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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2000

Baltimore's Literary Newspaper



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TOP STORY

The Surprising Talents of Elisabeth Stevens

At the end of the Jones Falls Expressway, where it becomes Falls Road, there are groups of buildings, one of which is the Greenspring Station Shopping Center, which has an atrium at its center. Around the small court are upscale shops, one of which is a small art gallery, owned and operated by Mary Jo Gordon, which is called *Galerie Françoise et ses freres*. From September 7 to October 4 the white walls of the small gallery featured the graphic works of a woman, known once as

an art critic for the *Baltimore Sun*, and, more recently, as an author of award-winning short stories and poetry. This woman had exhibited occasional artworks in group shows in New York City, in Washington D.C., in Chelsea, but now a good representation of her "other" art was displayed.

The featured work in the show was a limited edition book-in-a-box called *ERANOS*, which in Greek means a shared feast. The book is both text and image. The

text tells what happens when an aging writer is invited to a mysterious party and meets an enticing woman named Evadne. Accompanying the text are 5 original copper plate etchings. Published by Goss Press of Baltimore, the edition was limited to 25 signed and numbered copies. At the exhibit one of the books was framed and covered one wall of the gallery. Visitors, who began to read the story, were pulled along by the narrative motion of the prose,

Continued on page 4

THANK YOU!

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Literary October/November

A Bi-Monthly Potpourri of Literary Events

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

Consecutive Reading Series

Sunday, October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

7:00-10:30 p.m. The MYTH poetry slam has moved to TEAISM, 400 8th St. NW (corner of 8th and D Sts), Washington, DC. Open mic followed by 2 feature poets: one from the national scene, one local poet. Feature portion is followed by an open slam, with cash prizes for 1st and 2nd place winners. \$5 cover charge. Hosted by Baltimore Slammimstress Nicki Miller. For more info, email GalAengus@aol.com.

Tuesday, October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

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

Thursday, October 5, 12, 19, 26

8:00 p.m.-11 p.m. SLAMicide! at XandO, 3003 North Charles St. (Charles & 31st). Open mic, featured poets, slam. Cover \$5. Cash prizes to 1st and 2nd place slam winners. For more info, call (410) 889-7076 or email GalAengus@aol.com.

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

Friday, October 6, 13, 20, 27

7:00 p.m. Friday Night Music Series and Open Mike. Mariposa Center for Creative Expression, 5000 Berwyn Rd., College Park, MD. Cover charge: \$5. For schedule/info, call (301) 513-9422/(301) 881-8012.

Literary October

Sunday, October 1

1:00-3:00 p.m. Mystery Loves Company Bookstore, 1730 Fleet St. John Gilstrap signs his new thriller *Even Steven*. Refreshments served. For more info call either (410) 276-6708 or 800-538-0042.

Tuesday, October 3

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Anna Marie Clark reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Marcia Talley reads from her 2nd Hannah Ives mystery, *Unbreathed Memories*.

7:00 p.m. Howard County Library, East Columbia Branch, 6600 Cradlerock Way. Open

Mic Poetry Reading. For more info, call Julie Wilde at (410) 313-7715.

Wednesday, October 4

7:30 p.m. The "Function at the Junction" poetry series. Reading by Dr. Gary Blankenburg, Eleanor Lewis, Jenny Keith, and Batworth. Coffee Junction, 803 Frederick Rd, Catonsville. Donation \$2. For more info, call (410) 468-3496.

Thursday, October 5

6:00-8:00 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. "Poetry in Motion" featuring readings by Michael Collier, Stanley Plumly, Jane Shore, Terence Winch, John Yau. Sponsored by The Poetry Society of America with the Maryland Transit Authority and the American Institute of Graphic Arts at Baltimore.

"First Thursday" evening of poetry, music, and art. Carroll County Arts Council Gallery, 15 E. Main St., Westminster, MD. Featured poets: Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka and Kathie Corcoran. Also featuring the original music of musician/singer/songwriter Jesse Palidowsky. Refreshments.

Saturday, October 7

12:00 noon. Enoch Pratt free Library, Central Branch. The Poetry Discussion Group, led by Rachel Kubie, considers the poetry of Yusef Komunyakaa.

1:00 p.m. Monthly meeting of the Black Writers' Guild of Maryland, 8023 Garrison Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21215. Critique sessions for aspiring poets, novelists and historical writers. Discussions with publishers and established authors on how to become published and how to get an agent. For more info, call (410) 747-6812 or (410) 747-5898; email lsdiggs@bcpl.net or sidem@starpower.net.

