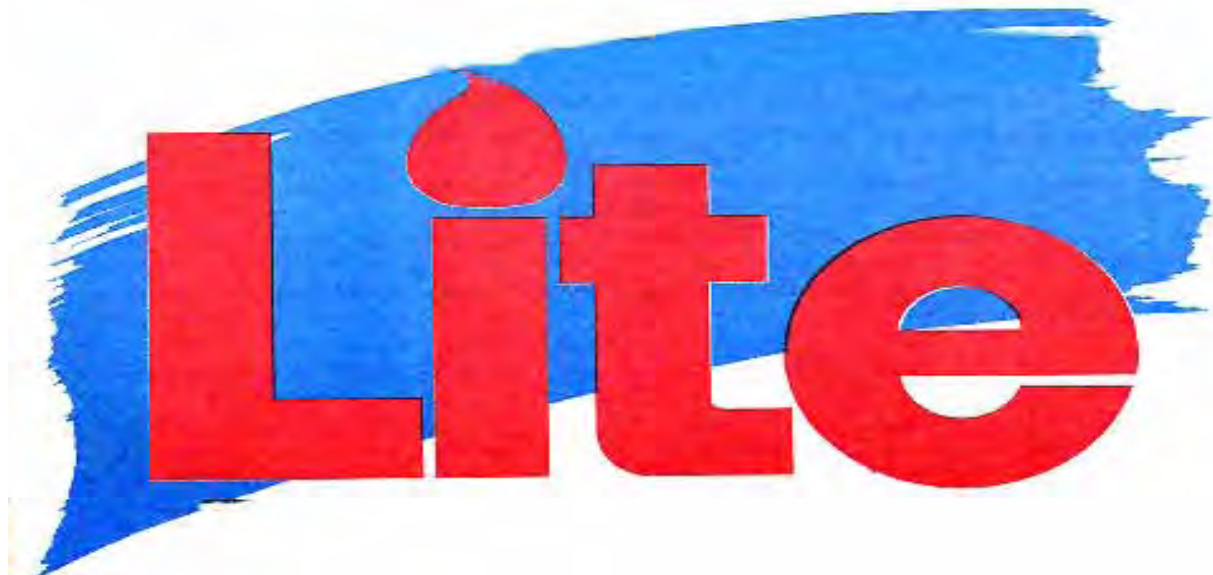


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DECEMBER 1999/
JANUARY 2000

Baltimore's Literary Newspaper



THIS ISSUE

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Ten Years of Lite

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Incarnation

David W. Kriebel

Poetry

Sam Beard ■ Dan Cuddy ■ Vonnie Winslow Crist
Dina Feinberg ■ Patti Kinlock ■ W. H. Stevens

Artwork/Photography

- **Cover Photo** *David W. Kriebel* ■ **Inside Art** *Vonnie Winslow Crist*
- **Other Photos** *Lite Staff*

Lite Reading: Book Reviews

W. H. Stevens ■ Dan Cuddy

LYTE BYTES

GUIDELINES FOR WRITERS

Plus

Literary Happenings in December and January!

TOP STORY

The Giuliani Madonna

So much elephant dung has been thrown about by politicians and would-be defenders of the arts over some incompetent mishmash of a painting that has as much in common with a "madonna" as Donald Duck has with a painting of a duck. The cliché is "if it looks like a duck...." But it doesn't look like a duck.

No attention should be paid to this ugly exercise in graphic art. It should not be laughed at or spat upon or revered as some breakthrough, as if it were a Cézanne, as Glenn McNatt of the Baltimore Sun implies in his article on October 11, 1999, "Art precedes the

shock of change." If America is going to adopt gangster civility (it already has—notice the amount of finger-giving and four-letter words that grace our society), then the painting by Chris Ofili is a harbinger and to be as celebrated as Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" as a symbol for an age to come.

What is the painting about, not counting its adolescent waving of arms that says "look at me?" Baltimore Sun columnist Gregory Kane writes, "Ofili told the New York Times that the painting is a 'hip-hop version' of 'sexually charged' portraits he had seen of the Virgin

Mary." Okay. What we have is an artist's sexual obsessions on display. What portraits of the Virgin Mary excited him so, or subconsciously excited him, to inspire him to parody them with the caricature he has produced? Hip-hop has its place in the adolescent psyche. Hip-hop may often be sexist but it has its place. So what we are dealing with is a caricature of art, a parody of devotion, an act of self-indulgence and this painting is a prayer to all that is most cherished in the modern barbarian culture: sexual gratification, greed

Cont. on p. 10

THANK YOU!

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Literary December/January

A Bi-Monthly Potpourri of Literary Events

(Watch for more January events in *Lite's* January 2000 Supplement)

Note: Lite suggests calling ahead for holiday schedules.

Consecutive Reading Series

Thursday, December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

8:00 p.m.-close. Jazz session and open mic poetry, Xando Coffee and Bar, 3003 N. Charles St., Charles Village. For more info, call (410) 889-7076.

8:30 p.m. "Tell the World," open mic poetry and spoken word reading at the One World Cafe, 904 S. Charles St., Federal Hill. Hosted by Tom Swiss. For more info, email tms@infamous.net or call (410) 455-5325.

Monday, December 6, 13, 20, 27

11:00 a.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. Betty Walter leads a weekly meeting in writing memoir essays. Designed for those 50 and over.

Tuesday, December 7, 14, 21, 28

9:00 p.m. Open Reading at Funk's Democratic Coffee Spot, 1818 Eastern Ave., Fells Point. For more info, call (410) 276-FUNK.

Monday, December 13, 27

7:00 p.m. Lite Circle Roundtable Critiquing Group meets at The Coffee Junction, 803 Frederick Rd., Catonsville. All writers welcome. For more info, contact Dennis Barnes, Acting Discussion Coordinator, at (410) 744-2173.

Tuesday, December 14, 28

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. Writer's Group. Bring 15 copies of your work to distribute for discussion & critique.

Literary December

Wednesday, December 1

7:00 p.m. Borders-Columbia Crossing Circle. Priscilla Pitts facilitates the Literature Book Group which discusses Wallace Stegner's *Angel of Repose*.

7:30 p.m. "Function at the Junction" reading series at the Coffee Junction,

803 Frederick Rd. Admission \$2. Featured readers are Danuta Kosk-Kosicka, Kathie Cochran and Vonnie Crist. For more info, call (410) 719-7717. An open reading follows. (Snow date—Dec 8).

Thursday, December 2

5:00 p.m. Modern Masters Reading Series. Ralph Lombreglia reads in the McManus Theater. Loyola College, 4501 N. Charles St. For more info, call (410) 617-5024.

5:00-9:00 p.m. The Baltimore Museum of Art hosts FREESTYLE: First Thursdays at the BMA. Free, all ages. Festivities include live music, hands-on activities for children, gallery tours, and films focusing on the artists in the "Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections" exhibition on view through January 30, 2000. The museum is located at 10 Art Museum Drive near the JHU campus. For more info, visit the BMA

website: www.artbma.org.

Saturday, December 4

12:00 p.m. Poetry Discussion Group meets at the Enoch Pratt Library, Central Branch. The poems of William Carlos Williams are discussed.

Sunday, December 5

1:00-4:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. Stop by the Johns Hopkins University Press table to meet the authors of some of the regions' finest titles, including Bert and Anthea Smith, Christopher Weeks, and C. Fraser Smith.

2:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium Crossing. George Weigel discusses and signs his book *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*.

5:00 p.m. Borders-Columbia Crossing Circle. Mica Brooks facilitates the Sister to Sister discussion group which

The Big Literary "Spot" Lites

Barnes & Noble-Annapolis, 5216 Solomon's Island Rd., Annapolis Harbour Shopping Center. Phone: (410) 573-1115.

Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City, 4300 Montgomery Rd., Long Gate Shopping Center. Phone: (410) 203-7006.

Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle, 1 East Joppa Rd. Phone: (410) 296-7021.

Bibelot-Canton, 2400 Boston St. Phone: (410) 276-9700.

Bibelot-Cross Keys, 40 Village Square, Baltimore. Phone: (410) 532-8818.

Bibelot-Timonium Crossing, 2080 York Rd. Phone: (410) 308-1888.

Bibelot-Woodholme, 1819 Reisterstown Rd., Pikesville. Phone: (410) 653-6933.

Borders-Columbia Crossing Circle, 6151 Columbia Crossing Circle. Phone: (410) 290-0062.

Borders-Towson, 415 York Rd. Phone: (410) 296-0791.

Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central branch, 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore. Phone: (410) 396-5494.

WordHouse Salon at Minas, 733-35 S. Ann St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 732-4258.

discusses Breana Clark's *River, Cross My Heart*.

Monday, December 6

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. When Dorothy triumphed over the Wicked Witch of the West, we only heard Dot's side of the story. *Wicked*, by Gregory Maguire, is the other side of the story. Dana Featherston facilitates a discussion of this book at the "Discover Great New Writers Book Club."

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. "Writing Workout." Join this writing seminar offered by members of the *Baltimore Writers Alliance*. This month will be led by Sam Schmidt and Virginia Crawford.

Wednesday, December 8

7:00 p.m. Borders-Columbia Crossing Circle. Joan Fox-Stauffer facilitates the Mystery Book Group which will discuss Ed Koch's (the former mayor of New York) mystery novel *Murder on 34th Street*.

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Towson Circle. Susan Weis facilitates the "Vaguely Jewish Book Club." This month's book is Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater*.

Thursday, December 9

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Woodholme. William R. Johnson discusses and signs his book *William and Henry Walters: The Reluctant Collectors*.

Saturday, December 11

9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Maryland Writers' Association presents "Personal Essay Writers' Workshop," facilitated by Laura Oliver, MFA. Registration from 8:30 a.m. Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, 801 Chase St., Annapolis, MD. Registration limited to 30 participants on a first-come, first served basis. Refreshments. For registration/info, call Vicki Meade at (410) 798-6458 or (301) 261-4972, or Kathryn Hudson-Frey at (410) 574-9381. Website: www.marylandwriters.org.

1:00-3:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium. Writing Workshop sponsored by *Late Knocking* literary magazine. Susan Laubach will reference her new book, *Don't Lose Your Memory—Writing the Journey Journal*, during this workshop on travel journal writing. Bring pen, paper, and your imagination.

