

SPECIAL LITERARY AWARDS ISSUE!

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JULY/AUGUST 2001

Baltimore's Literary Newspaper



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TOP STORY

A Call to Poets

Much of contemporary American Poetry is prose. There is little rhythm, less density of language, little beyond the great middle class "P" and all the soap opera plots of one's life used as specimen to be examined. There are writers, many of them old now like Anthony Hecht and Lucille Clifton, who present memorable poetry to their readers. Hecht, born in 1923, wrote poetry that glistens like diamonds, even when it turns to horrific visions:

*His legs were blistered sticks on which
the black sap
Bubbled and burst as he howled for the
Kindly Light*

Lucille Clifton, 65 now, writes in an authentic vernacular that has the rhythm of jazz, but not a slick commercial clarinet of jazz, but a music that expresses the sinews of the soul. These writers, like John Ashbery and Billy Collins, the recently appointed U.S. poet laureate, have the weight

of age on them. Though they may have influence on the younger generations, they are not of them.

Much of contemporary American Poetry is prose. Even Billy Collins, a master of evocative clarity and wit, rarely raises his voice above the drone of everyday speech. His often bemused tone of speech works because it is so filled with concise but association-exploding thoughts honed in a vivid imagery. Much of the writing in

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Literary July/August

A Potpourri of Literary Events

(Available online at www.litecircle.com/calendar.html)

Consecutive Reading Series

Saturday, July 7, 14, 21, 28

8:00 p.m. Saturday Night Poetry Series, Mariposa Center for Artistic Expression, 5000 Berwyn Road, College Park, MD 20746. Readings begin at 8PM followed by an open mike. Complimentary refreshments included in \$5.00 attendance fee. *July 7: Kenneth Rodney Lee, Lottie Mae McDonald (aka Grandma Slam) and Tyrone Taylor. July 14: Moira Burns presents...readings by Karren Alenier, Ruth Dickey and Sue Jonsberg. July 21: Edge City Review publication reading. July 28: International Women's Writers Guild reading.*

Sunday, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

7:00-10:30 p.m. The MYTH poetry slam, TEAISM, 400 8th St. NW (corner of 8th and D Sts), Washington, DC. Cover \$5. For program/info, call (202) 638-6010 or email GalAengus@aol.com.

Monday, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

7:30 p.m. SLAMicide! downstairs at XandO, 3003 N. Charles St., Charles Village. Donation \$5. Open mic—local and national features—slam. Cash prize for 1st and 2nd place SLAM winners! Hosts: Baltimore Slammaster Nicki Miller and Granma Dave Schein. For directions, call (410) 889-7076. For more info, contact Nicki at: GalAengus@aol.com, or Dave at: granmadave@yahoo.com *July 9: Turiya Autry and Walidah Imarisha, Portland, OR and NYC; July 16: Danny Solis/Albuquerque; July 23: Gayle Danley/1994 National Slam Champ!; July 30: we'll see—NPS in Seattle; August 12: Michael Mack/Cambridge.*

Tuesday, July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

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, call (410) 455-5325 or email tms@infamous.net.

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

Literary July

Monday, July 2

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City, 4300 Montgomery Rd. (Phone 410-203-9001) The Student Writers' Alliance meets to discuss their work.

Tuesday, July 3

1:00-4:00 p.m. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22). The Harford Poetry Society's Library Collection will be available to readers from 1 to 4 p.m. For more info, call (410) 877-1625

Saturday, July 7

12:00 noon. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. The Poetry Discussion group talks about the poetry of Frederick Holderlin.

Sunday, July 8

2:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. The Wine Glass Poets meet.

4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse at Minas. Publication reading for the latest issue of the *Baltimore Review*

5:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. The Irish Book Group discusses *The Highland Clearances* by Eric Richards

Tuesday, July 10

1:00 p.m. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22). Harford Poetry Society reading with Clarinda Harris. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Book Discussion: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera.

Wednesday, July 11

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Turki Amer, who has published 8 books in Arabic and 2 in English, discusses and reads from his work *Arabian Nightmares* (1998) and *White Leaves* (2001).

Friday, July 13-Sunday, July 15.

Artscape 2001, Mt. Royal Avenue, Baltimore. See *Lite Bytes* for Literary Arts Event Schedule.

Tuesday, July 17

1:00 p.m. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22). Harford Poetry Society reading: an audio program presentation of Jean E. Keenan. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Colin Beavan discusses his book *Fingerprints: The Origins of Crime Detection and the Murder Case that Launched Forensic Science*

Wednesday, July 18

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. Dr. Reginald Crosley reads from and signs his book *The Voudou Quantum Leap*.

Thursday, July 19

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-The Avenue at White Marsh (410-933-9670.) Mary Ellen Hughes reads from her murder mystery *Resort to Murder*. Based in Maryland, this mystery follows a high school geometry teacher as she finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation in the mountains of Western Maryland.

Friday, July 20

9:00 p.m. Shattered Wig Night at the 14 Karat Cabaret, 218 W. Saratoga St. *Eel and the Haunted Icebags*, a film by Sleafae Steele will be shown; music by the Woodsmen and The Pleasant Livers will help celebrate at the publication party for Blaster Al Ackerman's new book *I Taught My Dog to Shoot a Gun*. For more info, call (410) 243-6888.

Monday, July 23

7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. The Literary Readings Group meets to

The Big Literary "Spot" Lites

- Borders-Columbia, 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) 396-5494/396-5847.
- Mystery Loves Company Booksellers, 1730 Fleet St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 276-6708 or (800) 538-0042.
- WordHouse Salon at Minas, 733-35 S. Ann St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 732-4258.
- XandO, 3003 North Charles St., Charles Village. Phone: (410) 889-7076.

focus on 4 short works of fiction: *Silas Marner*, *Ethan Frome*, *Story of an Hour* and *Roman Fever*.

Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. The Science Fiction Book Group presents an author appearance: Catherine Asaro discusses her book *The Phoenix Code*.

Tuesday, July 24

1:00 p.m. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Harford Poetry Society reading: Rosemary Klein. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. The Writers Circle meets.

Wednesday, July 25

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Matthew Olshan discusses his book *Finn: A Novel*, which is a modern retelling of Mark Twain's book by changing genders and satirizing the social disabilities of modern America.

Friday, July 27

7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble-Ellicott City. Open Mic Poetry.

Tuesday, July 31

1:00 p.m. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22). Harford Poetry Society reading: Program TBA For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

Literary August/September

Saturday, August 4

12:00 noon. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. The Poetry Discussion group delves into the poetry of Juvenal.

Sunday, August 5

1:30 p.m. Members of the Harford Poetry Society will read their poetry at Liriodendron, 502 W. Gordon St., Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

Tuesday, August 14

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Book Discussion: *Possession* by A.S. Byatt.

Wednesday, August 15

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. First meeting of the Mothers-Daughters Book Club. For girls 12-16 years old and their mothers. For info & to register, call (410) 396-5484.

Saturday, August 18

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Lite Circle presents "Poetry in the Shade," Something Special Coffee House, 504 Main St., Laurel. Hosted by Hilbert Turner Jr. Featured readers: Karen Arnold and TBA. Open reading follows. For more info, email:

lite@toadmail.com.

Saturday, August 25

10:15 a.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Book Discussion: *The Professor and the Madman* by Simon Winchester.

Saturday, September 15

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Lite Circle presents "Poetry in the Shade," Something Special Coffee House, 504 Main St., Laurel. Hosted by Hilbert Turner Jr. Featured readers: Barbara DeCesare and Hiram Larew. Open reading follows. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com

To Have Your Event Listed

please send information to:
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ONE OR MORE WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Dumb and Dumber

Okay, it's soapbox time again, time for me to climb up on my editorial pedestal and shout until I'm blue in the face. This time it's about what passes for education in this country and the alarming decline in America's collective intelligence. Many pundits in the past have been similarly alarmed, but I never got too worked up about it because (a) they were mostly liberal intellectuals and you used to expect that sort of talk from liberal intellectuals, (b) I wasn't a teacher then, and (c) they were talking about people my age and I kind of liked the fact that a third of my future competition in the job market thought World War I was a movie. That was, of course, before I realized that knowing irrelevant stuff like history was nothing compared with say, being able to score a million points on Galaga.

I first realized the enormity of the problem on December 7, 1991, a date which will live in infamy, at least for me. I was sitting in a deli when I overheard the following conversation between the owner (who looked to be about 70) and his college-age employee:

Owner: Know what day it is?

Kid: Nope.

Owner: It's 50 years since something big happened.

(many, many clues later)

Kid: You mean Pearl Harbor?

Owner: Of course.

Kid: But wasn't that in 1947?

Owner: (aghast) I can't believe this. You're a history major!

Kid: (indignant) Yeah, but that happened before I was born!

That kid is about 30 now and probably running some multimillion dollar computer company, having learned at an early age that history is a useless subject.

My own students have had a similar revelation about religion, which is a required subject at one of the schools where I teach. One student, I recall, sat in the back of the class with his head down. That is, when he wasn't talking in class. "Talking in class"—the very phrase is redolent of elementary school, not college. Others can barely be bothered to raise their hands to indicate their (physical) presence in class. Spelling is atrocious and some student papers are barely recognizable as English, or any language. Few do the reading; nearly all think they deserve As.

For the spelling, I blame two things. The first is the misguided way in which English was taught in many school in the late 70s and 80s, dispensing with phonics in favor of

meanings so that my college students can't even sound out unfamiliar words (I've tried to get them to do that and have been met with blank stares). Second is the use of that wonder teaching tool, the computer, with its spell check and grammar check programs. Spell check erodes students' knowledge of spelling and limits them to the words contained in its dictionary (which include, of course, many out-of-context words). And that's when they use it. Having learned that spelling is unimportant because it can be relegated to a computer program, students don't use it. The result is that they allways rite like they talk, when they shold of ben able to spell by the time they went to colege.

The notion that this kind of writing is acceptable in the job world would be laughable if only it weren't true—most of the high-paying jobs require an ability to use computers, the one skill the youngsters possess in greater measure than their elders. And for this one thing, teens and even young children are praised by the media as prodigies: "They don't just know more than you did at their age, they know more than you do at your age," one TV commercial gushed. Riiiiigght.

The problem of overpraising and under educating is actually institutionalized in the school system. A friend who taught at a public high school in the Baltimore area complained about students' ignorance and asked about their preparation in middle school. She was told that the teaching focus in middle school is on "self-esteem," rather than subject matter. Self-esteem? Since when does self-esteem need to be taught? Self-esteem naturally flows from achievement. Should I esteem myself if I achieve nothing, if I learn nothing, if I fail to improve my life in any way? What is that? Just a big lie, and one which has a crippling effect on young minds. Self-esteem without achievement is negative, not positive. It teaches people that there is no incentive to better themselves and condemns them to lives of ignorance. Even if the know-nothing who esteems himself somehow gets a decent paying computer job, what kind of inner life can that person have? Self-esteem which is not linked to individual action shuts off reflection, questioning, and the search for meaning. It is disempowering and dehumanizing.

So what to do about this? I don't have an easy solution, but I encourage us all to think about it and I'll get back to you in another editorial. In the meantime, read and write. Teach your children to read. Keep picking up *Lite* and other literary papers. Watch the skies. Keep watching the skies.

David W. Kriebel, Editor

Lite Sightings:

THEATRE REVIEW

Hedda Gabler. The Shakespeare Theatre, Sunday, June 10th, 2001.