Sunday, October 8

4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse at the Minas. Winners of the Baltimore Writers' Alliance Werba Poetry Prize read.

Tuesday, October 10

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Margery Innes reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info call (410) 877-1625.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Jane Satterfield reads from her book *Shepherdess with an Automatic*.

7:00 p.m. Bibelot Cross Keys. Journalist John Cornwell discusses and signs his book *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*.

Wednesday, October 11

7:30 p.m. Maryland Writers' Alliance monthly meeting. Location TBA. Speaker: Jonathon Scott Fuqua, author of *The Reap-*

The Big Literary "Spot" Lites

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

pearance of Sam Webber, on "Creating a Young Adult Novel." Free to first-time attendees and MWA members; \$5 for others. For more info, visit the MWA website: www.marylandwriters.org.

8:00 p.m. Poet Carol Frost reads in the Faculty Lounge, Van Meter Hall, Goucher College, 1021 Dulany Valley Rd. Reception follows. Sponsored by the Isabel Kellogg Thomas Lectureship in English. Free. For more info, call (410) 337-6333.

Thursday, October 12

7:00 p.m. Biblot Canton. Laura Lippman discusses and signs her newest Tess Monaghan mystery *The Sugar House*.

Saturday, October 14

8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. University of Baltimore, Thumel Business Center. *Independent Publishing: The Basics and Beyond*. Sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Publishers Association, Publishers Marketing Association, and the Institute for Language, Technology, and Publications Design at the University of Baltimore. Registration: MPA/PMA affiliates, \$50/full day w/lunch; \$25/individual seminar or lunch; \$40/2 seminars w/lunch; Non-Members, \$80/full day w/lunch; \$35/individual seminar or lunch; \$60/2 seminars w/lunch. 10% discount for 2 or more people from the same company. For more info, call (410) 532-5018 or email info@woodholmehouse.com.

4:30-6:30 p.m. Many Chapters Book Club is forming an African-American literary discussion group at the GLCCB, 241 E. Chase St., 2nd floor. Discussion of Michael Baisden's *Men Cry in the Dark*, Same Gender Love Center, GLCCB. For more info, call (410) 325-3910 or email ManyChapters@aol.com.

Call for Info. Writers Workshop with local writers, Barnes & Noble-Inner Harbor. For more info, call (410) 385-1709.

Sunday, October 15

2:00 p.m. Fatslug Unbound CD Release Reading. The Writers Center, 4508 Walsh St., Bethesda, MD. For more info, call (301) 654-8664.

2:00 p.m. The Annual Margaret Diorio Memorial Poetry Reading will be held at the Friends Meeting House on the Friends School campus, 5116 N. Charles St.

5:30-8:00 p.m. Harry's, 1200 N. Charles St. Open poetry reading w/occasional featured poets every 3rd Sunday of the month. Hosted by Mary Russell. For more info, call (410) 685-2828.

Monday, October 16

Call for Time. The Spectrum of Poetic Fire at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Houston Baker Jr. reads from *Spirit Run*, *Blues Journey Home*, and *No Matter Where You Travel, You Still Be Black*. For more info, call (410) 255-2350.

Tuesday, October 17

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Ed Faine reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

Wednesday, October 18

5:00-7:00 p.m. Mystery Loves Company Bookstore, 1730 Fleet St. Robert B. Parker signs his new mystery *Perish Twice*. Refreshments served. For more info, call (410) 276-6708.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Elizabeth Stevens reads from her book of poetry *Household Words*. Barbara Simon, Mimi Zannino and Anne Barney, whose essays about writing and the process of healing form an epilogue to Ms. Stevens book, join her in conversation with the audience.

Thursday, October 19

7:00 p.m. "Century of the Millennium Reading Series" sponsored by the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society in conjunction with the UMBC English Dept. at the Albin O. Kuhn Library, 7th floor, UMBC campus in Arbutus. Readers TBA. For more info, call (410) 744-0349.

Poetry reading at Barnes & Noble Towson. Sponsored by Towson University's *Grub Street Magazine*. For more info, email jfelds1@tiger.towson.edu.

"3rd Thursdays" Open Mike Poetry at the GreatBlacks in Wax Museum, 1601 E. North Ave., featuring author Elliott Cunningham (*The Soul of Hearts*). Book signing follows. Donation: \$3. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Hosted by E.Z. Spearit. For more info, call (410) 594-9556 or (410) 563-3404.