8:00-11:00 p.m. The Harford County

Coffeehouse at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Church, 2515 Churchville Rd. (Rt. 22 across from the Campus Hill Shopping Center) features four writers from *Great Writers, Great Stories*, an anthology publishing some of the best fiction writers from Maryland, Virginia, and D.C., edited by Edward Faine. There will also be music by the Lost Contra Band, and the opening of a new art show by Aster Fonseca of Washington, D.C. A \$2 donation includes dessert and coffee or tea, or bring a dessert to share. For more info, contact Becca Motil at (410) 939-9522 or Rmotil@aol.com.

Sunday, December 12

4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse at Minas. Poets Hiram Larew and Laura Lynds read their work. \$3 donation. Open Mic follows.

Monday, December 13

7:00 p.m. Borders-Columbia Crossing Circle. Open mike. Read a couple of minutes of poems or prose that you have written.

Tuesday, December 14

6:30 p.m. Book Discussion Group meets at the Enoch Pratt Library, Central Branch. *Bridge Over Drina* by Ivo Andric is discussed.

7:00 p.m. Bibelot-Cross Keys. Well known for her insight and wit by NPR listeners, author of *First Comes Love* and *Telling*, Marion Winik will discuss and sign her latest novel, *The Lunch Box Chronicles: Notes from the Parenting Underground*.

Wednesday, December 15

7:00 p.m. Poetry reading third Wednesday of each month. Riverdale Book Shop, 4701 Queensbury Rd., Riverdale, MD. For more info, call (301) 277-8141.

Friday, December 17

8:00 p.m. Bibelot-Timonium. "An Evening of Lite Verse." Winners of the 1998 Lite Circle Poetry Contest will read: Marisa Canino (1st place), Hilbert Turner, Jr. (2nd place), and Bob Moskowitz (3rd place). Open reading follows.

Saturday, December 18

10:15 a.m. Book Discussion Group meets at the Enoch Pratt Library, Central Branch, to discuss *Possession* by A.S. Byatt.

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Lite Circle hosts "Poetry in the Shade," open reading/discussion series at Something Special Coffee House, 504 Main St., Laurel. All are invited to read or just listen. For more info, call (410) 889-1574 or (410) 719-7792.

Monday, December 20

8:00 p.m. Baltimore Songwriters Association monthly open mic at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 120 N. Front St. (across from the Shot Tower). Sign up at 7:30 p.m. All musical styles welcome. Free. For more info, contact Paul Iwancio at (410) 455-3822, email iwancio@umbc.edu.

Literary January

Wednesday, January 5

7:30 p.m. "Function at the Junction" reading series at the Coffee Junction, 803 Frederick Rd. Admission \$2. The Lite Circle staff and contributors are featured. For more info, call (410) 719-7717. (Snow date: Jan 12).

Friday, January 7

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Annapolis. Join host Sam Beard for "Poet's Night Out/Annapolis Lites," reading and discussion group sponsored by The Lite Circle. For more info, call (410) 993-1687.

Sunday, January 9

4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse at Minas. Poets Jenny Keith and Dorothy Dodge Miner read their work. \$3 donation. Open mic follows.

To Have Your Event Listed

please send information to:
Dan Cuddy, Calendar Editor
41 Odeon Ct.
Baltimore, MD 21234
Tel. (410) 882-4138

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The Laughing Ladies.....\$9.95
(Poetry by Diane Scharper)
Stations in a Dream.....\$9.95
(Poetry by Michael Weaver)
Heart of the Sun.....\$3.95
(Chapbook of poems from Gary Blanchard)

First Lite Pamphlets:

#1 Night Queen – poems by P.E.
Kinlock.....\$1.00

Sunrise Press:

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(Chapbook of poems from Lite Circle's Bulletin Board)

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Lite

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Ten
Years
of

Lite

By David W. Kriebel

As most of my friends know, a certain illustrated calendar has occupied a place of honor in my home for ten years, having been attached by magnet to three successive refrigerators. It is a 1989 calendar and I keep it open to December of that year. The photo above the calendar is of a dog of indeterminate breed, bedraggled and lying on a sidewalk. The dog's expressive face is the picture of exhaustion and worry. To me, his face has always been the perfect emblem for what I felt in December 1989, the time when the very first issue of *Lite* was launched.

Of course, 1989 also saw the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Tienanmen Square massacre, the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and the first free elections in the Eastern Bloc, but compared to the founding of *Lite*, that other stuff was a cakewalk.



Dave typing in the first issue of *Lite*: The Journal of Satire and Creativity (1989). *Lite* staff photo.

I began *Lite* out of a desire to own a business and to do something noble. Publishing seemed a noble business. My ultimate goal was to publish books, but I knew I couldn't put together a book publishing business from scratch. I had, however, published magazines in high school and college and thought I knew enough to start one. Once I had a magazine publishing business started, I could move into book publishing. And that is exactly what happened,

although the road to that goal was rocky and not without detours.

Lite had its first staff meeting in my Glen Burnie apartment in March, 1989. The staff consisted of a few friends and some people from my place of work. *Lite* was to be a quarterly and the first issue (Winter 1990) was to appear in December 1989 in order to coincide with the holiday season. I reasoned that I could sell more ads (for an as yet non-existent magazine) if I had a hook like the holidays. And in fact, we did sell ads, enough to pay for over half of the printing costs. The rest I made up out of my own pocket, beginning a tradition that didn't get turned around until we went non-profit four years later.

Between the time of that meeting and December, several members had dropped out. At that time, I had only minimal computer skills. I owned a reliable computer I had acquired in graduate school, a DEC Rainbow since given to my parents (it still works). However, it was incapable of doing desktop publishing. A friend who was (and is) quite computer literate agreed to lay out the issue using WordPerfect.

Then December came and things began to fall apart.

Two weeks before the deadline, under pressure from many other quarters, my friend with IBM compatible computer and WordPerfect expertise pulled out of the project. We had made commitments to advertisers, most of them given by me personally. We had agreements we couldn't renege on. And I didn't want to renege on them. I had a dream and I felt something driving me onward. The issue had to come out.

I went to another friend who owned an IBM clone and convinced her to let me put the magazine together on it. In three days and nights without sleep or much food, I taught myself how to do desktop publishing on WordPerfect, an application I had never used before, not even for word processing. Lack of sleep made me see things



Dave answers reporters' questions as Bill attends an intern pajama party. (*Lite*: Autumn/Winter 1992)

which weren't there, but I kept on anyway. At the end of those three days I emerged, haggard and spent, but with what I prayed would be a usable file.

I immediately drove through a snowstorm to Accurate Accounting, whose owner, Will Upton, had promised we could use his printer. I watched him load it, turn the printer on, and waited. And waited. Nothing. We spent the next several hours trying to coax it to print, until it was way after midnight. Finally, Will told me what I feared most—the file was incompatible with his machine and I would have to do the entire thing over again.

Nowadays if this had happened, I would have known what to do. I would have checked the formatting or found a friend with a different printer. But laser printers were not that common in 1989 and I knew next to nothing about computers. For the next week, I struggled to put the thing back together again. To his great credit, Will stayed with me through the nights, sleeping on the floor as I labored over his machine. Somehow I held down a full-time job that same week, working over 90 hours and getting very little sleep. What helped keep me going was an image I had in my mind, of swimming underwater and being guided toward the surface by rays drawing me upward to a circle of light. Finally, I finished it and Will cranked up the old Apple Laserwriter. I held my breath.

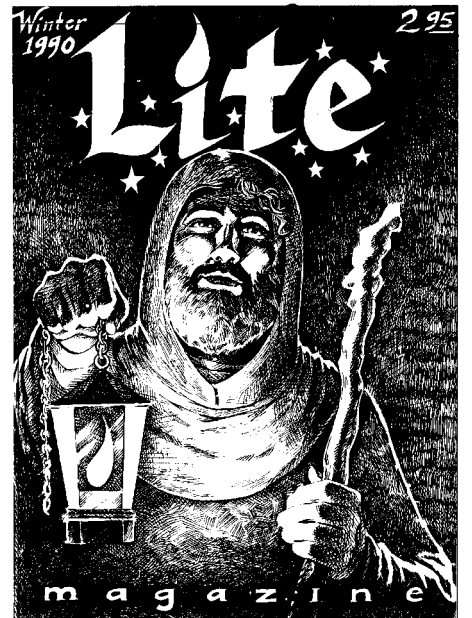
It worked.

I immediately called Lee Yelshin, my associate publisher, and we began work on paste-up. Yes, in those days the technology available to upstart literary presses did not include a scanner, so we actually had to cut and paste paper images into the frames I had set aside in the document. We were finished in two days, still enough time to get the magazine to the printer we had contracted and have the issue out in time for Christmas.

Except our printer had other ideas. Once he had the magazine, he sat on it for days and did not return my phone calls. I was forced to visit his home, which also served as one of his offices, only to find he was always out somewhere. I learned from his son that he was out playing bingo, sometimes until after two a.m., when he had our job to work on. Christmas came and went. Other staff members went and camped out at his house, waiting in vain for a response. Finally, after several angry phone conversations, he got the issue printed. Our 1989 "holiday" issue was completed a few days after New Year's Day 1990.

To add insult to injury, the quality of the copies was horrendous. I vividly recall Lee and I sorting the copies in my apartment, grading them into five categories, with less than 20 percent being without blemish. If I had known then what I do now, I would have demanded he rerun it all for free. I would also never have gone with the low bid in the first place. I will not print this man's name here, but as a public service will happily provide it to anyone who wants to know.

The next step was to distribute the magazine. At first it was strictly by hand, placing it in certain independent bookstores, retail outlets, and doctors' offices. Some places would not accept us. I recall that my dentist at the time would not take us because some clients mistook our mascot, the Cynic philosopher Diogenes (depicted on the cover holding his lantern), for Jesus and we were thus deemed "religious." We had some difficulty finding a distributor, but after a lot of finagling were picked up by Maryland News Distributing Company. I made a point at the time of requesting that unsold issues be returned. Unfortunately, I didn't specify



Premier issue of *Lite* (Winter 1990)

in one piece—I vividly recall the little “affidavits of return” the distributor would send us with the number of returned issues followed by the cheery legend: “Method of Return: Shredding and Baling.”