This drama in four acts, by Henrik Ibsen, focused exclusively on a central female figure. It was published in 1870 and its appearance, by 1890, frankly displayed some social issues which reflected psychological motivation through specific behaviors.

Hedda Gabler, one of the most vividly realized women in the dramatic literature, is an incisive character. She is portrayed as a selfish, cynical woman who is returning from her honeymoon and is already bored by this marriage to the scholar Jorgen Tessiman. She recognizes her inability to fit within the middle class structure of her marriage. The only reason she has married Tessiman is that this was the best she could do. Hedda inhabits a house that is loathsome to her and that became hers because, in a moment of boredom, she briefly admired it. Consequently, her dotting husband mortgages his Aunt Julie's and Rina's pension to acquire what is, in fact, nothing less than a prison for Hedda. She becomes vengeful when Thea Elvsted, a schoolmate acquaintance, reveals that she has left her husband and followed the regenerated dipsomaniac Ejlert Lovborg, who once pursued Hedda. Hedda incites Ejlert to shoot himself with one of her father's pistols after she burns the manuscript he thought lost, believing that she has ended Lovborg and Thea's potential success with the cynical excuse of protecting her husband. After the destruction of Ejlert's manuscript and his subsequent death, she begins to lose her previous dominant status, finding herself treated like the irresponsible creature she has become. Judge Brack, fully aware that it was she who gave Lovborg the suicide weapon and is consequently responsible for his death, tries to coerce her to become his mistress in exchange for his silence about this implicit murder. Hedda feels trapped and kills herself in a childish gesture of petulant defiance at a world she neither understood nor liked.

If this destructive act of a rebellious child meant a strive for freedom, it did not accomplish anything; its result had no value because there was no inner truth, no strength and no target. Her suicide constituted a shocking answer to an era where women were expected to conform to voiced and unvoiced rules of a patriarchal society.

This tragedy, which, for its action, is closer at times to a black farce, was directed by Michael Kahn, who was instrumental in bringing out all the potential of Judith Light in the principal role of Hedda Gabler. Hedda, like Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, is a "man-hearted" woman and her father's pistols are the symbol of

her phallic parts, as a means of intimidation and self-empowerment. Hedda is depicted, majestically, in all her arrogance and self-consciously histrionic behavior. Throughout the play, Judith Light (Hedda) projected all the incongruent responses which constantly offset the serious things she does. Hedda effectively manipulates people even in their routine actions such as where they should sit or stand, and the different positions assumed where she can dominate and overpower them. She is attractive and at the same time repulsive, independent and apparently strong. Hedda doesn't act abnormal but rather emotionally immature and somewhat disconnected from any counterpart in reality. In the final scene, she continues persistent and obsessed behavior with the curtains, symbolic throughout the play, as well as the playing of her final tune on the piano—revealing both her state of mind, her sudden wildness, and how, emotionally beaten, she runs to her final refuge beneath her father's portrait—he who is the cause of her tragedy and its ultimate solution.

Judith Light as Hedda shows her lack of inwardness as well as a personality deprived of the capacity to develop an inner depth. She has an all-hardened surface, dominant and unwilling to conform, but this is her deceptive shell, the mask prepared for all occasions which has been broken to pieces at the end. She has never owned an inner world, the famous "world of the attic," where she could go in seclusion for solace and oblivion. One intriguing aspect of Hedda's character, remarkably expressed by the actress, is the matter of her pregnancy about which the play is quite cryptic. The act of burning the manuscript (...now I'm burning your child!) and the feelings of burning Thea's abundant hair are viewed by Hedda as an ultimate means of eradication—no evidence of what once was remains—and also could represent a dual symbolism: the killing of the child within her body. Then, she is fulfilling the fantasy to do so which eventually is accomplished when she draws her final curtain.

Dee Pelletier as Thea Rysing Elvsted, the metaphor of Hedda's frustrations, personifies that kind of humble woman, always trying to help, keeping a low profile but with great influence on naïve and weak men: first, Lovborg and later George, by means of collaborating with him in reconstructing Lovborg's destroyed manuscript.

Hedda and Thea, these two female leads, possess within them both admirable and hateful female traits. Their combination reveals the true feminist message of the play and the symbolism throughout: the nature of the hair, the manuscript, and the pistols; illustrating the distinct differences between the two characters, emphasizing Hedda's absence of feminine characteristics and heightening Thea's femininity.

Michael Rusko as George Tessiman depicts the promising dull and plodding

academic, but also a kind and good-hearted man with a mundane temperament, somewhat timid and useless aside of his "book learning." He tolerates patiently Hedda's abuses and sarcasms without a question; however, paradoxically he excludes Hedda from his world and from any participation in the work of piecing together Lovborg's work, inciting Thea's collaboration and rejecting Hedda's. He was very convincing and humorous in his myopic obtuseness.

Juliana Tessman's role was well acted, without pretensions, by Ruby Holbrook; cossetting and sacrificing for her nephew George. She is the psychological maiden type, always sacrificing for others and feeling obligated to care for someone all the time.

Thomas Jay Ryan as Eilert (Ejlert) Lovborg presented a character morally adventurous, profligate and deviate, despicable and not a sympathetic figure, who reveals the humble and insecure traits of an unstable writer sinking deeper and deeper toward his fatal destruction.

Robin Gammell, in the pivotal character of Judge Brack, portrayed with excellence the amoral, non-remorseful, ruthless pragmatist who encouraged Hedda to quench her boredom by manipulating the lives of those around her as he does with social conventions to his own advantage. He is responsible, without a hint of guilt, for killing Hedda's will to live.

Prudence Barry was Berta, the colorless servant, who showed a polished acting training.

This is a cold play which sometimes provokes sardonic laughter. There is no tragic catharsis; the audience is left with mixed feelings of incomprehensible waste and uneasy incongruity as the corollary for Brack and Tessiman's responses to Hedda's suicide: "...she shot herself in the head...."; "...good God! People don't do such things."

MEAGHAN GREYSON

VIDEO REVIEW

Poetry Jam 10. At some point, it dawned on me that critics get free books. To be recognized as a critic, however, you have to publish criticism. Which amounts to getting someone to care about your opinion. And so I joined the folks at *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper*. You can all see for yourselves how well I'm doing as our ad manager. So (perhaps in an effort to identify any redeeming qualities I might have) Patti and Dave assigned me something to review.

My assigned topic was a tape entitled "Poetry Jam 10." This plays to my strengths because I am completely tone deaf when it comes to poetry. My sole claim to knowledge consists of the following: (a) I've been to some open mic poetry events and readings as an observer, (b) I screwed up trying to recite the only poem I know at one of the aforementioned open mic poetry events, and (c) I sat in Borders

one day and took notes on the rules of prosody so that I could recognize a sestina if I ever met one in a dark alley.

"Poetry Jam 10" proved to be an episode of a program produced by Blair Ewing for Howard County Public Access Cable TV. It consisted of a half-hour series of video clips featuring local poetic talent such as Chester Wickwire, Jade Connelly-Duggan, Chezia Thompson-Cager, Linda Joy Burke, Blair Ewing, Ian Ferrier, Rose Solari, R.D. Baker, Susan Tegeler, and Victoria Stanton. Some were video depictions of story or images from the poems being read, while others involved studio footage of the poets reading their works. *I wish more people would make music videos of poetry*, I thought to myself as I watched it. The creative use of overlapping voices, musical counterpoint, and visual images makes poetry accessible to prose fans like this reviewer in a way that words on a page and traditional readings don't. Of course, music video scale funding would definitely help—I mean, we are talking public access cable here—but Ewing and his subjects create some lasting and favorable impressions.

The success of a music video is only partly linked to its song, and so it is with the poetry videos in "Poetry Jam 10." The video medium is particularly kind to artists who connect warmly with a camera, like Thompson-Cager, Baker, and Solari, or those who make creative use of video imagery, like Wickwire, Ferrier, Tegeler, and Burke. Ferrier and Victoria Stanton also get high marks for use of sound—his "I am the One" was memorable for its overlapping voice tracks, while her "Split" was evocative of Middle Eastern music. On the level of poetry, I squealed in delight at Linda Joy Burke's poem about her 1986 Jetta and R.D. Baker's R.D.'s recitation on the 12-step approach to being a successful poet. I also enjoyed Ewing's "Tennis" as a musing on merits and structure of free verse.

"Poetry Jam" airs on Howard County Public Access Cable Channel 73 (Comcast) on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10, 2, and 6.

KATE YEMELYANOV

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He saw her first on the movie poster. He was walking out of a theater, thinking about the film he had just seen, when he looked up and froze in his tracks. The poster was simply her face, in close-up, with the title at the bottom, *Camille*. His jaw fell slack, and he entirely forgot the movie he had just seen. People passing him along the hallway jostled him, but he stood, transfixed and enchanted, staring. Slowly his mind registered: this was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

His gaze drifted in circles—her wet, gray eyes, her arched, lush black eyebrows, the soft edge of her hairline, her sharp, pronounced jawbone, her thick lower lip, her half open mouth, the red flush of her cheek and nose, her wet, gray eyes.

A skinny man bumped into him, spilling popcorn. He unglued his gaze from the poster and walked to the lobby, staring at his feet. He picked up a schedule from the snack counter in the lobby and then went outside to hail a cab. Once in the cab, he read the schedule. *Camille* was coming to the theater in two weeks. The synopsis read, "Winner of the top prize, the Golden Scepter, at the 2001 Courisino Film Festival, *Camille* is the latest film from Jean-Pierre Yernaux, acclaimed director of La Cascade. For her film debut in the title role, 19-year-old Véronique Duret won Best Actress at the 2001 Courisino Film Festival. *Camille*, the singularly affecting portrait of a teenage girl's struggle against her world and herself, is not to be missed. Special Engagement! Six days only! Jan. 28 to Feb. 2!"

He went on the first night, a Friday. Only six or seven other people came for *Camille*. The film was slow, in black and white, with no music and little dialogue except for brief, quiet exchanges. Camille lived in a French-speaking region of Belgium, with her deathly ill mother. Her next-door neighbor, an elderly man with greasy yellow hair, was a pervert. Her friend and co-worker at a local ice cream shop, a boy with an enormous nose and beady eyes, was a drunk and a heroin addict. Camille repelled the advances of her neighbor who repeatedly molested and assaulted her, supported her friend at work who repeatedly made mistakes and passed out on the job, and tended to her dying mother who became more and more overwhelmed with chest and stomach pain. The film ended with Camille, penniless and in tears, being forced to end her mother's misery with a hammer to her mother's head. The audience squirmed and coughed uncomfortably as the events—neighbor, friend, mother—cycled to the climax, after which the screen went black and the credits rolled.

He loved her. He loved Véronique; he loved Camille. He loved it all, the agony of watching the film and the agony within the story itself; he loved the drama, the images. At home, in his tiny single room, he searched the internet for pictures of her. He found web pages dedicated to the Courisino Film Festival, pages of movie reviews, French pages with photos of her from magazines and television. He read what interviews he

FICTION: SECOND PRIZE

2000 Literary Contest

Véronique

by

Andy O'Bannon

could find with her in English. He collected her image, and often spent hours shuffling through his collection, running his fingertips over his computer screen, touching her.

He saw *Camille* a second time, on Sunday, with even fewer people in the theater. He ignored everything except for her, Véronique, Camille. A heavy snow began to fall as he left the theater, and he saw it as pure white flakes of his love for her being sprinkled by God from Heaven.