Friday, October 20

5:00-7:00 p.m. Mystery Loves Company Bookstore, 1730 Fleet St. Anne Perry signs her new Inspector Monk historical mystery. Refreshments served. For more info, call (410) 276-6708.

8:00 p.m. Dust the cobwebs off of those Halloween poems & ghost tales and join Lite staff in an evening of "Fright Verse" at Biblot-Timonium! For more info, call (410) 889-1574 or email lite@toadmail.com.

Saturday, October 21

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Maryland Writers' Association hosts a workshop, "Shaping Stories for the Screen," at the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, 801 Chase St., Annapolis, rm. 205. Instructor: Richard Rashke. Registration: \$100 for MWA members; \$110 non-members. First come, first served, limit 10 participants. Deadline: Oct. 15. Please bring a brown bag lunch. Soft drinks and water provided. For more info, visit the MWA website: www.marylandwriters.org.

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Lite Circle presents "Poetry in the Shade," open reading and dis-

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ONE OR MORE WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Barnes and Noble, Round 2

Two months have passed since Lite instituted a policy of refusing to publicize Barnes and Noble events until the bookstore chain rescinded its own policy of refusing to carry free literature in its stores. During that time, no word has come down from B&N corporate offices in New York indicating that the policy will be changed. In fact, B&N corporate management has not seen fit to reply to our request for information on why the policy was adopted. We haven't even received a form letter.

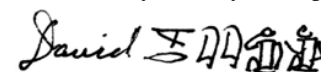
However, during that time we have also been contacted by B&N at Inner Harbor in an effort to have Lite participate in literary events at the store. After careful consideration, Lite has decided to participate in events provided they directly benefit local Baltimore writers and provided Lite (and other freezines) can be distributed at such events. We have also modified our policy in order not to harm Baltimore-area writers by refusing to publicize events where they are presenting their work, just because such

events happen to take place within a B&N store.

Therefore, we will publicize literary events at B&Ns *if and only if* they are intended to showcase or assist local writers. We will not publicize events in which well-known writers or other personalities participate. We will not include B&N in our "Literary Spotlights." We will continue to urge book shoppers to purchase their books elsewhere until B&N's corporate policy changes.

In the meantime, we urge you to continue to harangue B&N president Tom Tolworthy in New York and besiege him with e-mails (ttolworthy@bn.com) until he relents and drops this ill-considered policy which is harmful to local writers and presses and an embarrassment to B&N outlets and their employees.

Keep those cards and letters coming. And thank you for your support.



David W. Kriebel,
Editor

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SPIRITUAL, SEEKER

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LITERARY NEWS

Cont. from front cover

stopping now and then to admire Elizabeth Stevens' graphics. The author/artist's work is charming; it has both a winning elegance and, in the other definition of "charming," it is spellbinding. The reader/viewer, once started, wants to know what is going to happen.

In addition to the story, a variety of other artwork done over the past decade adorned the walls of the gallery. Each of the graphic works possessed a wonderful sense of line. Some of the works, especially *When I Was Three, I Flew Across The Front Parlor Over Their Heads*, possibly the best work in the show, had a whimsical theme in combination with figures and wallpaper background that reminds one of a Matisse under the influence of Picasso. The larger pictures are more successful than the small. *Nothing In The Center*, illustrated here, has an interesting picture design and clarity that shows up better with adequate space.



"Nothing in the Center"
Etching and Aquatint by Elisabeth Stevens

Ms. Stevens' small pictures are not without charm—how could they be from this artist? *The Widows's Garden*, which is one of the illustrations in Ms. Stevens' most recent book of poetry *Household Words*, published by Three Conditions Press, the book arm of the Maryland Poetry and Literary Society, was present in the pristine original with the lines, gray shadings of leaves and petals.

Ms. Stevens' imagination is not always happy or whimsical. One of her works is titled *The Death of Santa Claus*. Death and loss are very much in the palette of her words and her graphics. There is also an erotic element. But what cushions the blunt hammer of such themes is her sense of style. In the poetry the quiet images of the natural world and the voice of a "lady" mediate between the grief expressed and the reader's ear. In the graphic art there is that whimsical line that abstracts life, even its sadness, into an artistic design that one wouldn't mind having hanging on their wall.