The next two years saw many changes in *Lite* and the learning curve was very steep. I still worked very hard, laying out the issue with the help of a few other staff members, and ghost-wrote several of the satirical columns. After the first issue we changed to a real desktop publishing system, first Interleaf, then PageMaker, the system we use today. The magazine relocated from my apartment to offices in Crofton, then Arbutus. We also acquired a distributor in Central Maryland and in the Philadelphia area. New staff members came and went—what Patti jokingly refers to as “the revolving door.” I met Patti herself in 1990, when *Lite* held its first of a continuing series of literary contests. Patti won a prize in that contest and read at our first awards reading at St. John’s College in Annapolis. She started out on the “poetry panel” and worked her way up to her present positions of Managing Editor and Webmistress.

Our poetry reading series—a *Lite* tradition—began in our Arbutus offices where we advertised a “smoke-free environment” and free parking. Our first attendance at Artscape was in 1991, another tradition which has continued since. During this period *Lite* acquired several new staff members, including art director Jim Lasher whose work greatly enhanced the quality of the magazine. These were people who were attracted to *Lite*, and were not just “Friends of Dave,” although all of us became friends as we worked together.

In 1992 I decided to change *Lite*’s business structure from sole proprietorship to a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, and in May of that year The Lite Circle, Inc. was born. We also vacated the Arbutus offices and moved to the basement of my new home in Catonsville.

By the end of that year, our circulation had risen to 3,000 copies and we had begun to start a new branch of the business—book publishing. In 1993 our first book—Michael Weaver’s *Stations in a Dream* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award in poetry) was published as a joint venture with James Taylor’s Dolphin-Moon Press.

The periodical’s format dramatically changed, from a magazine to a literary newspaper. *Lite: Baltimore’s Literary Monthly* (later Newspaper)

began publication in 1993, with a circulation of 10,000 free copies. We dropped them all around the city, at sites given us by the former *Art in Progress* (whose column “Meter and



The first annual Lite Circle Benefit Ball at The Belvedere, 1997. Left: Dave and Dina. Right: Dave and Patti.



“Poetry in the Shade” reading series at Something Special Coffee House, Laurel, MD, 1998.

Metaphor” we took over and continued for several years), and other locations we developed. We also hosted a literary bulletin board, the first in the area. That year we began to hold benefit readings to raise money both for ourselves and other charities, such as homeless shelters, literacy efforts,

and the Greenway Project, the latter in partnership with Baltimore’s Department of Parks and Recreation. Our ability to manage and publicize events took a quantum leap in 1994 when Dina joined the staff as Director of Public Relations.

Since that time, Dina has arranged benefits at the Belvedere and raised thousands of dollars for us. She has also become an integral part of the *Lite* team.

We have also greatly expanded our presence in the area, publishing the free newspaper, operating two presses—Lite Circle Books and Sunrise Press, a press created to help promote the work of



underpublished writers—operating booths at area festivals, including Artscape and the Baltimore Book Festival, sponsoring an annual literary contest, and hosting over 30 poetry readings a year. In addition to our present series—“Lite Verse at Bibelot” (Woodholme and Timonium), “Poetry in the Shade” (Laurel) and “Annapolis Lites/Poets Night Out” (Annapolis)—we have held series in Arbutus (“Poetry Office”), Catonsville (“Cafe au Lite”), and Columbia (“Lite Verse at Borders”), as well as a number of readings in and

around Baltimore. The Lite Circle Literary Roundtable, under Donna’s (and now Dennis’) guidance, provides a venue for writers to share their material and receive valuable criticism. Our staff continues to grow, and we are particularly pleased to welcome Vonnie as Art Director, Wendy as Book Review Editor, and David as an Advertising Account Executive. We are also grateful to have Dan as our calendar and news editor—his diligence has greatly helped expand our coverage of literary events.

Lite currently receives grant funding from both the Maryland State Arts Council and the Baltimore Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Art and Culture. We have published over dozen books, including the annual Bright StARTS chapbook featuring art and writing by Baltimore’s children. Our most recent offering is the science fiction/fantasy anthology *Lower Than the Angels*, and have several more in the works, including an anthology of romantic poetry, an anthology of dark fantasy, a second science fiction anthology, and at least two more poetry collections. We have a web page (<http://litcircle.dragonfire.net>) and are steadily building our base of subscribers and advertisers. This year our books became available for sale to bookstores via Ingram and to individuals via Amazon.com, making *Lite* a national book publisher.

Ten years ago, I had only a dream and the determination to make it real. Now, we have a team which possesses the talent and drive to realize that initial vision. We are all friends at *Lite*, but beyond that, we are a family. We have weathered many ups and downs, and will continue to do so. It is clear now that *Lite* will continue into the next millennium and all of us are proud to be a part of that. We are thankful to the people of Baltimore and Central Maryland, as well as all our contributors and advertisers, for supporting us for all these years and helping us make the world better than we found it.



A few blythe spirits at the annual Lite Circle Halloween Party.

american dream

fortified bran
carpool
tokenly kiss
hand on the briefcase
eye on the wrist
ear to the carphone
lips to the dictaphone
life doesn't get
any better than this

urbanglass jungle
of concrete and steel
subwaying powerclones
march toe to heel
darksuited
widebreasted
upswimming
unrested
fast-talking
grant-seeking
hand-shaking
"Deal!"

cardiac clockwatchers
horseblinding by
Reeboks smack pavement
derbies block sky
stocktrading power
millions per hour
soul of a mannequin
money can buy
android quintuplets
total homogeny
power mentality
what is your progeny
telecommunicate
life excommunicate
mentoring Trump,
reading Machiavelli?

ninjas on wall street with
goldsaving zeal
slaves at the grindstone
god at the wheel
soulsighing
heartstopping
soul dying
hearts popping
myopic miserables
hauling the keel

plugged into walkmans
nobody walks
nobody listens and
nobody talks
ostrich in
quicksand
parlortanned
tincanned
yuppified
yummified
petrified
mummified
why should we think
it was ever our fault?

P. E. Kinlock

Anniversary Dance

Twirling 'round the couple moves so swiftly
She's so urbane and striking in her tailored dress.
He is as always right beside her
As love-struck now as when they barely met.

They dance exchanging such enamored glances
It almost seems as though they're newly wed.
Each footstep they perform together
While basking in their very festive dance.

She holds her head up high, reflecting briefly
The years they danced together side by side.

The room revolves as to embrace the dancers
Engaging true believers in romance.

Dina Feinberg

Concert

Silence fills the stage
The black, regal instrument is waiting to be played
No sound has been evoked, and yet,
Anticipation lingers in the empty hall.

The lights grow dim,
The curtains step aside, revealing
The feature of the evening.

He sits awaiting the moment
When the first sounds will dissipate the silence
The notes embody a tone of conversation
As if to first explain, but then insist.

Each phrase finds connection to a story
That has no ending.
Pauses only give a brief measure of rest
To gather thoughts that follow in streams of consciousness.

It's as though his fingers penetrate the keys
And suck the entity and breath from each note
Only to infuse the hollow hall with its presence.

It is in that frame of time
That sacred space
That he invites you into his world.
His emotions expressed as uncensored words,
Captivating each listener.

The music resonates impetuously through his senses
Escaping beyond restraints and tempo
He embodies the music unconditionally,
Until the two become inseparable.

Dina Feinberg

The ice storm had left the landscape along the tracks a fairyland of sunlight. You couldn't help but keep looking out the window as the train clattered its way to Philly, wondering how such a scene could exist just miles from Center City. There was even ice on the river, melting under the rush of the Schuylkill's brown green water, almost redeeming all that pollution.

I had seen something like this as a kid, too, coming back from a trip to the city with my parents to see Santa at Gimbel's, go through the Christmas Village at Lit's, ride the mono-rail around Wanamaker's toy department, see the famous light show there. And the train ride back was the finale of it all. It seemed so exciting to rise up that long escalator at the Reading Terminal, wait in front of the train doors, watch the signs above the doors change as the trains came in. The destinations seemed so exotic: Hatboro, Fox Chase, Chestnut Hill East, West Trenton. And then to walk out into the dark expanse of the train shed, among the waiting electric behemoths, sitting on tracks which led to a dozen farflung places, one of them my home—that was wonder.

Now there was no more Reading Terminal, and the train shed had been covered, air-conditioned, and glitzed up into a ballroom in the convention center. The trains now came in through a tunnel five floors below, moving through Center City like subways. Back in the '80s I had been all for this tunnel, which linked up the old Pennsy and Reading lines, but I hadn't realized how I would miss the old terminal. My great-grandfather had driven steam trains out of it, and my great uncle guided out the first electric train. I remember the last day of the terminal, how I had looked forward to riding the last train out of the terminal. But that day I'd gone hiking around Fairmount with a woman friend and lost track of time. I missed the last train by minutes.

I'd written a poem about the trains and the city of my childhood. At least I had that much left of the experience.

The train pulled into the tunnel and the conductor sang out "Market East, the Gallery!" I stood up with more than half the passengers, a huge crowd of Christmas shoppers. I also planned to shop for Christmas, but I had other reasons for being there. I needed to stop at the university, turn in the final draft of my dissertation proposal, and borrow a few books. I also wanted to experience Christmas in Philly. And even though Lit's and Gimbel's had folded and Wanamaker's had been bought out by Hecht's, there was still magic on Market Street. The Christmas Village had moved to Strawbridge's and the light show was still playing, even if it had been updated and lost John Facenda's resounding narration.

"Iron is stronger than flesh!" a man belted. He sat slumped against the glass wall of the station, his back facing the tracks below. He sat on and wore a blanket, keeping it wrapped around him, covering his in such a way that you couldn't be sure if he was wearing pants. "Iron is stronger than flesh, I say!" I ignored him and scurried away into the bright Christmas vistas of the Gallery.