He searched and searched for a way to contact her. He spent hours at his computer, scouring the internet for anything that may give him some information to contact her. He found numerous Belgian and French e-mail and phone number directories. After many hours of searching, he found her e-mail and promptly sent her the following message:

Hello, my name is Tyler and I am a college student studying chemistry in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. I just wanted to contact you to tell you that I think you are a very beautiful and talented actress and that I can only hope to meet you some day. Please respond! Thank you.

Two days later, she replied. She said she wanted to meet him, would he please come see her? He said he needed time, and she said she could wait. He spent the summer working in a hospital medical records office, and in the fall he worked as a chemistry tutor, until he had enough money to spend three weeks of December and the first week of January in France. He flew to France after the fall semester ended, to Paris where she met him at the airport.

"Am I what you expected?" he asked.

"I love your wonderful hair and your...highness," she said, referring to his height in stumbling English. "You are what I dream."

They made Paris their playground, visiting discotheques, bakeries, concerts, cafes. They were inseparable. At night, in the brisk Parisian air, on a park bench by the Seine, she would whisper to him in French as he caressed her hair and face, brushing her with his fingernails. He found French far more romantic than English, and tried to learn it. She would laugh at his weak attempts to say even simple things: "Sugar

with my coffee," "where is the theater?" and "you are my love."

They ate wine and duck Christmas Eve, wine and veal Christmas Day, and each time leaned across the table, over the single lit candle, to kiss deeply.

On New Year's Eve, they went to the Eiffel Tower. Somehow, it was deserted, and they found themselves alone at the top. At five minutes to midnight, they gently undressed one another and slowly began to make love on the cold metal, lit only by the celebrating city. At midnight, as the bells rang and as fireworks plumed throughout Paris, they climaxed.

Two days later, she replied. She said thank you for the gracious compliments, and she, too, could only hope to meet him. He told her he could visit her now. She said yes, she would like that, could he? He spent what money was left in his meager bank account and flew to Paris, not knowing how long he would stay.

She met him at the airport. He asked, "Am I what you expected?" She eyed him, head to toe, and said, "Your height and your deep black hair I love, but I dislike your glasses and your..." she sought the word, "...fatness," she said, gesturing with her hands to indicate his pudginess. "But you are not too fat," she said, smiling at him.

That night they went to dinner at an expensive restaurant. She ordered only a salad for herself and wine for them both, and he ordered a steak. He asked her about *Camille*, about the Courisino Film Festival, about her life as a child actress and her love of clothes shopping, all of which he had read about. She laughed, answering his questions shortly, coyly, and asked him about himself. "I'm a chemistry major. I spend my time reading and going to class. It's boring," he told her. "Even the most boring life only appears boring. May I borrow your knife? This knife cannot cut my salad," she said. He handed her the steak knife and began to ask her another question. She took his knife, and suddenly lunged at him with it, stabbing his neck. He fell backwards and his food spilled, the wine staining him purple while his blood stained him red. She knelt on his chest, stabbing him in the ribs over and over, defeating his resistance, until he was quickly dead. Then she stood, crying, horrified at

herself. She screamed, dropped the knife, and ran outside, throwing herself in front of a bus. She died there, in the street.

Two days later, she replies. She says she would like to meet him someday, if she is ever in Baltimore, and thanks him for his compliments. She asks him how he found her e-mail address. He tells her that he will visit France right away, and buys a plane ticket with a deeply indebted credit card, leaving for Paris the next day. He arrives in Paris. She is not at the airport. He finds her address in a phone book and takes a cab to her apartment building.

He reaches her apartment and knocks on the door. She answers the door a crack, apprehensively, saying something in French. He says, "I'm Tyler. From Baltimore, the one who e-mailed you." She says, "Tyler?" Her eyes widen as she realizes who he is. "You have come here?" she says, fearfully. "To meet you," he says. "I don't know you," she says. "I know, but I wanted to meet you. I'm in love with you." "In love with me?" she says, opening the door. "Ever since I saw the poster for *Camille*. The one with your face. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," he says.

She invites him in, and they sit on her sofa drinking tea. She is stiff at first, keeping her distance, then gradually warms to him as he describes himself, his life as a student, and his love for her and for Camille. Eventually she is laughing with him, even patting his arm when she finds him funny. The front door opens and a man in a suit enters, carrying a grocery bag. The man sees them on the couch and stops, staring quizzically at them. Véronique talks to the man in French. Tyler recognizes his own name. The man still appears cautious. Véronique says to Tyler, "This is my husband, Luc." Luc holds out a hand and Tyler shakes it. Luc says a few things quietly to Véronique, and ends with an "mmm-hmmm." Then Luc walks into the kitchen. Véronique turns to Tyler in the awkward silence that follows. She whispers, "You have to go. He says we can't put you up, we have not enough money for ourselves." Tyler says, "I don't want you to put me up." "Please, just go. I was pleased to meet you," she says, standing and walking to the front door. Tyler sits, stunned. He sets his tea on the coffee table. Luc appears in the doorway to the kitchen, his arms crossed. Tyler looks at Luc, who scowls, and then at Véronique, who holds the door open.

"But I love you. I came here for this and I just want to tell you I love you," Tyler says. "I know. You have told me. But please, you are making this bad," she says. "No, I'm not going to go," he says. Luc asks Véronique a question in French. Véronique is reluctant to answer. When she does, Luc's face reddens and he strides to Tyler and grips Tyler's elbow. He lifts Tyler from the sofa and heads for the door. "I came for her," Tyler says, reaching for Véronique, who steps aside as they pass. "Goodbye," Véronique says.

Continued on page 7

LITE BYTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

•**Artscape Literary Arts Event Schedule.** All programs take place in the Moot Court Room, Angelos Law Center, University of Baltimore unless otherwise noted. All programs are sign interpreted.

Saturday, July 14. On Gordon Stage.

•**12 noon -12:45 p.m. Marian Licha** (Silver Spring)—A tapestry of stories is woven from the Latin American folk tales, personal anecdotes, short bilingual songs, and Spanish words and expressions.

•**1-2 p.m. Diva Squad Poetry Collective: Chezia Thompson-Cager, Lenett Nefertiti Allen, Linda Joy Burke, jakiterry.** Followed by a brief Q & A and book signing session in lobby (*When Divas Laugh*, InPrint Editions, a subsidiary of Black Classic Press, 2001)

•**1-2 p.m. Sign-up for a Poetry Slam.** Limited to 25. First come, first signed up. Cash prizes.

•**2-3:30 p.m. Poetry Slam** hosted by Derrick Chase, spoken word artist and founder of Universal People Improvement Association.

•**3:30-4 p.m. Diane Chambers,** sign interpreter and author.

•**4:30-5 p.m. Julie Slavin** (Washington, DC)—Author of *The Woman Who Cut off Her Leg at the Maidstone Club and Other Stories.*

•**5-6:30 p.m. Award Recognitions:** "Short Short Story," the genre for this year's Artscape Literary Arts competition, was chosen to complement the "poetry" category of the 2001 Maryland State Arts Council awards. Writers from across the state of Maryland were allowed 1000 words (or less) to make a story happen. Real characters, imaginative dialogue and dramatic situations were key ingredients. The anthology of finished stories will be presented to the finalists: **Katherine Cottle** (Glen Arm); **Lalita Noronha** (Baltimore); **Barbara Westwood Diehl** (Baltimore County); **Kevin Lavey** (Baltimore); and **Madeleine Mysko** (Lutherville). Julia Slavin was the juror for the Short Short Story competition; Rachel Eisler served as anthology editor.

Reading Award-Winning Words. First, the winners of the Short Story competition will read, then 4 of the 24 winners of the Maryland State Arts Council's FY2001 individual Artist Awards for Poetry: **Rick Cannon** (Silver Spring); **Reginald Harris** (Baltimore); **Rosanne Singer** (Takoma Park); and **Davi Walders** (Chevy Chase).

Sunday, July 15. On Gordon Stage.

•**12 noon -12:30 p.m. Poe's The Raven.** A marathon reading of *The Raven* is made possible by the **free giveaway of The Raven & Other Favorite Poems** to all in the audience by the "American Poetry & Literacy Project."

•**12:30-1:30 p.m. Kwame Alexander** (Owings Mills), poet, playwright, producer, and founder and director of BlackWords, Inc., will read from *Kupenda: Love Poems* (BlackWords, Inc. 2000), and discuss his newest book, *Do the Write Thing: 7 Steps to Publishing Success* (Manisy Willows

Books 2001). Followed by a brief book signing in the lobby.

•**1:30-2:30 p.m. Manil Suri,** the renowned author of *The Death of Vishnu* (and mathematics professor at UMBC) will read from his work, followed by a brief book signing in the lobby.

•**3:00-4:00 p.m. Jane Hirshfield,** a nationally acclaimed poet from San Francisco, author of five collections of poetry, a book of essays on poetry, and editor and co-translator of two poetry anthologies will read from her work, followed by a brief book signing.

•**4:30-5:30 p.m. Writing That Heals.** Panelists and audience will discuss the virtues and growing recognition for therapeutic writing. Followed by a brief book signing in the lobby. Moderator: **Barbara Westwood Diehl** (Baltimore County), founding editor of the *Baltimore Review*, past president of Baltimore Writers' Alliance and co-coordinator of BWA's annual conference at Towson University. Panelists: **Madeleine Mysko** (Lutherville), a registered nurse in long-term care who works with Vietnam memories in poetry and prose. **Mary Semel** (Baltimore), a therapist in private practice and co-editor of the anthology, *A Broken Heart Still Beats: After Your Child Dies* (Hazelden Press, 1998 & 2000). **Harmon Lisnow** (Merrillville, IN), executive director, Institute for Career Development, a consortium of United Steelworkers of America and 13 steel companies that provide training and education—including creative writing—for union steelworkers. **Dwight "Doc" Iler** (Sparrows Point), steelworker at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point for 30 years, whose writing appears in the anthology, *The Heat: Steelworker Lives and Legends* (Cedar Hill Publications 2001).

•**5:30-6:30 p.m. Sign-Up For Poetry Slam**

•**6:30-8:00 p.m. Poetry Slam** hosted by **Kwame Alexander.**

•**The Literary Arts Tent** will be open Fri. 6-10 p.m., Sat. and Sun. 12 noon - 10 p.m.

Literary tables: Abstract Black Publishing Group (Randallstown); Anansi's Web (Baltimore); Artistic Designs (Columbia); Baltimore Writers' Alliance (Riderwood); Black Classic Press (Baltimore); BlackWords Inc. (Owings Mills); Creative Alliance (Baltimore); The Empowerment Zone (Dundalk); FJ Publications (Randallstown); FODDERWING Magazine/IM Press (Takoma Park); J.W. Productions (Baltimore); Jonathan Publishing Company (Baltimore); LINK: A Critical Journal on the Arts in Baltimore and the World (Baltimore); **The Lite Circle, Inc.** (Baltimore); **Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society** (Baltimore County); Maryland Writers' Association (Arnold); Sibanye, Inc. (Baltimore); and Two Bee a Twin Bee (Lutherville).

•The new edition of *Scribble* contains poems and short prose pieces by Joan Allen, Donna Almquist, Brenda Barrie, Amy Branson, Olga Dugan, Melody Gerberich, Tom Glenn, Carlee L. Hallman, Mary Kennan Herbert, Deidre Hobbs,

Rosalie Koslof, Linda Mastro, Pamela Moats, Sherry Audette Morrow, Irene L. Pigman, Frank Porter, Chris Stelzig, and Elisabeth Stevens. Lynn Stearns is the guest editor for this issue.