The Greenspring Station exhibit has ended, but there will surely be other exhibitions of Ms. Stevens' "other" art in the future. The curious should seek it out. It gives a whole new dimension to a woman

known in the literary community as an accomplished poet and storyteller.

DAN
CUDDY

Not Just for Grownups: The Baltimore Book Festival

This year's Baltimore Book Festival, we hear, celebrated the 200th anniversary of George Washington's death. Well, if George were still alive, he couldn't have picked a nicer weekend to cross the Chesapeake for cheap books or rap in a poetry slam. For three days in early autumn (Sept. 22-24, 2000), Mt. Vernon is magically transformed into a colorful, noisy, delightful bazaar. All the local literary players are there, including the Big Boys: Bibelot and Barnes & Noble. Not to mention all those corporate sponsors, such as the bank who so kindly provides the trailer with the ATMs. Listen closely each time John, Jean or Judy inserts that shiny piece of plastic, and you may hear the distant giggles of whatever bank manager arranged that \$1.50-a-pop deal. We're glad the port-a-pot people were not similarly inspired.

But we digress. The Book Festival is really a place for the Not-So-Big literary (and lots of other arts and community) folk to strut their stuff. We toiled around and checked out who was there, but other priorities came first: strategic location of Constantine's Greek Kitchen. Between trips to feed our dolmades ("Leaves of Grape") addiction, we collected literature and free pens, talked to more people than we usually do, and even bought a couple of books. We spotted the Baltimore Writers Alliance, Black Classic Press, Lambda Rising, The Book Thing (giving away free books!), Flying Coyote, Hometown Girl, HoCoPoLitSo, Baltimore Songwriters, Little Ned Stories, Baltimore Science Fiction Society, Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society, Maryland Writers' Association, WordHouse, the Urbanite, Severed Limbs Studio, Sibanye, Grub Street, Mystery Loves Company, Hometown Girl, Nappy Hair, The Children's Bookstore, The Village Learning Place, Common Thread, Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and

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Need an event covered? Call News Editor Dan Cuddy
at (410) 882-4138 or email lite@toadmail.com.

SPOTLIGHT

Calendar, cont. from p. 3

cussion group. Something Special Coffee House, 504 Main St., Laurel. Free. Hosted by Hilbert Turner, Jr. For more info, email lite@toadmail.com.

Sunday, October 22

2:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Madison Smartt Bell reads from the second novel in his trilogy about Haiti, *Master of the Crossroads*. *All Souls' Rising* was a National Book Award finalist.

Monday, October 23

7:00 p.m. Bibelot Woodholme. Andrew Vachss discusses and signs his latest novel *Dead and Gone*.

Tuesday, October 24

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Patti Kinlock of *Lite* reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poets Dan Johnson and Henry Taylor read from their work.

7:00 p.m. Goucher College, 1021 Dulaney Valley Rd., Kraushaar Auditorium. David Sedaris reads from his novel *Me Talk Pretty One Day*. Sponsored by WJHU. Q&A period and book signing follows. For more info, call (410) 337-6333.

Bibelot Woodholme. Rich Cohen discusses his book *The Avengers: A Jewish War Story* about a band of Jewish guerrillas, led by poet and Zionist Abba Kovner, who emerged to sabotage the Nazis.

Wednesday, October 25

7:00 p.m. Howard County Public Library, Glenwood Branch, 2350 MD Route 97. Open Mic Poetry Reading. For more info, call Julie Wilde at (410) 313-7715.

8:00 p.m. Goucher College, 1021 Dulaney Valley Rd., Kraushaar Auditorium. Reynolds Price, the Kratz Center for Creative Writing's writer-in-residence, reads from his novels which include *Long and Happy Life* and *Kate Vaiden*. For more info, call (410) 337-6333.

Thursday, October 26

7:00 p.m. Barbara Kingsolver, author of *The Poisonwood Bible*, introduces her latest book *Prodigal Summer* at Kraushaar Auditorium, Goucher College. Tickets are \$1, available at all Bibelot Stores. For more info, call (410) 308-2040.

Sunday, October 29

2:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Gilbert Sandler discusses his book *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album*. He tells the stories of neighborhoods and neighborhood landmarks important to Baltimore's Jewish population.

Monday, October 30

Call for Time. The Spectrum of Poetic Fire at Maryland Institute College of Art. Barbara DeCesare reads from *Jigsaw Eyesore*. For more info, call (410) 255-2350.

Tuesday, October 31

1:00 p.m. Halloween Reading by Members of the Harford Poetry Society. Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info call (410) 877-1625.