My plan was to scout out the stores first, so I wouldn't have to spend a lot of time finding presents after coming back from the university library loaded down with a lot of books. I walked through the underground mall past the musical Christmas tree and the foodcourt, until I came to Strawbridge's. As I headed for the gift section, I saw the meager book collection and went over to it. There wasn't much interesting, mainly the usual mix of bestsellers and picture books for tourists' coffee tables. One title caught my eye, though—a collection of classical poets in a new translation. I perused Sappho, Vergil, Ovid, and heard the

Incarnation

by

David W. Kriebel

Illustration by Vonnie Winslow Crist

click-click of a woman's heels behind me.

A soft hand fell upon my shoulder. I turned and found myself confronted with dark eyes, framed by long black tresses and olive skin. The full lips curved upward, making the eyes sparkle in amusement.

"Can I help you with something?"

I shook my head numbly. "No, just browsing." I started to put the book down.

"You're a poet, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said automatically. In my circles, everyone seemed to be a poet, and the ones who weren't were working on novels. I even had some claim to the title, having had a few pieces published in local litzines. But I wasn't thinking about any of that at the time. I was wondering if I might have a chance with her, crazy as that may seem. But here she was, beautiful and interested in poetry. "How could you tell?" I asked, meeting those deep, deep eyes.

"You remind me of someone I used to know."

"Someone you liked, I hope."

"I liked him well enough."

"He was a poet, I take it?" *Way to go, Captain Obvious.*

"He was a mortal. And a poet, as it happened." She looked down. "He tried, and most of it he captured. Within his limits, he sang well."

She was losing me, but the mystery of her words only made her more alluring. I glanced down, but she wore no badge with her name on it. My eyes lingered on the rondure of her breasts. I jerked my head up, hoping she hadn't noticed my rudeness. Her eyes still held amusement.

"You may call me Sybil," she said.

I told her my name. She pronounced it slowly, as if it were some exotic word. She frowned. "It will do, although I like the first part better than the last. It would sound better on a peasant than a poet."

"I'm sorry," I said, not sure exactly why I should apologize. It was a perfectly good name. In any other situation I would be piqued at her impertinence. But I couldn't be angry with her.

"Your name will be immortalized," she said. "It will live in company with the names of Hesiod and Homer."

I looked down. "Well, I'm not sure I'm that good."

"You do not have to be, poet. The theme of what you write will be enough." She lifted her chin, her eyes bright jewels. "You shall be my chronicler. Come."

And she turned away and strode out of the store.

I stared after her, numbed. "But...but..." She paused, turned. "Well?"

"Well what? Where are you going?"

"I'm going on an epic adventure, poet."

"But don't you work here? What about your customers?"

She shrugged. "I'm on break." And she hurried off again.

"Sybil." I went after her as she walked out into the mall. "Sybil, wait a second."

"I told you, poet, I'm on break. I haven't much time."

"Are you... what is this adventure you're going on?"

"A fair question. I am going to church to be converted."

"Oh." I knew a few born-again Christians, but none of them talked about their experiences this way. "You mean you've been born again and now you're going to be baptized?"

She turned, smiling. "I cannot be born again, poet. I was never born at all."

"What are you talking about? Of course you were born. Everyone was born at one time."

"All mortals, you mean."

"Well, yes. So what's your point?"

"I should think that would be obvious, poet."

I'm immortal."

Oh, brother. This lady was seriously delusional. I stopped in my tracks. "That's nuts."

"No, that's the truth. I am a goddess."

"The goddess Sybil?"

"If you must know, I am the goddess Cybele, once called Kubaba. I use the other name in my mundane life."

"And you work as a saleswoman in Strawbridge's."

"I needed the money and this position paid well. I am what is called seasonal help. You forget, my temples closed a long time ago."

Uh-huh.

"Now, shall we be going? The church is still some blocks distant and I have one other to pick up."

I hesitated. Common sense screamed for me to get away from her and let her be crazy all by herself. But I was curious. It wasn't as if she'd picked an easy to know name like Isis or Athena. I had a background I archaeology and I knew a little about the cult of Cybele. If Sybil was a loon, she was an interesting one.

And lovely, too, of course. Not that I ever let a consideration like that override my common sense.

"All right, but who else are we going to pick up?"

"Hephaestus."

Better and better. I walked with her again. "So what other gods do you know?"

"You think I'm crazy, don't you?"

"Do you want to know the truth?"

"Do you?"

"Sometimes fiction is more interesting."

"Is that all you think I am, an interesting fiction?" Her eyes flashed. "Skepticism does not become you, poet."

I wanted to tell her than lunacy didn't become her, but I said nothing. Neither did she until we neared the train station.

"Ah, there he is."

I looked ahead, but saw no one resembling a Greek god. There was only the homeless man slumped against the wall, keeping up his rant.

"Iron is stronger than flesh!" he cried.

She went up to him and I felt a sinking feeling. But it made sense. "Crazies must have a union," I muttered under my breath.

"Hephaestus, do you not recognize me?"

The old panhandler squinted up at her. "Who you talkin' to, girl?"

"Don't be difficult. I'm on my way to be converted. I've brought a poet to chronicle the event."

He stared at her as if looking through clouds. Suddenly he jerked his body and reached behind him. For an instant I was afraid he would come out with a gun. But he only pulled out a handmade crutch. He stabbed the floor with it, and hauled himself to his feet.

His eyes were suddenly sharp. And dangerous. I took a step back as he fixed her with them. "So you going to be converted. Just like my wife. Lived her life cheating on me with everything that breathed and had two legs, then she goes and gets converted and suddenly she's all virginal and righteous."

"I don't know her very well," Sybil said. "She was a young goddess. And I am old."

Not from where I stand, I thought.

"Yeah, well seems I never knowed her, either. She give up her name when she got converted, you know that? You ready to give up your name, mama?"

"Walk with me," she said. "We're losing time."

"What's time to us?" the panhandler said. "Ain't like we're mortals."

"I have a job."

He laughed. "What you need a job for? That's what worshippers are for."

"In case you haven't checked recently,



people don't worship us anymore."

"Really? Well I been waitin' for a long time for some and it's finally payin' off. There's these people call themselves pagans and some of them seem serious about bringing back the old religions. I have worshippers again, lady."

"Is that why you have to beg for your supper in a train station?"

His head shook back and forth. "So there ain't many, so far. Big deal."

"Two engineering students in Berkeley is not a big deal."

"How you know that?" He looked about to explode, but she was unflappable.

"Aphrodite told me."

"That whore!" He pounded the floor with his crutch. "Bitch won't give me the time of day, but she goes flapping her lips to every immortal who comes along." He turned to me. "Oh, you should see her now. I can hardly stand to look at her."

"I'm sorry." It was all I could think of to say.

He turned to her again. "Did she also tell you I have powers again?"

"No." They had come to a less frequented part of the train station, to an elevator. The panhandler stabbed at the UP button.

"Well, I do. Watch this."

He held out his free hand, palm up, and closed his eyes. An instant later, the air above his hand seemed to shimmer, but it could have been a trick of the light reflected in the chrome doors of the elevator. "See?" he said proudly.

"See what?" Sybil asked. The doors of the elevator opened and we all stepped in. In the close space with two probable lunatics, I wondered why I hadn't just said my good-byes and left. To make it worse, the little man's body odor was really noticeable now. I waited impatiently for the elevator to reach street level.

"Heat," the panhandler said. "I can make heat now. That's got to be from more than just two geeky kids from Fresno believing in me. I'm getting a following, honey. I got my power back."

She gave him an arch glance. "Please don't be pathetic. I have power, too, as you call it. But I will not stoop to performing parlor tricks to impress mortals."

He ignored her and turned to me. "You saw it, didn't you? What, don't you believe in me?"

"Of course I believe," I stammered. Why was the elevator taking so long?

"You don't look it." His eyes narrowed. "Maybe I should let you feel it, just to be sure." He pushed his palm at me. "Come on, mister, feel the burn."

I flinched. "No, thanks." The elevator door opened and I sprang out into the station vestibule. The air felt fresh after riding in that cramped box. I started away from them, toward the eleventh street exit.

"Where are you going, poet?" Sybil cried.

"Got to do some shopping," I rasped, half glancing back at her.

I heard her slap the little man. "You scared him off, fool!" Then she ran up to me, catching me as I was opening the door. I paused, found myself staring into the pools of her eyes. "Please don't leave me," she husked.

I bit my lip. "Listen, miss...Sybil. I hate to say it, but I really don't believe that you two are Greek gods." I glanced behind her, saw the panhandler hobble up.

"I never said I was Greek," she said, touching my shoulder. "I was first worshipped in Phrygia, later in Ionia. Yes, I had Greek worshippers, but so did the one we are going to see."

"Who's that?"

"Jesus, of course."

Oh, brother. *We're going to see Jesus.*

Was that code for "we're all going to drink cyanide Kool-Aid now"?

"Sorry, I have to go." And I pushed on the door.

She put her hand on my arm and turned me around. "Please. No one is going to hurt you." She must have seen me glance toward the panhandler. "He's harmless, I assure you. He does go on, but he's harmless."

I hesitated. "All right. How far is it to this church?"

"Ten minutes if we walk fast."

It went against my better judgment, but something about her seemed sorrowful. The thought of leaving her made me feel guilty. "Fine," I said. "I'll go. But I can't be long."

"You won't."

"Iron is stronger than flesh," the panhandler announced, showing yellow teeth.

Outside the cold street was filled with the strains of "The Little Drummer Boy," blaring from unseen loudspeakers. The two divinities and I hurried off, but our hurrying could only move so fast as the panhandler. I was actually half-expecting "Hephaestus" to lose his limp and suddenly start walking, maybe attributing the "miracle" to his superhuman powers. And he did move quickly for a man with a broken leg. If it was an act, he'd done a good job of remembering to keep it up.

"How'd you break your leg?" I asked him.

"My legs ain't broke. I was born that way." He cackled. "That's why I was cast out of heaven, boy. The old biddy couldn't stand to look at me no more."

"He means Hera," Sybil said. "For some reason, people have often confused me with her."

"One thing I'll say for the hag, I never heard of her wanting to be converted. Not like others I could name." Sybil didn't answer. Instead, he continued, "After the wife had it done to her, she started babbling about 'spiritual love.' She never talked like that before. She stopped coming to lie with me, too." He chuckled. "Of course, she stopped lying with everyone else, too, which I guess was a plus."