Scribble is a publication of the **Maryland Writers Association**, published semiannually. Submissions should be sent to: *Scribble* c/o Sherry Audette Morrow, editor, 2800 Gibbons Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21214. Subscriptions are available for \$9.00 per year. For more info, call (410) 319-9487, or email: saudette_morrow@hotmail.com.

•The Shattered Wig Press announces the publication of *Wet Chin*, fresh poesy by **Blaster Al Ackerman**. Bob Black, author of *The Abolition of Work*, calls Ackerman "that second-story man of the psyche, the country's greatest humorist, teller of tall tales Mark Twain wanted to write but was scared to. What the personal ads call 'a teddy bear' but the kind who devours two or three tourists in Yellowstone every season." To order a copy, send \$4 to Shattered Wig Press, 425 E. 31st St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

•*Splendor in the Grass*, a changing group exhibition, is currently at the Steven Scott Gallery, 515 N. Charles Street. (410-752-6218). The gallery hours are 12 noon-6 p.m. Tues.-Sat. In September and October the work of **Robert Andriulli** will be shown.

•From July 5-August 31st an exhibit of paintings and mixed media works by **Nancy Linden** titled *Other Summers* will be shown at the Craig Flinner Contemporary Gallery, 505 N. Charles Street (410-727-1863). Gallery hours are Mon-Sat 10-6 p.m.

•PhotoWorks, 3531 Chestnut Avenue, Hampden (410-889-4600) will display photographs by **Lisa Larson Haskins**. The exhibit, *Act 1*, will run from July 6 to August 2. Ms. Haskins alternative processes as well as utilizes pinhole and large format cameras. Her mediums include palladium, Van Dyke brown, and silver finely printed on hand coated paper. The gallery hours are Tues.-Thurs. 2-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. 12 noon-6 p.m.

Future exhibits at the PhotoWorks Gallery include the work of **Charles Fairchild** from Aug. 3-30, **Michelle Gienow** from Sept. 7-Oct 14.

•**The Contemporary Museum** at 100 W. Centre Street in Baltimore is currently showing the Paintings 1989-1992 of **Moira Dryer**. The exhibition hours are Tues.-Sun. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For information about the Contemporary Museum call (410) 783-5720 or check the web site: www.contemporary.org.

•Paintings by **Nancy Lynn Nowak** are on display at the Minas Gallery, 733 S. Ann Street, Fells Point (phone: 410-732-4258). The show runs until August 31st.

•An exhibit of paintings by **Brian Taylor** will be on display at the Gomez Gallery from June 30th to July 28th. The gallery is located at 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 100, near the Woodberry light rail stop (phone: 410-662-9510, web: www.gomezgallery.com).

•In conjunction with Artscape the **School 33 Art Center** is hosting an exhibition titled *Wildflower* that will be on view in Gallery I, II and the Installation space from July 13 to August 4, 2001. The show

will feature work by 70 local poets and regional artists. The public is invited to an opening reception on Thursday, July 12 from 5 to 7 p.m. A closing reception will be held on August 4th from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., with a gallery talk scheduled at 3:30 p.m.. School 33 is located at 1427 Light Street, just 8 blocks south of the Inner Harbor. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.. For more information call (410) 396-4641, (410) 396-4642 TTY or visit the web site: www.school33.org.

The wildflower, weed, or grass are the source images or motif for the exhibit. Throughout the history of art, plant forms were used regularly as the subject or as the foreground element of figurative work and as the root motif for non-figurative or decorative work. The *Wildflower* exhibition will show all of these directions interpreted by a number of artists including a wall painting, video installation, fragments from performance pieces, as well as straight-forward observational paintings, drawings and photographs, landscape, still life and botanical painting.

•The 9th annual **Baltimore Museum of Art Summer Jazz Series**, held in the Museum's Wurtzberger Sculpture Garden, has three dates in July and August. On July 7th the Joe Cooper Project, Baltimore's premier reggae-jazz fusion band, will perform. On July 21st David Dyson takes the five-string electric bass into jazzy, melodic territory. On August 4th the Afro-Rican Ensemble blends Salsa-like tunes with the blues-bound soul of straight-ahead jazz.

The cost per evening is \$12 (\$10 BMA members, seniors, students); \$48 Jazz+Dinner ticket (\$46 BMA members, seniors, students). Tickets are available at the BMA Box Office, (410) 396-6001. For more info, call (410) 396-6314.

•The Art of **Arlene DiMenna** is on display at the Unicorn Studio (Gallery and Frame shop) in Fells Point (626 S. Broadway). The show runs until July 14. For more information, call (410) 675-5412.

•**Schedule For The Baltimore Playwrights Festival.**

•**June 28-July 15. Seasons of Love and Laughter**, two moving comedy-dramas by Jim Cary, directed by Barry Feinstein. Fells Point Corner Theatre, 251 S. Ann Street.

Real-life husband and wife actors Joe and Audrey Cimino will portray a long married couple in *Good Night*. Tommy and Katherine, married nearly 50 years, have what may be their last chance to rediscover the personal qualities that made them fall in love in their youth, and to discover new unnoticed qualities that ripened in their maturity.

Secrets and hidden desires fuel the dream of *In Smoke*, the story of two high school seniors who have been close friends since middle school. Jane Steffen plays Marty, an attractive and gifted art student, while Paul Emmons plays Leonard, a cheerful, bright, and witty handicapped young man.

•**July 6-28. Brotha** by J.H. Chapmyn, directed by Melainie Eifert. Can the bonds of love and friendship survive obsession, money and guns? The Audrey Herman Spotlighters Theater, 817 St Paul Street. 410-752-1225

•**July 19-Aug. 5.** Two plays by veteran BPF writers:

Free Fall by Mark Scharf, directed by Miriam Bazensky. Comedy in which two men grapple with the human connection that binds us all in spite of ourselves.

Anthem by Joe Dennison, directed by Sharon Weaver. His last letter home, 1968, "Bob Hope tours the world with long-legged ladies who can save us!" Uncommon Voices Theater Co., Fells Point Corner Theatre, 251 S. Ann St. Phone: (410) 788-1489.

•July 19-Aug. 5. *Knees and Toes* by Michael Wright, directed by Noel Schively. When a brilliant photographer dies, who gets his eyes? A play about love, loss, and body parts. Mobtown Players at Axis Theater, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd. (410) 467-3057.

•July 26-Aug. 5. *The Day They Left Home* by Bob Racine, directed by John Sadowsky. A gripping semi-autobiographical drama set in Tidewater, Virginia. Director's Choice Theater Co. At Kittamaqundi Center, 5410 Leaf Treader Way, Columbia. (443) 745-4611

•July 27-Aug. 5. *Run Past the Sun* by Theodore Groll, directed by Wayne Shipley. An exciting drama, set in a remote corner of Southeast Asia, about a paradise seen in transition. A man discovers he is never free of his past, or able to outrun his present. Chesapeake Center for the Creative Arts, 194 Hammonds Lane, Brooklyn Park. (410) 636-6597.

•Aug. 3-19. *Why Do Men Have Nipples* by Ram Hamby, directed by Winifred Walsh. A young sailor brings a friend home, upsetting the family and forcing them to face their hypocrisy and prejudice. Vagabond Players, 806 S. Broadway. (410) 563-9135.

•Aug. 9-26. *Seafood Buffet* by Rosemary Frisino Toohey, directed by Mike Moran. A smorgasbord of one-act comedies provides food for thought. You are how, what, where, why, and when you eat! Fells Point Corner Theater, 251 S. Ann St. (410) 276-7837.

•Aug. 10-Sept. 1. *Memorial Day* by Chuck Spoler, directed by Rodney Bonds. A double-bill set on Memorial Day:

Blood Memory, about friendship, betrayal, and guilt.

Buzz Bombs Fell on Antwerp shares time on the holiday for the story of a woman who lives in the memories of her World War II service in Europe. Audrey Herman Spotlighters Theatre, 817 St. Paul St. (410) 752-1225.

•Aug. 16-Sept. 2. *Take Two* by Richard Espey, directed by Maria Lakkala. Imagine a garden called Eden, a God who creates man and woman, a serpent, an apple, and—hey, who's that other guy? Maybe therapy is needed! Director's Choice Theatre at Arena Players, 801 McCulloh St. (443) 745-4611.

BPF subscriptions are available at \$45.00 for six tickets which can be used for any BPF show (with advance reservation). Mail check payable to: **Baltimore Playwrights Festival**, 251 S. Ann Street, Baltimore, MD 21231. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your tickets. For further info, call the BPF office at (410) 276-2153, and your call will be returned.

Call the theatres for reservations and performance times.

Véronique, cont. from page 5

Luc pushes Tyler onto the sidewalk and then turns to the door. "I'm not going to leave! I'm here for her! I love her," Tyler says. Luc pauses and slowly turns to face Tyler. He says, in awkward English, "You love her?" Tyler nods and says, "Yes. I'm here for her. From America." "You love her?" Luc says, more loudly, and then he yells, "You love her!" Tyler raises his arms in defense. "You love her! You love her!" Luc screams, shoving Tyler onto the ground and spitting on Tyler's face. "You love her! You love her!" Neighbors peer out of windows at the scene. "You love her! You love her!" Luc kicks Tyler, and still screaming, "You love her! You love her!" walks into the apartment and slams the door.

Tyler sits, panting softly with fear. Then he stands, hails a cab for the airport, and uses the same deeply indebted credit card to buy a plane ticket home.

Two days later, she replied. She said thank you for the compliments and how did he find her e-mail address? She says she will be in New York this week for a film festival. He tells her he will try to meet her there. He checks, over the internet, what festival she could possibly be at in New York in the first week of February. The New York Festival of French and Spanish Film is playing *Camille*. He takes a bus to New York and a cab to the theater.

He waits outside the theater as the director and cast arrive. Véronique steps out of a Lincoln Town Car, wearing a conservative black evening jacket and purple gown. Her hair is curled tightly to frame her face. The crowd is lined two bodies thick on each side of the red carpet into the theater. Tyler cries out as she passes, "Véronique, I love you," mispronouncing "Véronique." She turns and smiles. A few cameras flash as she faces him. She waves and says something he can't hear, maybe in French. He watches her go in, then ten minutes later he follows the crowd inside.

He sees her sitting in the center of the theater, next to the director and the rest of the cast—the neighbor, the friend, the mother. They chat and chat, laughing occasionally. He sits two rows behind her. A man with a microphone appears in front of the screen. He welcomes the audience to the festival, says a brief question-and-answer will follow the film, and then starts a round of applause as the lights dim and the film starts.

Tyler is mesmerized by Véronique's presence, watching her and not the film. He wonders how she reacts to seeing herself as Camille and if she thinks about how people see her. She is a flickering, ghostly silhouette for two hours, then the credits roll and the lights go up. The man with the microphone reappears, and the director and cast walk to the screen.

Three people ask questions. Why the director chose black and white, how the actors prepared for their roles, why Camille uses a hammer to kill her mother. Tyler raises his hand and is picked by the man with the microphone. Tyler stands and says, "Véronique, I love you!" again mis-

pronouncing "Véronique." Some in the audience chuckle and Véronique takes the microphone, smiling. "Thank you. I didn't think of Camille as so lovable!" More people chuckle and the man with the microphone points to another raised hand.