Literary November

Wednesday, November 1-Friday, November 3

Call for schedule. "Celebrating African American Women Writers," conference at the Essex Campus of the Community College of Baltimore County, 7201 Rossville Blvd. (see ad, p. 15). Conference activities include panel discussions, workshops, readings, book signings, a book fair, and a Poetry Slam featuring The Arpeggio Jazz Ensemble. For more info, call (410) 780-6742 or email cgoodman@ccbc.cc.md.us.

Saturday, November 4

1:00 p.m. Business Meeting of the Harford Poetry Society followed by a poetry reading at 2:00 p.m. Harford County Library, Hickory and Pennsylvania Aves., Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

Tuesday, November 7

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Daniel H. Lightsey reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

7:00 p.m. Howard County Public Library, East Columbia Branch, 6600 Cradlerock Way. Open Mic Poetry Reading. For more info, call (410) 313-7715.

Wednesday, November 8

7:30 p.m. Maryland Writers' Alliance monthly meeting. Location TBA. Speaker: Author/poet Jack Geer, Ph.D., on "Fiction's Inner Harbor: The Chesapeake Bay and a Sense of Place." Free to first-time attendees and MWA members; \$5 for others. For more info, visit the MWA website: www.marylandwriters.org.

Thursday, November 9

7:00-8:30 p.m. Maryland Center for the Book presents its annual International Coffee House, featuring readings by Danuta Kosk-Kosicka, Lalita Noronha, and Felicia Morgenstern. Howard County Public Library, East Columbia Branch, 6600 Cradlerock Way. For more info, call (410) 313-7700, (410) 313-7768, or email batesp@howa.lib.md.us.

Saturday, November 11

10:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. "Building and Selling Your Manuscript: A Workshop for Writers"

sponsored by MidAtlantic Publishers Association. Poe Room, Central Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library. Free. For more info, call (410) 396-5430.

2:00 p.m. "The Century of the Millennium Reading Series," sponsored by the Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society in conjunction with the UMBC English Dept. at the Albin O. Kuhn Library, 7th floor. Readers TBA. For more info, call (410) 744-0349.

2:00-5:00 p.m. Towson University's *Grub Street Magazine* hosts a high school poetry contest. Towson University, Smith Building. Letters of invitation were sent to Howard, Baltimore, Carroll, and Harford Counties and Baltimore City. Ticket prices TBA. For more info, email jfelds1@tiger.towson.edu.

Tuesday, November 14

1:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Harford Poetry Society. Dave Kriebel of *Lite* reads at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air. For more info, call (410) 877-1625.

Friday, November 17

8:00 p.m. Lite Verse at Bibelot-Woodholme. Singer/guitarist Brian McQuade performs. Poet Felicia Morgenstern, author of *Night Mother Earth Told Father Sky She Was Tired of the Missionary Position*, will read. For more info, email lite@toadmail.com.

Wednesday, November 18

8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Seventh Annual Baltimore Writers' Alliance Conference, sponsored by the Towson University Master's in Professional Writing Program. University Union, Towson University, Osler Drive. Panel discussions, manuscript critiques/reviews (note: manuscripts must be submitted by Oct. 15; conference registration required). Keynote speaker: Philip Gerard. Closing speaker: jaki-terry. Fee: \$60 for BWA members, TU faculty/staff/students; \$90 for BWA membership and conference registration; \$65 for registration before Oct. 16; \$75 after Oct. 16. For more info/program, call (410) 377-5265 or (410) 321-1179; email hdiehl@bcpl.net or tmiller@towson.edu.

To Have Your Event Listed

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

Information received after the 15th of the preceding month may not be printed. We reserve the right to edit all material to fit space requirements. Note: Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper is published bi-monthly. A literary supplement is published in the off-months. Events may also be emailed to: lite@toadmail.com.

Membership Question?

Email pklock@toad.net.

SpotLite, cont. from p. 4

many more.