"So you really think Aphrodite was your wife?"

"Yeah, like I think I got two gimpy legs." He glowered at me, then grinned. "Seems a demonstration is needed here."

"Don't you dare!" Sybil hissed.

"Watch, boy," he said, holding up his hand. The air above it shimmered. Then a businessman passed us and he stretched out his hand toward the man's shoes.

They burst into flame. The man screamed and kept on screaming, kicking at his shoes. The flames crawled up his leg as a policeman tackled him, pushing him to the ground. I stood stunned as the flames died away.

"Another case of spontaneous human combustion," the panhandler commented.

Sybil glared at him and spoke angrily in a language I did not recognize. He folded his arms and answered her back in English.

"Make me, old lady."

"See how small a fragment you have become, to resort to this? How far you have fallen!"

"I'm the one who's rising!" he hissed. "I'm the one with the power."

"You will see power soon. That I promise you."

The two stood, facing each other, and I would not have gotten between them for the world. Then sirens sounded and we hurried off through the crowd of onlookers.

"How did you do that?" I asked him.

"I told you before," he said, "but you wouldn't believe in me. See what you made me do?"

"Our destination is in sight," Sybil an-

nounced. Two minutes later we were entering the Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul.

I had been inside this church once before, with a friend, back in the 80s when I was in graduate school for the first time. It was still impressive the second time around. The center aisle stretched the length of the cavernous basilica, and the altar at the end was a distant thing. We moved toward it.

No one spoke. There were others in the church, a few older women come to pray, a black robed priest or deacon working up near the front. The three of us formed a procession, with Sybil leading, me in the middle, and the panhandler—or whatever he was—bringing up the rear. I looked to the side, at the rows of candles, and noticed something strange: as we moved, the candles to either side seemed to flicker. The air seemed unaccountably thick. I felt someone over my left shoulder, but when I turned around there was only the panhandler, dragging himself forward six feet or more behind me.

She came to the altar, right up to the rail, opening the little gate in it. I looked at the man in the black robe, expecting him to warn us away, but he never even looked up. She went up to the altar and I followed. The panhandler stayed behind. Neither of us questioned it.

Above us hung a large crucifix. The pale, pinkish body of Jesus looked down on us, his eyes closed in pain. Sybil reached up, touched his wooden body with her hand, sighing. Her eyes closed as she carressed it and her breast rose with the indrawn breath. A thrill went through me and I realized my skin was covered in goosebumps.

"We all come to this decision along different paths," she whispered. "I chose this place, this path, because of him. He is so like my Attis." She opened her eyes. "You know Attis, don't you, poet?"

"Yes." Attis had been the son and lover of the goddess Cybele. Driven mad by her love for him, he castrated himself under a pine tree and died. "It's nice to know ancient history has its uses," I quipped, then wished I hadn't.

"It is not ancient history to me, poet. He died for me. Willingly. It was my sin that killed him." She touched her fingers to her lips and returned them to the statue. "I would heal you," she sighed. I saw with a start that there were tears in her eyes. "I would have you back, my love."

I don't know what made me look up, but I did. "Jesus!" I shouted.

The statue's eyes were open.

I half-expected it to talk and answer to the name of Jesus. But it did not. I began to wonder if the eyes had been open all the time and I hadn't noticed them before.

"Once I walked upon the backs of lions. Once I stretched out my hand and held life within my grasp. And I crushed that life, smothered it." She collapsed to the ground, weeping. I glanced down at the panhandler and saw him staring at her, ashen. "He was my son!"

I heard a small voice then, so thin, I wondered if it was my imagination. *My only son*, it sighed.

She jerked her head up, as if she'd heard it, too. "I sacrificed him."

I sacrificed him.

"Your son rose again," she sobbed. "You gave him life once more."

You shall rise again. You have been given life.

"But I killed him, I! His mother!"

Mother.

Then I saw her feet leave the floor. I sat, transfixed, watching her rise, until she was face to face with Jesus.

"Mother," the voice said.

"My son," she cried, and reached to take him in her arms.

A silent explosion of light made me close my eyes and cover my face. When I looked again, I saw floating, treading air, rays of light streaming from her back. Or were they wings? I saw again the power who ruled mountains, made wild animals do her will.

She smiled and moved toward the man at the communion rail. The way she moved reminded me of a bride. I looked down and saw a crowd of people who were not there before, come like guests at a wedding.

"This is my body which is given for you," she whispered to the little man. He reached up, slowly, his face marvelling at the sight of her. Light welled out of her and the most beautiful music I had ever heard filled my awareness. I closed my eyes.

"Excuse me, sir, but you can't be up there." I blinked and saw a black-robed figure of coming toward me. There was no sign of Cybele or Hephaestus, either. The church was suddenly empty.

"I didn't see you before," the priest said. "Do you need any help?"

"No, I'm fine. Thanks." I shook off his offered arm and made my way unsteadily down the steps, away from the altar, stopping only once to look back at the crucifix. It hung there, woodenly surveying the scattered women in the pews.

Outside, in the crisp December air, I wondered what had happened. I was afraid I had blacked out and hallucinated it all, but for some reason this prospect did not alarm me. Maybe it was because I didn't really believe it had been an hallucination. Maybe that itself was cause for concern.

I rushed back through the crowds, across the parkway, through City Hall courtyard, all the way to Strawbridges, searching for Cybele. I asked another salesperson if she'd seen her and she only shrugged. "I never heard of anyone like that working here. Should I get the manager?"

I told her no and headed back through the mall to the Market-Frankford el station. The idea that the whole episode had been an illusion seemed more and more reasonable. I wondered if I should tell anyone about it, maybe ask someone at the University. Then I realized that would be the same as kissing my Ph.D good-bye. I shrugged it off as I bought a token and slipped through the turnstiles.

But before I went down to the platform, something caught my eye. A man was wandering about, dressed in clothes which looked much like those of someone else. When he turned around I knew him.

"Hephaestus!" I ran up to him. "What happened back there?" Then I noticed he bore no crutch, but walked on two straight legs. "You're walking. Your legs are healed."

"Flesh is stronger than iron!" he cried, and thrust an open hand at me.

I gave him a quarter and wished him a Merry Christmas. Then I hurried off and caught the westbound train. I sat down, reached in my pocket, found a scrap of paper and a pen. I began to write.



**Don't Miss the Lite
Circle Benefit Ball!**
January 29, 2000
See Our Ad on Page 15
for Details or Call
(410) 719-7792.

LITE BYTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We receive a calendar of events each month for children for the 27 branches of Baltimore's **Enoch Pratt Free Library**. Here are a few examples of events in December. We urge parents to contact their local library for a schedule of events.

■ **Govans Branch**, 5714 Bellona Ave., (410) 396-6098.

—Preschool Storytime on Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15 at 10:30 a.m. Ages 3 to 4. Stories, songs, & finger plays.

—After School Games Club on Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15 at 3 p.m. Ages 9 to 13. Call to register.

—Govans Holiday Open House on Saturday, Dec. 11, 1 to 3 p.m. All ages. Children's crafts; refreshments.

■ **Herring Run Branch**, 3801 Erdman Ave., (410) 396-0996.

—After School Film Program on Wednesdays, Dec. 1 and 15, 3:30 p.m.. Ages 5 to 12.

—Preschool Storytime on Mondays, Dec. 6 and 20, 3:30 p.m. Ages 3 to 5 Call to register.

—Christmas Stories and Poems, Monday Dec 13 at 3:30 p.m. Ages 6 to 12. Call to register.

■ **Northwood Branch**, 4420 Loch Raven Blvd. (410) 396-6076.

—Happy Holidays Storytime on Thursday, Dec. 16, at 10 a.m. Ages 3 to 5.

—Family Holiday Celebration on Wednesday, Dec. 22 at 7 p.m. All ages. Stories, songs, activities, & refreshments.

■ A new edition of *Grub Street*, published by the students of **Towson University**, is now available at various locations in Baltimore. Robin Gunkel is the Editor-in-Chief. The cover is imaginatively designed and foreshadows the creativity within. One stanza that I thought was outstanding in its evocativeness is by Sian E. Erskine in her poem *Daily Battles*:

*My mother is
a light that is slowly
diminishing.*

But that is only a sample of the poetry, fiction, artwork and photography in the book. The book is a steal—literally! It is free.

Grub Street is hosting a regular series of open poetry and short fiction readings at the **Coffee and Tea Cafe**, 6303 York Rd. (410) 435-3040. Chelsea Zent hosts. The readings are held on Fridays from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. There is a sign up sheet. Free.

■ The dates for **Artscape 2000** have been announced. Mark your calendars for July 21, 22, and 23, 2000. This is the 19th annual edition of Artscape. For more information, or to make tax-deductible charitable contributions to Baltimore's Festival of the Arts, Inc. (BFAI), a 501(c)(3) organization, call (410) 396-4575, fax (410) 727-4840, or email artscape@juno.com.

■ **The Towson Unitarian Universalist Church** continues to offer imaginative adult education programs. The Winter Programs are lectures on:

—*The American Connection: William James* (Wed., Jan. 5, 12, 19, 7:30 to 9 p.m., \$25. Leader: Dr. John Rose, Professor of Philosophy and Chair of Dept. of Religion and Philosophy at Goucher College)

—*Charles Darwin and Evolution*. (Thu.,

Jan 6, 13, 20, 7:30 to 9 p.m., \$25. Leader: Erik P. Scully, a member of the Biology Dept. at Towson University).

—*Vienna 1900: Art* (Wed., Jan. 26, 2000 at 7:30 p.m. No fee).

—*Nativism and Modernism in American Literature* (Wed., Feb 2, 9, 7:30 to 9 p.m., \$20. Leader: Dr. Walter Benn Michaels of the English Dept. at Johns Hopkins University).

—*Myers-Briggs: The Myers-Briggs Indicator* is used widely in business, education, churches and individual/group counseling to help people and organizations to better understand intra- and interpersonal dynamics. (Thu., Feb. 3, 10, 17, 7:30 to 9 p.m., \$25. Leader: William J. Sneek, S.J., Ph.D, a licensed psychologist and a Roman Catholic priest who teaches pastoral counseling in the graduate division of Loyola College).