Tyler remains standing until the question-and-answer ends and the audience drifts out, a few people going to talk to the director and cast. Tyler walks to Véronique.

"You are the one in love with me," she says, holding her hand out. Tyler shakes it and says, "Yes, very much." "I am flattered," she says. "My first movie and I have a fan already!"

She turns to a man next to him and begins talking. Tyler stands motionless, staring at her. She watches him from the corner of her eye as she smiles at the man, who soon leaves. She says to Tyler, "You are still in love with me, or just don't know the way home?" He smiles and says, "Would you go to dinner with me?"

The man with the microphone steps between Tyler and Véronique, saying that Ms. Duret and the cast are leaving. He holds Tyler back as Véronique and the others exit the theater through a back door. Tyler cries, "Véronique, I love you," still mispronouncing "Véronique." She walks out, ignoring him. Tyler stares at the door, losing track of time, re-imagining her exit, and then realizes he is alone in the theater. He runs through the door she left through, but finds only an empty alleyway.

Two days later, she replies. She tells him please do not contact her through her private e-mail address and how did he find it anyway? He replies that he wants to meet her, and she tells him no, she can't, she is very busy, and please don't contact her through her private e-mail.

Two days later, he has received no reply, so he e-mails her again. The day after that, he e-mails her again. He never receives any reply and by April has completely forgotten about her, erasing all pictures of her from his computer. The next January, he sees a poster for a French movie about an 18th century Parisian werewolf. He sees her name at the bottom. "Véronique Duret" sounds vaguely familiar, then he fully recalls her. He frowns and walks down the hall, staring at his feet, wondering why he ever loved, how he ever could love, someone so far away.

NOTICE

Please note that our sequence of issues has changed. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* will now be published January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December.

Question, comment, review, or event for *Lite*? Write us or email: lite@toadmail.com.

Names in Lite

•**Tillie Friedenberg** (*Poetry: First Prize*) is a poet from Reisterstown, MD.

•**Meaghan Greyson** (*Lite Sightings: Theatre Reviews*) was born in New York and raised since almost a baby in Switzerland, London, and central Europe until 1959 when she permanently returned to America. She received a doctoral degree at the University of Georgia. For years she worked as a consultant but on the side wrote and still writes for newspapers in New York, Los Angeles, London and Sydney and also for the well-known internet magazine, *Theatre World*. She now lives in Columbia, MD and continues to write theatrical reviews.

•**Billy Dean Hester** (*Poetry: Nemesis, Venus*) was born in Burlington, NC in 1937, graduated from Wake Forest College in 1960, lived in many different locales of the U.S., and presently resides in Santa Fe, NM where he sells fine art and collaborates with painters and photographers. He has published one book of poetry of chapbook length, titled *Flying Pimento Cheese Sandwiches*. His work has also been included in an anthology titled *Lincoln Poets—Lincoln Mass. Publication—and numerous periodicals*.

•**Daniel H. Lightsey** (*Poetry: Second Prize*) writes from Joppa, MD.

•**Atticus Marcus** (*Poetry: Third Prize*) writes from Baltimore.

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LITERARY NEWS

Cont. from front cover

contemporary poetry journals are straightforward narratives without that twist of Collins' wit, Clifton's emotional music or Hecht's brilliant-hard words. Because superior talent is only fed to society in teaspoons, the prose anecdote fills the little and the big magazines. There may be a simplified clarity in the more amateur productions but the words, homely as a discount furniture decorated house, do not grab a reader, that indifferent stranger who wants to be entertained as well as told the bare rudiments of a tale. As in any amateur endeavor the spectator may admire the courage of the performer in getting up on stage, and even empathize with the experiences narrated, but the discipline of art is not there. The voice quavers; the key—well, it's lost. The products in sophisticated university-sponsored magazines, stylized as a woman's hair by a professional hairdresser, often have that dull verbal consistency of the average newspaper story. There is usually nothing memorable in the "We-Are-Professional" Poetry Review. Volumes upon volumes of old poetry journals fill second-hand bookstores. They are only moved by a trip to the trash can. Yesterday's brand name poet, when read today, seems so dated, so uninspired. Today's brands will also yellow like aging paper. Yesterday's poetry "phenom" is like those of baseball, the Clint Hartungs, the Jake Gibbs, the Rodney Craigs. The baseball term is "up for a cup of coffee" in the big leagues. The Jane Shores, the Norman Dubies, the Garrett Hongos of poetry, though fine people and accomplished educators and not untrained wordsmiths, will probably be just names tomorrow. Their poetry, if remembered, will be in histories of literature rather than in volumes of poems still read for enjoyment and enlightenment. They, like the specialists they are, will be remembered by specialists, at least until the years snow down on this little turn-of-the-century epoch.

Neither the critic nor the public should blame the professional poet for being less than a "genius." The right combination of skill and inspiration in creating poetry is a phenomenon like lightning. It happens. It strikes. Thank the heavens for the illumination that momentarily dispels the darkness of the human soul. Poetry is not an easy art—is any art easy? There are so many pitfalls of excess that can swallow a poet. The bard, to use an antiquated term, can be so stretched upon the rack of meter and rhyme that the tortured body of verse dies without telling its secrets. In contemporary America the excess is more likely to be an infusion of intellectual middle-class mediocrity. The Oprah-ization of the art can be read in journal after journal. As in all else in America the victim is the only true voice

worthy to be heard. Either some social or sexual pathology must be invoked like a *deus ex machina* to bring a poem to birth. Poems are more riddled with the bullets of sociology than the strafe of poetic inspiration. The body of verse bleeds not memorable lines but politically correct superficial nods of the head. The language of sociology is prose, often a convoluted prose. Poetry inspired by sociological concerns would naturally adopt prose as its expression. Rhetoric, a ripping, roaring rhetoric, is often peppered in the anecdotes that lament the plights of the victims, but the flushed face and the increase of decibels has more in common with political speech than poetic speech. It is plain old shouting and plate throwing. All the histrionics would be forgiven if the poem were inspired and written in a vibrant language. The voice in the kitchen should echo, like poor Sylvia Plath's. The shattering dishes should leave nicks in the wall, break the surface of the dull smoke-stained green paint. The poems are anecdotes, little homespun autobiographical stories told in plain words, little tepid cups of decaffeinated coffee. If you don't love the woman (or guy), she (he) would put you to sleep.

In any expression of opinion, you must cite examples. Go to any web site or magazine and read. The rhythm of matter-of-fact prose will converse with you like a neighbor saying "we're in for a dry spell." There may be lists that will include artemisia and gladioli, but the passion of the gardener will be more vegetable than human. But there are other possibilities::

*You did it, didn't you?
 I cannot occasion that from here.
 Unplugged, I do not require conversation
 to oppress what least I care for.....*

These are the opening lines of Don Hyman's *Passacaglia* in *The Best American Poetry 1997* edited by James Tate. Are the lines matter-of-factly spoken or is there a twitty, snobbish edge to them? "Occasion," "oppress," used in the present context, are

Continued on page 10

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Spotlite, cont. from p. 8.

words alien to all but the most precisely pretentious of personas. The poem broadens out into a healthy poem but the opening lines are a harridan prose rather than a forceful evocation, unless the point is preciosity of complaint. But this poem is not the prose paragraphs broken into lines that often pass as poetry. The academy has added its stamp of learnedness, or at least the airs of learnedness, on the lines quoted. Compare the passage to Hecht's lines quoted above. Are they even in the same theater? But go, go to any web site, to the *American Poetry Review*, and you will read the drone of American poetry. At least Hyman grabs your attention, though with prose. Read the narrations, both those that say something, and those that ooze with the obscurity of octopus ink. There are memorable contemporary poems loose in the world, poems equal to those of the past, but so much is drizzle. The storms of inspiration pass quickly. The drip from the roof and the trees may last the night.

Poetry should contain concise, precise language. There must be a texture to the words and that texture must rub over the reader's skin in a rhythmic dance. The mind, the heart, the eye, the ear, the soul must be engaged. The commonplace is not taboo, but it must be transformed like moonlight transforms the visible into an enchanted evening (apologies to those who find "enchanted evening" an irredeemable cliché). Even the horrific must, like Hecht's lines, be transfused with the glory of language. The bottom-line all-is-business-nothing-but-business civilization of America must be transformed into the geometric shapes of its monuments—the great steel and glass office buildings—and into the veils and vapors that inhabit the human soul. If mankind is to be a race of automatons, programmed for corporate profit, the dull metal of its collective soul must shine in revealing poetry. Though some of us live soap opera lives, the motives, the psychological twists and influences are not simple. The world is three dimensional—four dimensional with time. Poetry's realm is a language that attempts to capture the light, the darkness, the heat, the cold, the whimper, and the howl of the human heart. Meter, metaphor, image, irony, grammatical verbal flow etc., etc. are a means to an end. A middle-class life is pleasant to live, but there is little poetry in it. The poet and the reader can live, if only for a brief moment, on a higher plane. God may accidentally brush against a poem's words. That contact is lightning. Let us see the world. The metaphysical power is out. We stumble around in the ordinariness of our lives.

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Lite Reading: BOOK REVIEW

The Master and Margarita. By Mikhail Afanasevich Bulgakov. Various editions.

If I had to recommend one Russian book of the XX century it would, absolutely, be M. Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*.

However, before going on with the actual review I have to mention this. It does not matter what language a book is written in, there is no way that a translation can ever do the book justice.

For years I have been studying Russian literature, and consequently I have come across several translations of this masterpiece, and have discussed them with professors who have been teaching this book for many years. After comparing the Russian language publication of the book with those in English, we came up with the unavoidable decision, that all of the translators of this book have done a terrible job with it. Mirra Ginsburg's translation lacks the passages that were censored by the Soviets. Michael Glenny's version is readable but not accurate Bulgakov. I recommend Nabakov's translation, though you feel he is always showing off his virtuosity at the expense of the author.

But getting back to the book. This book was written in the 1930s but was not published until the late 1950s. According to Bulgakov this book was written for "the drawer." He knew that the public would not see this book until after his death. Though the novel saw the light during Khrushchev's era of thaw, the book was still censored to the bone. This narrative, had it reached the public when it was written, may have changed the history of the USSR.

This book depicts life in Russia in the 1930s and compares it to that in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate. One of the most striking points in this comparison is Pilate's saying that he only carries out the will of Caesar. The author is really *telling* the reader that Stalin is the Russian/Soviet Caesar, and that all of the officials are the equivalent of this Pontius Pilate.

To be more precise, one should point out that this novel is written from the point of view of a writer, and what he had to undergo and put up with as a writer in Russia in the 1930s. Bulgakov showed that writers are like Jesus. Whether the henchmen are Caesar's or Stalin's they are out to get you, or your book. Your closest friend or associate may be a "spy" who can turn you in at a drop of a hat. That is the serious point of the wild comic tale that Bulgakov unfolds.

If you ever wanted to learn anything about Stalin's Russia, this is definitely the book to read. Bulgakov took all of the terrible truths of his era, and showed the

people of Russia what they should have realized, but hadn't.

If one must read this book in a translated version, the reader will get a *general* idea of what this book is all about: the plot, the picturesque characters, including the Devil himself, and what it was like to live in the real Russia of the 1930s. However, to really understand this novel one would have to read it in Russian and be able to savor the play of language in a narrative that points to the historic real world which is as fantastic as the world of a novel. For most Americans reading the original is not an option. Most translations will greatly entertain and provide a hint of Bulgakov's artistry, but remember, as you are enjoying this novel in English, you are reading a shadow. Katarina Clark's book *The Soviet Novel*, and a "Master & Margarita" web site at <http://cweb.middlebury.edu/bulgakov/> will be helpful in giving background information on the novel.

