. Many of his haiku, senryu, and tanka can be found in top publications internationally. Blaine was born in Oxford, Mississippi in 1968 but grew up on the Eastern Shore in the mostly agricultural town of Laurel. He returned to Oxford to study English at Ole Miss and recently finished a Master’s Degree in English at Salisbury University. He is currently teaching in his seventeenth year at his high school alma mater. For five consecutive years, he has been the editor of the Delmarva Review, a sixty-page publication featuring writers from the Eastern Shore. He was the recipient of a 2006 Delaware Fellowship of the Arts Recipient in Poetry. Blaine lives in Seaford, Delaware with his lovely wife, Sara, and their son, William.

Linda Blaskey Originally from the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, she now resides in Sussex County, Delaware. Her work has appeared in Terrains, Literary Mama, Beltway Poetry Quarterly, Milford Chronicle and in a chapbook titled The Poet Laureate Presents Eight Delaware Poets, and is forthcoming in the anthology The Farmer’s Daughter. Her poems have been included in the moving exhibition Poetry in Public Places, supported by the Delaware Division of the Arts. She received a 2006 Emerging Artist Fellowship in poetry from the Delaware Division of the Arts and her manuscript Leaving Arkansas was a 2005 finalist in the Dogfish Head Poetry Prize competition. One of her short stories is scheduled to be dramatically read in Philadelphia by InterAct Theatre’s Writing Aloud! project. She is on the organizing committee of the annual John Milton Memorial Celebration of Poets and Poetry held in Milton, Delaware.

Sherry Chappelle Sherry Chappelle spent many years as a classroom teacher and Children’s Literature expert in New York State. A member of the Rehoboth Art League Writers Group, she was chosen for the Masters Poetry Retreat sponsored by the Delaware Division of the Arts and led by Fleda Brown in September, 2005. She has taken part in “Poetry in Public Places” and “Poets at the Beach.”

Ann Colwell, a poet and fiction writer, is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Delaware. Her work has appeared in several journals, including California Quarterly, Mudlark, Evansville Review, Phoebe, Eclectic Literary Forum, Southern Poetry Review, and Octavo. An online chapbook of her poems appears in The Alsop Review. Her first book of poems, Believing Their Shadows, has been a finalist for the University of Wisconsin’s Brittingham Prize, the Anhinga Prize, New Issues Poetry Prize and the Quarterly Review of Literature. Her critical book, Inscrutable Houses: Metaphors of the Body in the Poems of Elizabeth Bishop, was published by the University of Alabama Press in 1997. She lives in Milton, Delaware with her husband James Keegan and son, Thomas.

Debby Creasy received both her B.A. and M.A. in English from Salisbury University, where she was a graduate teaching fellow and later an instructor. As an undergraduate, she studied with poet Michael Waters, whom she still considers a mentor, and who gave her the opportunity to meet and work with such distinguished writers as Raymond Carver, Mary Oliver, Robert Bly, Gary Snyder, Larry Levis, and William Stafford. Her poems have appeared in the magazines Far River Poetry and raccoon. She is currently at work on a collection of poems and a novel.

Alan Davies is the author of many books of poetry, including Signage (Roof), Candor (O Books) and, most recently, a chapbook called Book 5 (Katalanche).

Buck Downs A native of Jones County, Miss., Buck Downs lives in Washington, DC and works for a database publisher in a location nearby. His two most recent projects are Ladies Love Outlaws (Edge Books) and Recreational Vehicle (Aphthys Poets Press). Poems can also be found online at www.fascicle.com and www.onedit.net.

Wendy Ingersoll Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll is a piano teacher in Newark DE. Her chapbook River, Farm was published in 2005 by Bay Oak Publishers of Dover (excerpts and photos can be viewed at wendyingersoll.com). Her work has appeared in a number of lit mags including Potpourri, The Lyric, By-Line, Worcester Review, Pinehurst Journal. Recently she won the poetry contest for the Writers at the Beach: Pure Sea Glass Conference in Rehoboth.

Joshua D. Isard is a writer from Philadelphia who has published his writing in both American and British fiction magazines and anthologies. He has completed one novel, for which he’s still seeking a publisher, and is working on a second. Joshua earned a master’s degree in creative writing from The University of Edinburgh, and is currently enrolled in University College London’s master’s program literature. He has taught literature and writing at Temple University and the Art Institute of Philadelphia.

John Milton & Company Quality Used Books “Pre-owned books read just as well.” Bringing you the best in used books since the last millennium — Now proud to bring you The Broadkill Review, featuring the best in contemporary writing.

Steven Leech has been an editor of the Delaware literary periodical Dreamstreets since 1980. He is also the producer of the radio series Dreamstreets 26, which is podcasted from WVUD.org. His latest novel UNTIME will be published in 2007 by Broken Turtle Books.

H. A. Maxson is the author of four collections of poetry, a novel, and a critical study of Robert Frost’s sonnets. He is co-author, with Claudia Young, of seven historical fiction novels for young readers. He holds a Ph.D. in English/Creative Writing from The University of Southern Mississippi.

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