For more info, call (410) 825-6045.

■ **The School 33 Art Center**, 1427 Light St. in South Baltimore, continually offers an interesting series of exhibits. Three new exhibits begin on Dec. 18 and run to Jan. 21. There is an Opening Reception on Sat., Dec. 18 from 3 to 5 p.m. The public is definitely invited.

—Gallery I: Sculpture by Keith Krueger and Drawings by David Little. Keith Krueger creates wall assemblages with found objects utilizing the original colors, but, in most cases, only parts of the original forms, lending an air of mystery to the finished work. Parts of words, symbols, wood and metal pieces are assembled together to evoke a fragmented sense of the past. David Little creates large pastel and conte drawings, placing the human figure on the same scale as machinery—twisting, stretching, and floating among architectural elements such as floors, walls, scaffolds, and towers, thus, empowering the machinery with a life of its own.

—Gallery II: Family History/Fact & Fiction, sculpture by Carolyn Jean, who incorporates found objects and artifacts into component sculptures that reflect her fascination with each object's original manufacture, and subsequently, the people that utilized them.

—Installation Space: Blue Morning Ball Time, an installation by Michael Baker. In a sealed-off area, Baker utilizes four floor fans to create a circular airflow as vinyl playground balls are dispersed within the environment. The vortex-like air circulation causes the balls to continuously circle the space. Working in this playful mode, Baker symbolically refers to human intelligence through a false personification of the balls.

For more info, call Peter Dubeau at (410) 396-4641 Tue.-Sat. from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

■ A new used bookstore recently opened in Hampden. It is **Broken Wings and Things** at 832 W. 36th St., (410) 889-5900. Good luck to owners Brandy Knapp and Kathi Eppler, who have launched their ship on the sea of commerce. (Note—besides used and rare books, the store also offers gifts and collectibles.) (Note#2—though *Lite* mentioned the sister (or brother) store in Fells Point in October's issue, we want to emphasize the Hampden store this issue. *Lite* has been mourning the loss of the **Raven**

Continued on page 11

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Lite Reading, cont. from page 11

everyday life. Leo's many relatives and friends help him along the way, as well as caring strangers who reach out to him to protect him from the Nazis. Not only does he experience compassion, but he is also the victim of deception and indifference, never knowing who he can really trust.

Leo escapes from the clutches of death many times as he crawls under a barbed wire fence to escape a French detention camp, jumps off a freight train that is en route to a death camp, and outruns and hides from police in attics, crawlspaces and cellars.

A must read for anyone who wants to know the dreadful truth about the Holocaust, it is memoir told with clarity and suspense thanks to Bretholz's accounts and the help of the *Baltimore Sun's* Michael Olesker.

An excellent piece of non-fiction, it is well worth the bargain price.

W. H. STEVENS

Down On the Shore. By Adele V. Holden. Woodholme House Publishers. 246 pages. Hardcover. Memoir. \$21.95.

Adele V. Holden, who was an English teacher at Dunbar High School and later Professor of English at the Community College of Baltimore, grew up on Maryland's Eastern shore in Pocomoke City. During those growing years and beyond, Ms. Holden describes a life filled with family closeness, love of education, and her eye-witness accounts of discrimination.

Her down-to-earth, moving account of her parents' struggle to have a better life and to provide an education for their five children pulls the reader into their world.

Her stirring story of how her third grade teacher was fired because she insisted her white boss address her as "Miss Blaine," instead of by her first name, is one of the many incidents that tell of the injustices dealt to African Americans before the Civil Rights Movement.

Holden recounts the lynchings of black men in nearby towns, an account so chilling the reader feels the fear that the Holdens and their neighbors must have felt.

This memoir is so skillfully told, the reader walks in the shoes of Eastern Shore blacks as they strive to be treated with respect and to get the same opportunities as the white people living there. It is story mixed with joy, sadness, anger, and fear—an heroic story of a father who fights to educate his children, of a mother who works menial jobs her whole life with dreams of a better life for her family, and of the children themselves who rise above discrimination to achieve their goals.

Down On the Shore is an excellent, fast paced memoir that readers will not be able to put down. As a quote taken from Nikki Giovanni states on the cover, it is "a moving testament to the human spirit."

W. H. STEVENS

Have a book review?
Have a book you'd like reviewed?

Send it to: Wendy Stevens,
Book Review Editor, The Lite Circle
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LITERARY NEWS

Cont. from front cover

for money, adolescent rage (or perhaps neurotic, bordering on psychotic, rage), anarchy, and the supremacy of the individual to act in any manner he/she wants in public. The Renaissance and these more liberating times have little in common. Contemporary Western society does not revere ideals but reveres subversion, nastiness (ah, the humor in insults), one-up-manship, egotism (the ideals of marketing have a lot to do with that). What we have in the Giuliani Madonna is a self-indulgence crafted to provoke a response in those who still believe in the discredited, and/or unfashionable faiths, so that they over-react by threatening to close down the Brooklyn Museum, and this, in turn, allows the oh-so-sophisticated, politically correct, defenders of human freedom, self-expression and the "cutting-edge" of art to raise their swords, shields and voices. This gives the sophisticated little bobbing heads (they nod so much they bob) a cause to agree in, and to vanquish those backward 19th century know-nothings, who still, if truth be told, think virginity is not necessarily evil.

But what about the art? The piece in question? The masterpiece whose monetary value went up in this brouhaha. I've seen a black and white photograph reproduction of it in the October 10 *Sun* (the source of so much enlightenment). Granted, the deprived can not know if Ofili is a master of color. We have only the reproduction of the linear aspects. Apparently the piece is a wall-filler. It is not one of those little Vermeer scenes. It appears to have buttocks like putty surrounding the main figure. The figure purports to be a black woman, but it is not. I'm surprised that there hasn't been a protest by the NAACP. This is a caricature of African-American womanhood. Of course Catholics have been outraged. It is a mocking portrait of a religious icon. Doesn't it mock the traditional devotion to the Virgin Mary? Arnold Lehman, the director of the Brooklyn Museum, wanted notoriety. He got it. However, the reproduction doesn't show the elephant dung to advantage. I'm sure there are apologists for this groundbreaking art that have taken it all in. Dung as a material for art, though not a new, or even a novel idea (the 60s, the 70s, the 80s were there first), does have its charm. Perhaps it provides a counterpoint of abstract expressionism to the pop-art cartoon of the main figure. Perhaps.

Does the exhibit warrant the castration of funding? Of course not. What it warrants is complete indifference. One of the *Sun* articles said that Serrano's "Piss Christ" is on display in some other gallery in New York. I saw, in the kodachrome, the crucifix immersed in urine. I only knew it was urine because that's what the caption said. The word "urine" gave the piece its life. Otherwise, it is dead. The Giuliani Madonna? Let's go to the Gomez Gallery here in Baltimore, or School 33, or to Grimaldis to look at the variety of contemporary art. The "Sensation," purporting to be leading young British artists, is an old marketing P. T. Barnum ploy with money and fame as its goal. If there is anything spiritual in the exhibit, it is purely accidental. A really provocative artist would mock the whole "art as investment" concept that dominates

the Sophisticated Art World. The really revolutionary would imbue his/her art with more than adolescent rebellion so romanticized by the seers of conformity. A really interesting piece of art would have some noticeable (as opposed to theoretical) beauty of line or color or texture. A rare gem of art may even ennoble the sensibility of the viewer, but probably not. Our society entertains only lust, greed and anger.

There is nothing philosophical or enlightening about art except the price.

DAN CUDDY

Lite Hosts LTTA Gala

The Lite Circle hosted a publication party and reading for *Lower Than the Angels* (editors, David Kriebel and Vonnie Winslow Crist; Lite Circle Books) on Friday, Oct. 15 at Bibelot-Timonium. The event was well attended, with an audience of at least 70 people and readings/discussion by a number of contributors to the anthology, including (listed in order of appearance): W. H. Stevens, Dan Cuddy, Rebecca Motil, Elisabeth Stevens, E.B. Frohvet, Elaine Erickson, Eva Curlee Doyle, Donna Eason, Sam Beard, Jack Chalker, Patti Kinlock, Dave Kriebel, and Vonnie Crist.

For complete ordering info, see the ad on page 13. Copies are also available at local Bibelot stores.

PATTI KINLOCK

Artscape Literary Arts Competition for Y2K

The Artscape Committee has decided to change the Literary Arts Competition for 2000. Gone are the poetry, fiction, and play competitions and the nominations by writers' organizations. Instead, Marylanders who have an interest in submitting their own memoir writing can now compete for space in the Artscape Memoirs Project Anthology chapbook scheduled to debut July 2000. When asked about the change, Artscape Memoirs Project advisor, Diane Scharper, said, "We're hoping to see work from many people who haven't previously participated in the Artscape Literary Competitions because they didn't belong to a writers' group. We're also hoping to see new, exciting memoir work from the Marylanders who've competed before as poets or fiction writers." Ms. Scharper also said there was no entry fee for this competi-

Continued on p. 12

Need an event covered? Call News Editor
Dan Cuddy at (410) 882-4138.

Lyte Bytes, cont. from page 9

Bookshop for some time now. Hopefully this store will stop the tears. There are never too many used bookstores in this town.)

■ **The Black Planet Bookstore** has moved to 614 S. Broadway in Fells Point (Baltimore, MD 21231). The telephone no. is (410) 563-2008. Website: www.blackplanetdirect.com. The store has much more room to spread out and display more books. The store specializes in "radical books" but also contains less partisan titles. *Lite* urges everyone to stop in and look at the books if visiting Fells Point. You may come up with a good read.

■ When visiting College Park, drop by the new **Mariposa Center for Artistic Expression** and say hello to the proprietor, **Maritza Rivera**. They host regular literary and arts events on Saturday evenings (call for schedule: 301-513-9422). It's a cozy, comfortable space with a charming butterfly decor, and the audience doesn't bite. Donations welcome. We need more such artistic havens.

■ An exhibit of sculpture by artist **Albert Schweitzer** opens Sat., Dec. 11 at the **Gomez Gallery** and runs through Jan. 23, 2000. Opening reception Dec. 11, 6-9 p.m. The Gomez Gallery is located at 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 100. For more info, call (410) 662-9510 or visit their website: www.gomezgallery.com.