ALEXANDER B. PEKER

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I drive across Highway 10, beneath a sky the color of withered flax blooms, regretting each mile I cover. The sun that's as bright as a gold coin eclipses the Superstition Mountains. Waves of desert heat mire the ocotillo cactus dotting the landscape like stiff, exhausted seaweed. Going back home, not wanting to; but having to anyway. My sister will be buried today.

Phoenix is hot this time of year. Phoenix is always hot, period. Mom and Dad will have the swamp cooler going. They have always refused to buy an air conditioner, saying it cost too much to run. Instead, they sit around breathing damp air, their clothing draped over them like wet paper.

They say you can never go home again. Though I've only been gone a little over two years, I never planned on going back. Of course, the only person important enough to draw me away from my so-called life in LA would be Anna.

I remember waiting for Anna; a cobwebbed memory of my mother's swollen belly, round and plump, like an over-ripe melon whose skin was ready to split. In the beginning, waiting was easy because it was for tangible things. Waiting for Anna to walk, waiting for Anna to talk. Infinitesimally slow increments of time, installments to be paid for the right of having a sibling, a friend, a sister.

But two people were never more dissimilar than we were. In fact, everything about Anna was different, unique in a sort of indescribable way. Unfortunately, as Anna grew, so did her problems, which became almost like a third child, overshadowing our life, as if there were more of Anna than of me somehow.

When Anna was very young, Mom took her to the pediatrician because she said she was worried, but she wouldn't say what exactly was troubling her. The doctor ran tests and then only smiled, telling the family that Anna's IQ was much higher than normal. She was probably "hyper-sensitive" and just required a little extra TLC; she would be fine.

Anna was always the wild one, vexing our parents, exhaling discontent. Mom would swoop through the house carried by gusts of spurious agitation as Dad mumbled through thin, pursed lips. Anna would roll her eyes, suppressing an ocean of sarcastic sighs while Mom struggled to extinguish the despair that swirled above our heads.

Life became a series of incongruent assurances. The promised puppy never materialized because of worries that Anna's temperament wasn't "suitable" for pets. Never having friends over because of Anna's anti-social behavior. Missing my best friend Kimberly's thirteenth birthday party because Anna had thrown a fit and had broken nearly every dish in the house and Mom needed my help cleaning up. As I grew older, the promises from Mom to make up for missed events and special occasions became so thin that it seemed to me even Mom didn't believe what she told me most of the time. I learned early how not to cry. Tears were anger, and letting go of either one meant that I might not have anything left to hold onto when it was all over.

All this history wearies me as I reach across the car seat for my Marlboros. I

FICTION: FIRST PRIZE

2000 Literary Contest

Twig Doll

by

Katrina Prado

light one, letting the smoke scuttle out the window, like broken dreams.

As Anna grew, Mom and Dad tried to accept her eccentricities, but everything about Anna had an oceanic quality. At the beginning of her seventh grade Valentine's Day dance, Anna pranced onto the dance floor, alone. She danced every single dance, moving at a feverish pitch, even after the music stopped. When the lights went on and everybody left, the vice-principal had to escort Anna from the school gym. Her hair was soaked with sweat and she cried because she had to leave. Life was a heaving, throbbing verb. She gulped knowledge, consumed experiences, and devoured feelings, as if she knew there wasn't much time.

As I speed down the Papago freeway, through downtown Phoenix, my tires eating asphalt, I feel swallowed by bitterness over my sister Anna. Though Anna had always been "challenging" as Mom put it, there had never been too much out of the ordinary until Anna turned fourteen. How could I ever forget that day?

I had a part-time job at Smitty's grocery after school and had gone in for a short four-hour shift. That night was the prom, and it seemed the one thing that Anna could not take away from me. I was just clocking out when I received a hysterical call from my mom.

"Anna's gone crazy! She's talking nonsense. One minute she's silent as a post, the next she's babbling incoherently. I opened the door to her room; she was marking the walls with her own feces," her voice stopped suddenly, as if she couldn't believe what she had just said.

As my classmates slow-danced to Celine Dion amidst dizzying clouds of perfume and aftershave, my family was in the emergency room trying to calm Anna's fears of being pursued by spies. Hemmed in by suspicious stares and quiet, cruel remarks. A handsome young man about Anna's age looked at us as if we were oozing molecules of the Ebola virus. Anna would have liked him, I thought. But she couldn't see through her beveled consciousness, as she waded through endogenous thoughts. The young man moved away, drawing his windbreaker close to his body.

Physicians turned into family counselors, who turned into psychologists and psychiatrists, who eventually turned into Dr. Van Buren. He was a portly man with

graying sideburns who diagnosed Anna as having hebephrenic schizophrenia, with some delusional paranoia. Dr. Van Buren smiled confidently as he spoke of medications, assuring my parents that he would find a drug to help Anna.

I pull into my parent's gravel driveway, dread coiled tightly around the isthmus of nerves between my brain and my heart. How I wish I were back in my own apartment, among my own things: my large amethyst paperweight, my tall blue water glasses, my endless rows of books balanced on wooden boards supported by cinderblocks.

I pull down on my cinnabar-colored tank top and quickly check my make-up in the rear-view mirror. As I ring the doorbell, I push away the nagging memory that no one ever said a word about my senior prom.

The door opens and there they are suddenly, like some poorly directed movie. Dad stands too close, his face, large and sagging, like a caricature of himself. He's peering, moving fast, wresting the suitcase from my hand. Mom's cool, clammy hands upon my cheeks, as if I were made of some special dough. Both of them examine me. Mom smells like she always did; of penicillin and oranges.

"Reve, honey, it's good to see you. Have you gained a little weight?"

She pulls me in to the old, gilt and brown living room and I have to look away from her pale, washed-out eyes. Her hair has gone completely gray. She is forty-six years old. I feel my cheeks flush hotly and swallow hard to smother the burning that expands in my abdomen.

"I can't stay," I blurt out, and then regret it.

Mom and Dad look at my suitcase and then at me.

"Surely you could spend the night and leave first thing in the morning?"

"Not safe for a woman driving at night," Dad says, scratching a large, hairy scar.

"Besides," Mom says, mopping her eyes with an already wet tissue, "I was hoping you could help me with Anna's room."

I am so angry with Anna, with all of them, and I can't even begin to explain why. I sink into an over-stuffed chair with worn spots on the armrests and let out a ragged breath.

Mom stands up.

"Let me get you some iced tea, dear."

She returns with a murky jelly glass filled with instant tea that seems lukewarm even though there are ice cubes bobbing at the surface.

"How's Wal-Mart?" Mom asks.

"I work at the bookstore now," I say.

Mom waves her wet tissue in front of her. "Of course, the bookstore. How are things?"

I know she asks out of politeness. Her eyes and body are so drained from sorrow, I wonder how she keeps from collapsing.

I suppose I could tell her what it's really like. Stocking the new titles, arranging the remainders tables, the careful whittling away of each hour, as if each fallen minute must drift away in a particular pattern. I work the late shift, closing the doors each night at midnight. The owner thinks that by staying open late, he will make money. But nobody buys books at midnight. Mostly, there are men, wandering in and looking around. They come in for small things, a newspaper or maybe a birthday card they will never send. As if my youth contains a scent they feel compelled to seek out, the way a dog rolls in wild smells in the grass.

"Things are just fine," I say. And already we've run out of things to talk about.

An elongated moment of time fills the room like an expanding balloon. I realize that my jaw is clenched so tight that it hurts.

"So, what exactly happened?" I say, knowing I have no right to ask. I gave up long ago trying to care or to help, even before I left. Because of this I feel terribly guilty. I rage over everything and nothing, feeling a little like Saturn eating his own children.

"It was her condition," Mom says.

"But she was in the hospital, wasn't she? I mean, you can't die from schizophrenia," I say, my voice serrated with impatience.

Dad looks deeply into the lap of his trousers.

Mom plants her palms at the tops of her knees, sighs, and then stands up.

"We'll need to leave soon."

I had left home before they sent Anna to Hale House, a private sanitarium. I had been very much in a hurry to go and had missed the worst of Anna's rapid, inglorious descent.

A month after my missed prom I had come home from work to find her wandering the street in front of the house. She was wearing a down jacket in the sweltering August heat, layers of crinkled tin foil protruding from her tightly drawn hood.

"Anna, come inside," I urged. I pulled at the arm of her jacket, wiping the sweat from her forehead with my other hand.

Anna's shocked eyes darted to me, then quickly back to various points in the sky.

"They're trying to x-ray me again. Do you feel it? I feel it. My skin is stinging. Every time they try to x-ray me, my skin starts stinging."

I pulled her into the living room and looked for Mom. Inside, the house was a shambles. Couches and chairs had been tipped over barricade-style. The small foyer was littered with a river of silver. Forks, spoons, kitchen knives, plated silver pic-

Continued on page 13



Society's Page



Poets' Ink—MSP&LS Celebrates Diversity

Here at Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society we're celebrating the birth of a new publication. **Poets' Ink** is the brainchild of much brainstorming among the staff of MSP&LS about how to get poetry out of the classroom, off of the library shelves, away from the bookstore and into the hands of the everyday reader. And we've been successful. Published as a folio, the first edition of **Poets' Ink** has been a great success.

The premise behind the publication is that there are lots of genuine poetic voices that never get heard. Either their work is too raw or doesn't fit the editorial policy of a slick magazine. **Poets' Ink** solves that dilemma by connecting diverse and emerging writers with editors in what we call "critique workshops." Designed to be "drop-by" writing seminars, the workshops allow poets to get immediate feedback on their work and to select, with an editor, a poem to be published. Editors Hugh Burgess and Alan Reese then select and fine-tune the publication. Published poets receive ten copies of **Poets' Ink** to distribute to their particular audience. Thus, while you may find **Poets' Ink** in the bookstores and coffee shops around town, you might just as likely find it in churches or social clubs, diners or beauty shops. **Poets' Ink** really is "poetry of the people."

Look for **Poets' Ink** at ArtScape or join us for our next **Poets' Ink** critique workshop to be held at the Pratt in early September. We are planning another edition of **Poets' Ink** to be out by the time of the Baltimore Book Festival and will feature some of the poets in the publication in the festival reading series. **Poets' Ink** was funded, in part, by a grant from Baltimore City.

Writing To Heal

If you plan to attend the "Writing to Heal" workshop to be held in conjunction with the literary events at ArtScape, also plan to visit MSP&LS and take a good look at Elisabeth Stevens' **HOUSEHOLD WORDS**. The first publication from MSP&LS's "Three Conditions Press." **HOUSEHOLD WORDS** is more than just a book of poetry. The book, designed as a prompt for readers and writers who have experienced all manner of loss, chronicles the losses associated with widowhood, moving, and aging in the finely crafted poems. More telling, however, are the essays and interviews which move the book into the realm of the healing journal.

Anne Barney, whose book **Stolen Joy** is one of Icarus Press's bestsellers, writes of surviving stillbirth and infant loss. Her essay is a marvel of finding strength through writing. Similarly, **Mimi Zanino-Bracken's** essay details the manner in which people, women especially, can use writing as a way of coping. **Zanino-Bracken** has a variety of materials centering on loss available from her Memory Lane Press. **Rosemary Klein's** engaging interview with Stevens suggests yet another way to open oneself up to a dialogue about loss while **Barbara Simon's** essay offers yet another, more academic solution, to how to write your way through loss.

HOUSEHOLD WORDS will be available at ArtScape as will the authors, all of whom will be more than willing to talk to you about ways you have used writing as a means of healing.

Brand New from the Staff of Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society

In the past few months, we here at MSP&LS have been far busier than we thought possible. Not only have we been organizing and facilitating workshops, developing a new publication and getting on with our "day" jobs, we have also been producing some of our own work.

Kathie Corcoran's most recent publication is **Semi-Sub Un-Conscious Mind of Quatrain**. The chapbook features not only Kathie's fine work, which is centered in West Virginia, but poems by the other members of Quatrain. If you recall, Corcoran's manuscript, **Bloodroot**, was the 1997 ArtScape poetry winner. In fact, that chapbook is still popular as it was used recently at a book group meeting in Fairmont, WV where the comments were, "Well, your poetry was a smash! They loved it. . . . I could see memories flooding back of their own childhood as I read some of your poems, and I had some members read too." You can hear Corcoran and Quatrain read at the Common Ground on the Hill's American Music & Arts Festival at the Carroll County Farm Museum at 3 pm on July 7.

Rosemary Klein has a poem in **Intimate Kisses**, an anthology of love poetry edited by Wendy Maltz and published by New World Library. Klein's poem "After New Hampshire" joins rank with work by Sharon Olds and Octavio Paz—fine company. **Intimate Kisses** is available at all the major bookstores.

Mike Fallon had a poem in "The American Scholar" magazine and presented a colloquium to the UMBC English faculty on the work of Seamus Heaney.

If you go to newyorkbigcitylit.com, you can read Barbara Simon's review of Bertha Rogers' translation of "Beowulf." Rogers won our last year's chapbook contest. Her "Beowulf" is going into its second printing.

Hugh Burgess did an individual reading in Bel Air for the Harford Poetry Society. He organized an Earth Day Readers Forum at Marshy Point and edited **Poets Ink**, our new folio publication, which will be available to the general public at ArtScape.

For you sci-fi fans, Alan Reese won second prize in the Baltimore Science Fiction Society's "Poetry and Machine" contest sponsored by BSFS and Lite. Reese read the poem at Balticon on Memorial Day weekend as a part of the awards ceremony.

Harford County Hosts Poets

For those of you unfamiliar with Lirtodendren, Harford County's most elegant reading venue, consider setting aside July 24 to hear **Rosemary Klein** read from her selected works. As a featured reader, she will be joining the ranks of Baltimore poets who have read to enthusiastic Harford County audiences.

Most recently, **Mimi Zanino-Bracken** and MSP&LS intern **Josh Bartlett** read to a standing-room-only crowd on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. In addition to the excellent poetry and music, Zanino-Bracken's artwork was on display.

So, why not combine a day's drive into the country with an afternoon of fine poetry? Call 410-747-0594 for more information.

New for the Fall from MSP&LS

Through its series of critique workshops, the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society offers opportunities for poets and other writers to participate in positive, critical appraisals. Work in all stages of development is welcome, whether it is "in progress" or finished. A workshop discussion, for instance, could very well jump start a piece that has momentarily stalled.

Participants should bring to the Workshop ten copies of each piece they are placing under discussion. Further, they are encouraged to be actively involved in offering commentary and to submit pieces for the new MSP&LS annual publication **POETS INK™**.

POETS INK WORKSHOPS are led by Hugh Burgess, president of the MSP&LS. His poems have appeared in such diverse publications as the English Journal, Puckerbush Review, Christian Century, Nuthouse, Function at the Junction, and Yankee (pending). New Poets Series published his volume *Dwell Within These Distances*, and Lite Books published his chapbook *Penny Hill*.

Plan ahead to attend one of these reading/writing sessions. If you have questions about the schedule, call 410-744-0349 or email wordrite1@gateway.net

Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society
2001-2002 "First Thursdays" Schedule: [7:00-8:30 PM]

Poets' Ink Workshops: Cockeysville Public Library

November 1

March 7

June 6

Readers' Forum: Towson Public Library

October 4

February 7

May 2

ArtScape Is Happening and We'd Like To Meet You!

Again this year, MSP&LS will be a presence in the literary arts tent at Baltimore's primo art fair. As in previous years, we will be offering you the opportunity to support the literary arts by participating in our annual fundraising raffle. This year, in line with our outreach into the larger literary community, you'll find some new literary friends at our booth.

Among the new faces—or at least new to the Baltimore area—will be Hiram Larew and Forestine Bynum from Prince George's county; Victoria Crane, a recent Phi Beta Kappa from UMBC; and Cynthia Parker Ohene, one of the poets from **Poets' Ink**.

And, while you're making your **ArtScape** plans, plan to bring us a sample of your poetry. You, too, can join in the literary conversation that is making MSP&LS one of the most active voices in the Maryland community of poets. We'll talk to you.

WANT TO BE A CONTEST WINNER?

Visit us at ArtScape and pick up our flyer "How To Shape Your Manuscript" into a winner. Plan to spend some time "talking" with us about the steps to take before you submit a manuscript to our chapbook contest or any other contest. Bring some poems that you think fit together. Expect to walk away with the beginnings of a successful contest entry.

SUBMISSION HINTS

- Send clean copy
 - Do not use fancy paper or fonts
 - Include a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope (SASE)
 - Keep bio brief and to the point
 - Do not add extra commentary
- REMEMBER—Most editors are busy people with day jobs. They want your work to speak to them, not you.

"Society's Page" is brought to you by the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society under the auspices of The Lite Circle, Inc.

Twig Doll, cont. from p. 11.

ture frames, the silver floor lamp, a desk fan, screwdrivers and the toaster, all lay strewn about the floor. Mom sat at the kitchen table, huddled behind a cold cup of coffee, her eyes dark pools of tears. She spoke in a coarse whisper.

"We were eating breakfast. Suddenly, she began screaming, clawing at herself. Something about a laser beam trying to get her. She said the silver things would bounce the beam back at the 'matchstick people'."

I followed my mother's eyes and found that Anna had wandered into the kitchen, taking a chair opposite Mom. She smiled sheepishly, then held a hand to her mouth, stifling a giggle.

"Anna, is everything all right?" I asked.

She looked at me and smiled warmly.

"I'm so unbearably sad. Really, really sad. Have you ever been so sad that you just wanted to die?" she asked. And then she began laughing hysterically.

Dr. Van Buren changed Anna's medication frequently. Over the next two years she bumped along on a furious river of drugs: Thorazine, Clozapine, Haldol, Clozaril; always with the same disastrous results. Shaking hands, uncontrolled facial movements, agitated spasms of her body; like a bird trying to break out of a rubber shell. Every so often, Mom couldn't take it anymore, seeing her beautiful baby girl reduced to a pile of twitches and jerks and facial tics. She would withhold the medication, only to be rewarded with more bizarre behavior.

The last time I saw Anna, she was in her room, sitting on her chair, her journal on the table in front of her, her knees drawn up under her chin. She rocked absently back and forth, as if suspended in an invisible calm.

"Anna, I have to leave," I said.

Her rocking became more passionate.

"You can't get away, did you know that?"

You can't. I used to try to get away, but now I know the truth."

"I'll call as soon as I get settled. Maybe you could come out and visit," I said, knowing with certainty that this would never happen.

She looked at me with wounded eyes.

"My liver hurts. My liver and my kidneys hurt. But my liver really hurts."

I was seventeen when I left. I got a job as a stock clerk at the Wal-Mart on the lower east side of Los Angeles and lived out of my car for six months until I could afford a small cockroach-infested apartment for five hundred dollars a month. I regretted leaving so suddenly, so decisively. I volleyed between guilt and relief as I replayed the confrontations and disappointments from my childhood. I wondered about college. But mostly I drank vodka tonics, trying to numb the roiling discontent that hovered just below the surface. The mess that our life had become wasn't Anna's fault. I knew that. She was as caught up in her own private struggle as I was with mine; both of us as distant as planets. Somehow, though, I still felt cheated.

Mom had called two months ago to let me know they were thinking of putting Anna into a mental hospital. She was only seventeen. And there had been an incident.

Mom and Dad had awakened to find Anna standing over their bed with a butcher

knife, mumbling something about wanting to make sure they were okay, leering and smiling as she played with the knife. Mom had called the doctor the next day. When Dr. Van Buren heard the knife story, he sighed. He told Mom that there was one other treatment option they could try. ECT, or electroconvulsive therapy. He said it was used extensively until the mid 1950s, until the development of anti-psychotic medications. He said Anna might respond favorably since the drugs weren't working. He told Mom that ECT would produce a generalized seizure with minimal side effects. Anna might have some memory loss, or disorientation. He suggested a series of treatments, three the first week. There seemed to be nothing else to do. Mom told Dr. Van Buren that she wanted to be with Anna during her treatments, but the good doctor wouldn't hear of it. He said the experience would be too traumatic.

We all meet in the hallway at the top of the stairs; a confluence of disjointed lives. Mom is wearing a black knit dress, much too hot for summer. Dad has on his old serge suit. I brought a charcoal gray dress that seemed appropriate at the time, but which Mom frowns at slightly.

We get into Dad's lemon-chrome Lincoln and he cranks up the air conditioner as we drive to the church.

Mom picks at the collar of her dress, then pulls down the sun visor and begins poking at her hair as she stares blankly at the vanity mirror.

"They said we'd be able to see Anna about an hour after the treatment."

Dad shakes his head. He's driving down Washington Street, thirty-five miles an hour, ten miles below the speed limit.

"I was so nervous," Mom says. "Dad kept clearing his throat." She looks at Dad now. "You kept clearing your throat, remember?"

She folds up the sun visor, then dabs at the corners of her mouth with her thumb and forefinger. The car is flooded with the heavy sweetness of her *White Shoulders* perfume. She turns so that she is looking just above Dad's head.

"Dad said we should go out to Red Lobster afterwards. Can you imagine"? I told him not to make any plans. It would be nice just to spend a quiet evening at home without toasters and screwdrivers all over the floor." She looks out her car door window.

Dad switches on his right turn indicator. It makes a muffled, comforting *pling-plong* sound as he rounds the Lincoln up Thirty-second Street.

Mom looks at Dad again.

"You just stood up, remember?" Then to me, "He stood up and walked to the end of the hall and stared out of the bar-covered window."

Mom folds her hands and places them in her lap.

"After two hours, Dr. Van Buren finally came out."

"I thought he looked old that day," Dad says.

"I remember," Mom began, "right before he gave us the bad news how I suddenly realized that his chin looked like the heel of a foot. The whole time he's telling us about the accident, about Anna's

aneurysm, about the blood vessel bursting, drowning her brain, and all I could think of was how his chin looked just like the heel of a foot." She pauses. "Isn't that funny?" she says to the air.

Dad parks in the lot of St. Thomas of Aquinas. We sit in the left front pew. There are not many of us. A few friends of Mom's and Dad's that I vaguely remember. Dr. Van Buren is not here. The funeral is swift and proper, the priest says all the right sorts of things. Just what Anna would have laughed at before she got so sick, saying something like Father Timothy was so cosmopolitan and droll. Dad sits stochically, his face as hard as scrimshaw. Mom bows her head, letting her lap catch her silent tears. I cannot cry. My tears and anger have congealed and at times I think are the only things holding me up. All I can think about is getting into my car and driving back to LA.