■ **The Contemporary Museum** presents "Afternoon of Changes: The Art of John Cage," an afternoon of film, music and discussion in conjunction with its current exhibition *Impact: Revealing Sources for Contemporary Art*. The event is free and runs from 1:00-5:30 p.m. at the Contemporary Museum, 100 W. Centre St., Mt. Vernon. For more info, call Dana Johns at (410) 783-5720, ext. 103. Museum hours are Tue.-Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sat./Sun. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

■ **The Baltimore Songwriters Association** announces a new open mic series the third Monday of each month at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 120 N. Front St. (across from the Shot Tower). Signup is at 7:30 p.m. and the music starts at 8 p.m. Next two readings: Dec. 20 and Jan. 17. For more info, contact Paul Iwancio at (410) 455-3822 or iwancio@umbc.edu. Visit their website at: www.electrobus.com/bsa/.

■ The winner of the **Hamilton Poetry Contest** is Darlene Burke for her poem:

A Hamilton Night Relived

my platform shoes dragged across the concrete.
jeans tinged with the red glow of the neon lights.
a whistle from the continuous entourage of late model Chevys interrupted the Motown backdrop.
I was Miss Hamilton Park when my standpoint was more shallow.
waiting for my best friend—I knew she would show.
she was my only certitude.
we'd talk about our most recent attempts at love,
those damned republicans and
"You know I think this is the best pizza in Baltimore, bar none."
we'd stay until the neon light fused with the night sky
and our minds were graveled from the ambiance.
we'd hug and say goodbye yet one more time
and walk away in our separate directions.
and certitude dissolves into dust.

Lite Reading:

BOOK REVIEWS

The Black Buzzard Review: Tenth Anniversary Issue. Edited by Bradley R. Strahan; Associate Editor, Shirley G. Sullivan. Black Buzzard Press. Poetry. \$4.00.

Over 75 poetic voices are represented in this tenth anniversary edition of *The Black Buzzard Review*. Editors Strahan and Sullivan have chosen quality poetry from coast to coast for poetry lovers to enjoy in this slim but rich collection of work.

Deanne Bayer's "Postlude" reminds the reader of "sounds you take for granted ... sparrows... flirtations between leaf and wind ... the voices of those who love you." Marcia Renee Goodman writes of a love affair with books: "we crave those covers in hand, words and rhythms to hold us."

In Dustin Kidd's "Strawberry," his sensuous word choices create the sense of taste—without the strawberries. And in Robin Messines' "Subway," the imagery is so vivid the reader can almost reach out and touch a woman who is holding a small child as they ride New York's public transportation system.

There are so many poems and so little space here to remark on them all, but *The Black Buzzard Review* offers avid poetry readers a little of everything they may crave within just a few choice pages.

W. H. STEVENS

Borders and Other Barriers. By George L. Bristol. Published by the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society. Arcade Press. 26 pages. Chapbook. Poetry. \$5.95.

This year's chapbook winner of the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society, *Borders and Barriers*, is chock full of imagery and gritty down-to-earth depictions of the common man.

George L. Bristol of Austin, TX, who is a self-proclaimed political poet, brings to life the plight of the Mexicans who try to sneak into the U.S. for a better life: the "American Dreamer," Tomas Tello, who lives in a trailer where he built a garden and playhouse; and of

Red Thunder, who dies taking his native tongue with him.

Bristol uses his insight and humanity in his poetry to comment on many facets and realities of the human condition without being preachy or self-righteous.

Congratulations go out to the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society and to Geraldine Connolly, their final judge on an excellent choice for their contest and for the readers of Baltimore.

W. H. STEVENS

Baltimore Close-Up. by Christopher T. George. Arcadia Publishing. 128 pages. Softcover. History. \$16.99.

Christopher George, a local historian, has compiled a nostalgic and informative collection of photographs which depict the many faces of Baltimore through the years.

Whether the reader is a history buff, one who enjoys reminiscing about the past, or a young person in search of Baltimore's history, this delightful book is sure to please.

George's work, divided into thematic sections such as "Celebrations," "Civil War Baltimore," "Family Portraits," and "Before Harborplace," take older readers back in time and literally shows young readers the roots of "Charm City."

Baltimore: rich in history, a forerunner in the arts, a center of commerce, and steeped in tradition is a unique place indeed and George has brought it to life with his meticulous research and descriptive captions under each photo and document in this beautiful photo album collection.

W. H. STEVENS

Alice Miller's Room. By Del Marbrook. www.onlineoriginals.com.

Alice Miller's Room is a unique story, an almost Jamesian story. The basic premise of the novel is the building of a fantasy room for Sacha, the small nephew of Natalya Yasdarov. However, the real story is the relationship of the main three characters: Paolo Maio, an artist, Dom Maggiore, a metallurgist, and Natalya, a psychiatrist. The real action of the novel is psychological and like a Henry James novel it is subtle. The emotion of the story is love but not necessarily

erotic love, though there are elements of it. The love is akin to friendship but transcends that bonding with something stronger—familial love. The story is how that relationship survives.

The novel is 130 pages long but it is not a fast read. It resembles Cormac McCarthy's *Suttree* in two ways, though its world is as different from the McCarthy novel as Fitzgerald is different from Kafka. But like *Suttree* this novel contains a boat which figures prominently, and it has a dictionary vocabulary. The reader is often sent to a dictionary to look up the meaning of an unfamiliar word. "Dehisced" is one that this reviewer found fascinating. The novel is also heavy with Jungian psychology & arcane allusions that spike the story intellectually but do not necessarily enhance the narrative flow. The novel cries out for a sophisticated cerebral reader who can sift through the feints and stabs of words and get at the emotional truth. After finishing the narrative the reader will look back kindly on the characters and give assent to their creation, but one must will themselves through at times. This is not a popular novel but an attempt to flesh out the depths of the mind as embodied in three ordinary but extraordinary lives.

Here is a passage that tells of Dom Maggiore's motivation in creating the room for Sacha. (Dr. Alice Miller is a child psychologist who is a real life author of a number of books on child psychology.) It gives a small taste of the drama, inner drama, which is the action of the story.

Dom's own reason for doing this work was at first Paolo, whom he liked more than any man he'd known. Then it was Natalya, whom he liked so much he did not permit himself to feel any other thing for her. Next it was Sacha, with whom he felt a mysterious bond. Lastly it was Miller, whose writings, once discovered, had empowered him to leapfrog hurdles in therapy, the very ones that had ruptured him. Miller gave his evil childhood a face, a name. It happened, she said. He was indebted to his four new friends, counting Miller, and yet he could not bring himself to share with them, or anyone, the psychic engine he'd built to ride his inner storms. He didn't wish to define himself irrevocably to them, to single out, to put at risk any aspect of what they'd come to share.

To read this novel on the web, key in www.onlineoriginals.com.

DAN CUDDY

Leap Into Darkness. By Leo Bretholz with Michael Olesker. Anchor Books. 263 pages. Softcover. Memoir. \$12.95.

A fast-paced page turner, *Leap Into Darkness* is the story of a young Jewish man's flight from death at the hands of Hitler's Nazis during World War II.

At the urging of his mother, 17-year-old Leo Bretholz runs from occupied Vienna. Leaving his mother and sisters behind, he braves the Sauer River in Luxembourg on a chilly fall night in 1938 to begin his seven year quest for freedom.

During his flight, he sees several sides of the human condition, experiences love, and even finds some humor amid the terror in his

Continued on page 10

HOT OFF THE PRESS

The Warrior's Legacy. By Robert A. C. Bunn. American Literary Press, Baltimore, NM. 108 pages. Softcover. Novel. \$8.95.

■ The story of two brothers who are accomplished in martial arts. They go their separate ways to fight against the forces of evil in an enchanted world. This is Bunn's first novel in a trilogy.

Slowburn. By Peter Lalos. American Literary Press, Baltimore, No. 425 pages. Softcover. Novel. \$14.95.

■ In an isolated mining camp someone or something is killing workers one by one. The protagonist, who is in charge of the settlement, must catch the mur-

derer before everyone dies. This is Lalos' first novel.

Fodderwing Literary Journal, Summer/Fall 1999. A collection of stories, essays, poems, and articles, edited by Edward Allan Faine. I.M. Press. 26 pages. \$3.00.

■ Another eclectic collection of literature by area writers including Mary Overton, Elisabeth Stevens, Lin Min Hua, Joan Selby and John Norman McClean. Also featured in this issue is art by Joan C. Waites, Mary Procter, Wesley Stewart, Kacey Cameal, Kristen Helberg and Jimmy Lee Suddeth.

W. H. STEVENS

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SpotLite, cont. from page 10

tion so the only cost to writers would be manuscript duplication and postage. Five institutes of higher learning will be involved in the selection process rather than a solitary judge.

If you're not sure what a memoir is, then visit a library or bookstore and check out some of the wonderful memoirs available including: *Songs of Myself* edited by Diane Scharper, *Angela's Ashes* or *Tis* by Frank McCourt, *Down on the Shore* by Adele Holden, or *Leap into Darkness* by Leo Bretholz with Michael Olesker. Also, memoir workshops are available at bookstores, senior centers, colleges, and through writers' groups. As an example, on Monday, January 17th, (snowdate February 21st) at 1:00 p.m., a free memoir-writing workshop will be given by Vonnice Winslow Crist and W. H. Stevens at Bibelot Timonium.

The *Lite* staff knows change can be threatening, but it can also be an opportunity. Local writers should celebrate this chance for several people to have their memoirs featured in an Artscape chapbook. The rules for submission to the Artscape Memoirs Project follow. We challenge our readers to put together a submission and send it in. If you've always wanted to share your memoirs, now's your chance. Good Luck!

Artscape 2000 Memoirs Project Rules & Procedure:

1. You must be a Maryland resident, 18-years old or older.

2. The manuscript should be 10 to 15 pages of prose, poetry, or a combination of both.

3. The manuscript must be typed (double-space for prose and single-space for poetry) on one side of standard white 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Pages should be numbered and a title page included. The author's name cannot appear anywhere in the manuscript (including on the title page).