As we leave the church, I push away refractory thoughts. They are cold, I know. I do not wish to be cold. I don't mean to be calloused or hard. For so many years I have defined myself only in terms relating to Anna's illness. Living on my own, sometimes I have tried conjuring the blurred vision of me alone, but it rises like bile, sour in my throat. The past then settles like heavy ashes and I find myself desperate for a vodka tonic oblivion.

After the burial, we walk slowly to the Lincoln. Mom links her arm in mine. Her anguish is cement-heavy. I want to say something that will help, but there is nothing to say.

Back home, Mom busies herself in the kitchen with a neighbor who has brought over a lasagna and green bean casserole. Dad sits in his usual chair, his first round a glass of brandy, listening to the stream of conversation from the kitchen. Someone else shows up with a meatloaf.

I walk upstairs and stare at the door to Anna's old room. Opening the door, I am almost overwhelmed. It smells of Ten-O-Six Lotion and Bonne Bell Strawberry lip-gloss. A poster of Bon Jovi hangs on the wall next to the bed. A pale ivory dust ruffle peeks out from beneath a salmon-colored comforter. I remember that Anna always hated that comforter. "How could they make me sleep underneath something that is named for a fish?" she had said.

There isn't much. Most things were taken to the hospital when Anna left. Inside the closet hangs just a few clothes. A plaid flannel shirt sent by a distant aunt from Minnesota that Anna never had occasion to wear, a couple of pairs of shorts and a tank top that I don't recognize. I fold these things and then turn my attention to the dresser. On top of the dresser are a few knick knacks. There's a picture of the four of us taken a decade ago, against a backdrop of the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon, like so much else in life, just didn't seem real. A vase in the shape of a cow I remember Anna buying at a garage sale, stands empty. Next to the vase is a small glass jar of multi-colored marbles with a cork lid. I took closer and notice tiny bits of foil dot the surface of the dresser, like scales on a fish. The drawers, too, are mostly empty. I gather everything and put it next to the small stack of clothing that sits

waiting to be boxed up on the bed. Of course, I have saved the desk by the window for last.

The first thing I saw when I walked into the room was Anna's journal sitting on the desk. After taking down the poster, I look around. The only thing left is the journal. Anna always stressed the importance of everyone calling it her journal and not her diary. Diaries, she said, were for silly girls who liked Barbie. Mom has said that everything will be boxed up and given to Goodwill or maybe The Salvation Army. But somehow it doesn't seem right to do that with her journal.

The late afternoon sun casts uncertain rays of light across the table. I walk to the desk and pick up the journal. It is leather-bound, heavy and solid in my hands. I put the journal to my face and inhale and surprisingly, it doesn't smell of leather at all, but only of Anna.

I open the journal and thumb through the pages, glancing at the writing. In the beginning, the writing looks normal. Anna's generous, loopy cursive sprawls across the page. I catch odd blurbs: *...my philosophy is receding, I reached out to grab it as if it were a brass ring, ...templates, what a lovely word, it sounds like some sort of expensive jewelry, ...dancing must be to the woman, what sex is to the man.*

Closer toward the end of the entries, the writing takes on a more sinister look. Anna has begun to print some passages. Many sentences end with numerous exclamation marks that look as if they've been engraved with a dagger instead of a pen. I turn the pages more quickly, afraid to read anything, yet my eyes catch words anyway: "pierce," and "sting," "ripping," and "bleed." I close the book momentarily, then take a deep breath and open to the last entry. It is dated March 10, 1995, the day I left for LA.

Reve's fear makes her run away. But the more she runs, the less she sees.

She always said I was the strong one, but I am not. I feel as fragile as a twig doll, trying my best not to snap into a thousand tiny pieces.

From my darkness I've seen dimly and someday she will know: the past and future are one; a shadow lit only by the brightness of the present. I hope someday she dances in the flame.

The rest of the pages are blank. I close the book as my eyes well with tears. I try swallowing the lump that has formed squarely at the base of my throat, but it stays, rooted. I am surprised by the warmth of my tears and find myself wondering if they are so warm because they are so old.

Through the window, I notice a large prickly pear cactus growing in the front yard. A late, bright yellow and white flower has bloomed on the cactus. By this time of year, most of the blooms on all the cacti are gone. But this one, lone flower sits, thrusting itself towards the sun. As I weep, a hummingbird, a bright flash of cobalt green, flickers on top of the flower, then darts away, as quickly as it came.

The Third Place Fiction Winner will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper*.

POETRY: FIRST PRIZE

2000 Literary Contest

I Wait for You

When I rock gently in the sun,
sew silk stitches on your infant's gown,
I wait for you,

dream the color of your hair,
run my fingers
down your unborn cheeks.

My daughter's body
cradles you. You float
like a fish

in her waters
as she once floated in mine.
I call you by her name.

When you are born,
she will be born again.

Tillie Friedenber

POETRY: SECOND PRIZE

2000 Literary Contest

View from the Bottom of the Well

From a cell in the well,
Alone, on a hot summer's night;
An alto-saxophone's trill, caught my ear,
Pierced the air, filled the night.
As I looked through gargantuan steel bars, thirsting,
The first evening star came into view.
I'd never seen a star so bright,
Nor heard a sound so true.
My mind camera snapped
A yardbird being swallowed up by an eagle.
Defying death, and, gravity,
"The Bird" became The Eagle, soaring,
Racing, toward the "Son of Mercy."
It was on that night, that I drank,
From the bittersweet well,
Of Charlie Parker's poetic soul.

Daniel H. Lightsey

POETRY: THIRD PRIZE

2000 Literary Contest

Two Tenets

Trust betrayed by recanted love
Voted guilty one to nothing
Called for recount
Guilty one to nothing
I watch the clock
The clock I watched
Unforgiving labyrinth of changes
Passageways across the deserts of time
Ominous clouds on the endless horizon
Forever painting the windows black
Impervious to the light
Yet transparent
Heart raging fire – Fading flower
Retaining fear – Busy but idle
A thought, What am I waiting for
He has returned
Sudden drastic change, A new attitude
Paragon vision
Only two tenets
He died – He lives
Noble in spirit, Limitless boundary
Warrior poet made poor, Richly adorn
Naked faithful guardian
Quiet leader, Undisturbed
By the power vested Him
Moved the stone from the tomb
That was my soul
My spirit ruttled by time restored
Irenounce my sadness
Give up grief – Refuse your guilt
Relinquish the ghost of unused dreams

It's verified, Established, The truth
So stop the eulogy, I live forever
Freed from the fast and feast
From the dominion of
Connoisseurs, Commissars and Consumers
While in positions of trust
Guilty of malfeasance
Ill and thirsty they drink brackish water
From designer bottles and think it nectar
Sickened, they call
Nine hundred tellers of untruths
Prevaricators – future tellers
Demonically inspired answers
False revelations of world's end
Unremitting prophetic henchmen of chimaeras
Demons haunting pieces of gold
Pieces of clay afraid of failure
Uniformed inanimate gray matter
Shapeless common sense
Unchangeable compromised mindless burdens
Soldiers of greed stalling for time
Double dealing victims injuries unseen
Suffering no loss
Takers with needs of Titans taking
Crying for more
Achievement discourage punished
Nightmares waiting watching

Atticus Marcus

Death of a Mockingbird

Yesterday
the air surged
with burbles and carols,
tinks, wheeps, whoops,
calls of other birds,
impossible mimicry
gene-written in your voice.
The holly bush shivered and shook
as you fluttered
in and out,
as courting calls spilled
from that spiny green grotto.

I would have gone to you myself
if I had wings.
Such rapture
is perilous to reason.

Now the quiet undoes me;
it burns my skin:
I thought I would always
know you.

I want to blame someone.
White and gray and black
litter the lawn, feathers
splayed, strawed.

What terrible echoes
of life's end, this hush,
the holly bush so still now.
Not even God is this silent.

Ann Yohn

Hide-N-Seek Addiction

It's a game with us—like when we were kids.
Truth is kicked around in the can and we scatter
To hide among the hushed maple-lined streets
Of my neighborhood—in summer when curfews were lifted
And streetlights cast wild shadows on the sides of houses
From lacy tree branches. It was wonderfully frightening to feel
The keen sense of awareness buzzing in our stomachs
Like June lightening bugs, our eyes dilated and seeking,
As we tiptoed through dark backyards, behind sheds,

Or spied from ebony limbs of the cherry tree in the corner yard—
Until we were found—or until it was safe to come home.
We do the same today, really. I stand against a tree
Covering my eyes, counting down, 10-9-8-7-6.
I dash behind parked cars and bushes to find truth,
But if I find it, the game is over. You are best at hiding—
Darting in and out of the shadows of the blue street light
Signaling silently to me like a spy that it is safe to come home.
“Olly olly in come free!”

I advance down black sidewalks, zigzag around trees,
Skirting issues of light, getting closer to what I want to be safety,
Heedlessly ignoring the hints that lurk behind like ghosts
Chasing me. Being the seeker that it is, it catches up to us,
Tagging us with its presence: “Ready or not, here Truth comes!”
As a moth circles round and round summer's porch lights,
Truth stands under the street lamp and calls us out from the shadows,
Like parents, who come to front screen doors and yell,
“It's time to come in!”
It's time to come in!

J. Warren

Nemesis

Unable to reason the night
I lose the magic of the glorious morning.

When all my nightmares are hidden
by boundless sunlight,
you hover over me.

In the darkness you fell upon me
in your ordered disorder.

I would be Helen, my defenses are breached.

My myths are lain, the lyres are silent.
Achilles has died.

Billy Dean Hester

Aubade

The quiet morning wakes
when you breathe above me,
tiger-fierce.
Holding my hands,
you enter me slowly
as we tremble, eye-locked.
This is the moment of creation,
the joyous joke riding
behind death
in the morning sky.

Anne Yohn

Venus

Fallen from my evening sky and myths

I lie in the dewless morning
Headless, Armless, Legless

My alabaster milk dries and in drought
I erode like sandstone

I will be blown in grains across the desert

Billy Dean Hester

CALLING ALL WRITERS!

STOP!

You are *NOT ALLOWED* to put down this magazine without reading about Lite's 2001

Poetry & Short Fiction Contest

Winners in each category will receive the following prizes:

FIRST PRIZE: \$75

SECOND PRIZE: \$45

THIRD PRIZE: \$15

All winners will be featured at a special Lite Circle reading and will have their work published in *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper*

All entries must be postmarked no later than **December 31, 2001**. Reading fee: \$5.00 per story, \$3.00 per poem, \$10.00 for up to 6 poems. **No limit on submissions.** Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, with cover sheet containing title(s) of work, along with author's name, address, and telephone number. The manuscript should include the title, but not the author's name. Please include short bio. Winners will be notified by March 31, 2002. Maximum story length 6,000 words. Maximum poem length 50 lines. Please mail entries to:

The Lite Circle Literary Contest
P.O. Box 26162
Baltimore, MD 21210

For more info, write us or email lite@toadmail.com.
Or visit our web site at: www.litecircle.com.

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SHRUBBERY, HEDGE TRIMMING

OVERGROWN AREAS CLEARED

GARDEN DESIGN - PLANTING

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Life Doesn't Have to Be.

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Gallery hours

Wednesday through Sunday, 11:00 am - 8:00 pm