4. Six disposable copies of the manuscript, each secured in a lightweight folder or binder should be sent. Also, each entry should include a cover letter stating the title of the manuscript, author's name, address, phone, and e-mail address (if applicable). Lastly, a self-addressed stamped postcard should be included for acknowledging receipt of the manuscript. No manuscripts will be returned.

5. The SAS Postcard, 6 copies of the manuscript secured in 6 folders, and cover letter with author information should be sent to: Artscape Memoirs Project, c/o Towson University English Department, Towson University, Towson, MD 21204. Manuscripts must be received no later than February 29, 2000.

VONNICE WINSLOW CRIST

The Poetry of the Moment

I am entirely content sitting here looking out over the sea, listening to grasshoppers clicking their love songs as they fly over the rocks, seagulls making noise for the joy of it, and screen doors slamming in the distance. Must be summer. I'm in the thick of it and every year I wonder how I can hold this peace when I return to the so-called real world. So far I've only been marginally successful. Sometimes when I am running errands at home, I hear the gulls on the dumpster as I park my car in a shopping center, but it's not the same.

I will return from vacation once again determined not to lose the peace, to take one more step out of the virtual reality of the mail and the media, to slow down a notch or two. So I'm in training again here on this island where I've been spending summers for 30

years. No car, no TV, lots of time. Why, just last night I stepped outside before I went up to bed and stayed long enough for my eyes to adjust to the dark. The moon hadn't risen and the humidity had blown away, so it was a great show. The Milky Way arched overhead covering the black of deep space with so many stars it looked like a white rainbow. And as I followed it, a shooting star surprised me, making its whole journey through the atmosphere before I could say *Look, there!* Because of this foray into the night I missed *Action News at 11 with a complete and up-to-date weather forecast*. But tell me, which one is the real world? It occurs to me that the places and circumstances we refer to as the real world are more virtual than real and the pace of that world can be even faster than the shooting star I just managed to catch in the corner of my eye.

Too much to eat, too much to buy, too much to read, too much to learn, too many places to go. Here's the scene—cooking dinner, new CD playing that I've really wanted to hear, talking on the phone to arrange something (car pool, appliance repair, a meeting), watching the clock because someone has to be somewhere at 7:00 and I'm driving; it is 6:20. Now what kind of reality is that? Sometimes feel I like I am on a lifelong trip with Alice through the looking glass. My wild reality is as absurd as Carroll's fantasy.

For a writer this is a bittersweet dilemma. How can stimulus be a bad thing? I want rich experience to draw on when I write. Sometimes I feel like a child in the world's big box emporium where countless rich experiences are available as resources. And the price is time. As I indulge in all these experiences, time is devoured. With the necessities of food, shelter, and health secure, managing time has become the next challenge on the hierarchy of need. Because without time to reflect on my experiences, writing is only a primitive form of reporting which the ever-present video camera can handle more efficiently. I want to write about what experience means, I must take the time to reflect.

Now I am easily distracted—I don't think I was always this way, but survival as a mother and a middle school teacher requires attending to whatever crisis presents itself immediately. Children present a crisis every 7-1/2 minutes. So it isn't hard to get my attention, and my attention is required as I drive, drive, drive to work and on errands, as I listen to the radio, as I talk on the phone, as I wade through the work I bring home, and as I attend to my family. And so life gas, a wild loop of experience washing over me. The temptations and responsibilities of the world are so compelling, and even noisier than the gulls; it is difficult to bear my inner voice.

Coming to Maine in the summer gives me the time and place I need to reflect. I am able to spend as much time as I want sitting on a rock in the woods or by the sea, which inspires me to think about anything but the great issues of the day. Here I find time to watch the sun drop behind a cloud bank and fight the sky in a progressive display that keeps me watching until Venus and a slender moon crescent emerge. And my notebook is near to record my thoughts. That is how a poem begins for me—I slow down to the point that I can experience the world as it is around me, and then I write. Later, when I read what I have written, I might find a piece of a poem. Now, of course a rock and a sunset are not necessary for this process. Wherever I can take time to write and then later take time to read it again and think about it, a poem is possible. The key is time to reflect. The writing can happen in an airport or even, I must confess,

as I am driving the turnpike. It is important to take this writing seriously enough to read it again later. Recording my experiences can lead me to a deeper place; then I might have something to say that others will want to read.

Although solitude is the place where experience, recording, reflection, and writing happen, sharing is a rich experience in itself. Artists have been attracted to this small island for over a century and one lesson in their work is that the scenes they paint are infinitely variable because of the life experiences they bring to the moment of painting. Of course the same is true of poetry. It is at once comforting and enlightening to see how someone else writes about a common experience in the natural world, its beauty, its indifference, its solace; the joy and pain of relationships; the expanse of imagination. Working together is enriching.

On this island where I spend my summers, I have sometimes attended poetry workshops. We meet in groups of five or six and share the new writing we do every day with a poet who lives on the island. We meet at her house, outside whenever possible. Sometimes she gives us a direction for writing and sometimes we just spin off each other. The most valuable part of the workshop comes when we discuss each other's work. Because the writing is new, so clearly a work in progress, it is more of a discussion of possibilities than criticism. I am always inspired by the depth and touching imagery of these first drafts. One day the participants brought collections of sea glass, shells, stones, pine cones, beads, wire, ribbons, seeds, colored tissue paper and other bits and pieces for us to assemble any way our individual creativity directed us. Manipulating the objects was absorbing, but equally important was the communion I felt with the other women though we worked in silence all morning as the sunlight slid over the floors and walls. When we left we felt we had finished with the objects, and wrote about the experience and then left for lunch. Later in the afternoon, we talked about what we had made and shared the writing we had done. So in the workshop we were engaged in creating experience as well as writing about it. These workshops last only one week, but many of the people who have worked together in previous workshops still share poetry informally and occasionally give readings.

The challenge for each of us is to find time and personal space everyday. I confess I find it hard to do this when I return from Maine at the end of the summer and take up my life in Maryland again. I believe it is possible, however; and the search for such time is rewarding even if it is elusive. It does not have to happen on an island, but to make it happen we have to resist the relentless banality of a fast paced life that offers way too much stimulus. We are richer in material goods today than is good for us, certainly, and I believe we are similarly overwhelmed by experience; there is little time to reflect. Poetry exists in every moment if we choose to stop and find it. But when we operate at such a break neck speed, life becomes a blur and possibilities for writing just fade away. To write poetry we must find the place where we can feel, see, touch, taste, smell every minute and then examine it to see what we learned.

Find your island and turn off the world for awhile. You have enough of the world in you right now to imagine wonderful things. Write about what you remember, what you know, and you may be surprised at what you find there. Time will allow your ideas to grow so that you can express your unique way of seeing the world. Do this for yourself.

JUDY GREY

Poem For The Marriage of Minas And Peggy

“I love you.”
That’s what words say.
They are as simple as the light
that pours in at the window,
that gives the blues and reds of the carpet
a vibrant dance,
that takes the leaves of the potted plant
and caresses them green,
that taps a silent little tune
on the polished silver, on the brass lamp.

But how can words,
even if as powerful and as gentle as light,
reveal,
the wide secret starry stretches of emotion,
the gravity of affection of two people
who are in the same room,
not touching, not speaking,
perhaps one reading, the other sleeping?

“I love you.”
Three billion fires of meaning
revolve around those words,
a giant pinwheel of light,
and at the core
there is not the sound of language
but a kiss in all its passion,
in all its innocence,
and God,
sitting unnoticed in his wing chair,
clears his throat
and says “Good Morning.”

Dan Cuddy

night queen

the night queen dreams
of ruby-scented blossoms
white petals pale as stars

whiteness stained
with scarlet dew
as she opens to
another lover

merging mouths
exchanging
drinking in
she thinks she’ll live forever

P. E. Kinlock

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Threes

Magic comes in threes
like wishes or bears
or sad dogs with plate-sized eyes
that guard treasures
hidden beneath our feet.
A triad of witches chants
the gleam of MacBeth's swordfall
and the Fate Triplets sing-song-sing
as they twist, twine
the dream threads of future
while a runaway princess transports
her three-piece wardrobe
in a walnut shell,
each radiant dress the envy of angels
and thin enough to slip through
the eye of a needle quicker
then a tax-collector can get into paradise
or three camels can carry their passengers
to visit a third of the Trinity.

Magic comes in threes
like gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh
or visions: one for Mary, one for Joseph,
one for a trilogy of Magi
who journeyed home another way
or like a carpenter three-times denied
before the cock crowed
and a trio of men were hung on crosses,
wandered past the triple-headed dog,
and on the third day He arose.

Magic comes in threes
even beyond our touchable trinal dimensions
where time wavers in three parts:
the first as old as Jehovah
and thrice as mystical;
the second as precious as bread and blood;
the last as scorching as the flames
that Nebuchadnezzar stoked,
as powerful as the faith
of three condemned Jews,
and as unexplainable as the blinding white
figure who held back death then,
now, and on all the third days
yet to be.

Vonnie Winslow Crist

Walking at Holly Hill

Early snow clings
to dead leaves.
Squirrels dash
past headstones.
Falling backwards
in time, wordless
songs cover my
shoulders, a gray
wool shawl.
A reluctant shadow
is there, cloaked
in layers of space,
under a cloud-clotted
sky. Pieces of a
broken equation stake
a claim, spiral
through me, disappear.
A whisper in
a noisy room.

W. H. Stevens

Earth Memories

The scent of the freshly turned earth
is strong, so strong you can taste it.
It's a pleasant taste, a sweet taste
that returns me to childhood days
when Dad tilled the ground in the backyard
to plant rows of corn, tomatoes, and peppers.
He wanted me to learn the skills,
have the talents to grow things, like him.
But I had neither.

They are all gone now: the vines rotted
and the cornstalks crumbled into dust long ago,
returning to the earth some of what was removed.
Still, I taste a cherry tomato,
feel it burst in my mouth,
squirt its seeds against my cheeks and tongue,
and I miss him.

Samuel I. Beard, Jr.

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Left to right, top: Vonnie Winslow Crist, Patti Kinlock, David Kriebel, Dina Feinberg, Wendy Stevens; bottom: Sam Beard, Donna Eason, Dan Cuddy, David Cookson.

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