To our surprise, Lite's booth was housed in the children's section, snugly ensconced between "Nappy Hair" and the KinderMan (although we had not heard of him, he wowed the fisher price crowd: "Friends, friends, 1, 2, 3, all my friends are here with me!") The change of venue presented a dilemma: how to label our books. "For grownups?" "Non-children's literature?" "Adult" just didn't do it. Luckily, we were not permanently banished to the outer rim of teletubby land. Many stopped by in their weekend perambulations, including Lalita Noronha, Hugh Burgess, Tom Chambers, Rosemary Klein, Hal Haag, Mark Owings, Jul Owings & her brother Judd, Barbara Diehl, Linda Joy Burke, Carolivia Herron, Mimi Zannino, Elizabeth Stevens, Al Fick, Miriam Kelly, Virginia Pritchett, Brian McQuade, Rupel Marshall, Ted Hendricks, Dennis & Pat Barnes, Lisa Hurowitz, John Schweitzer, Barbara DeCesare, Vonnie & Melissa Crist, and Felicia Morgenstern & her lovely mother. Not to mention Ed Faine and Paul O'Neill, winners in our book basket raffle.

Special thanks to Lite staffers Dave Kriebel, Stephanie LaMastra, and Hilbert Turner Jr. for "camping out" at our booth most of the weekend; thanks to John Schweitzer and Lisa Hurowitz for lending a hand. A big bright shiny thing goes to Wendy Stevens & Vonnie Crist: "Jewels for the Body & Soul" were a definite hit.

While we did not see many events, we sold some books, stuck our camera in the faces of some interesting people (and a dog), visited the breathtaking Peabody Library, hefted books (and dealt with weirdos) on the Light Rail, ate grape leaves and drank iced mocha, sang along with the KinderMan, and generally had a great time celebrating literary arts in the "city that reads."

P.E. KINLOCK

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L I T E B Y T E S

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- We receive a calendar of events for children for the 30 branches of Baltimore's **Enoch Pratt Free Library**. Here are a few examples of events in October. Parents should contact their local library for a schedule of events.

Canton Branch, 1030 South Ellwood Ave. (410) 396-8548.

—Merry Monsters' Preschool Storytime. Thursday, Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m. Ages 3 to 5

—Fall Craft Program. Wednesday, Oct. 18, 3:30 p.m.. Ages 6 & up. Call to register.

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

—Autumn Crafts & Stories. Wednesday, Oct. 11, 3:30 p.m. Ages 5 to 12

—Halloween Party. Tuesday, Oct. 31 at 6:30 p.m. Ages 3 to 12. Scary Stories & refreshments. Wear a costume & win a prize.

Hamilton Branch, 5910 Harford Rd. (410) 396-6088.

—PreSchool Storytime. Wednesdays, Oct. 11 & 25 at 11 a.m. Ages 3 to 5. Stories, fingerplays, songs.

- Genia Slutsky, the mother of Lite's Director of Public Relations and Asst. Editor **Dina Feinberg** was one of six Baltimore Symphony Orchestra members featured in the Sunday *Sun*'s September 10 Arts & Society section. Mrs Slutsky is married to another BSO member, Dina's father, Leri Slutsky. Dina's brother Boris Slutsky, whose picture is in the Peabody News and the BSO program (in an advertisement for the Peabody Concert Series), will be a soloist on October 6 with the Peabody Concert Orchestra. He will be playing Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in b-flat minor, Op. 23*.

- Lite sends its condolences to poet and former Artscape prize winner **Marta Knobloch** on the loss of her husband Bill. They were married 42 years and truly devoted to each other.

- Congratulations go to **Sam Schmidt** and **Virginia Crawford** of WordHouse on the expectant arrival of a baby in February.

- **Black Planet Radical Books** is moving again to a larger and more visible location. It is now located at 1621 Fleet Street.. The phone is still 410-563-2008.

- **Scribble**, a semi-annual publication of the Maryland Writers' Association, is looking for submissions of short fiction, essays, and stand-alone novel excerpts up to 3,000 words, and poetry up to 30 lines. Subject matter is open. The magazine has published everything from humorous essays to a children's fable. Include a SASE, a brief author's biography, and any submission history of the work submitted. Send submissions or questions to: Scribble, c/o Sherry Audette Morrow, editor, 2800 Gibbons Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21214. For more info, call (410) 319-9487 or email Saudettemorrow@hotmail.com.

- MWA also announces its **Writing Contest 2000**. 1st Place: \$150 and publication in *Scribble* (except plays); complimentary admission to MWA's Annual Writers' Conference. 2nd Place: Complimentary admission to MWA's Annual Writers' Conference. Re-

serve the right to publish in *Scribble*.

Rules: Manuscripts must be original and unpublished. All submissions must be neatly typed or printed on 8.5"x11" white paper. Pages should be numbered. The author's name must *not* appear anywhere on the original manuscript. Short fiction and One-Act plays must be bound. Include a cover page stating: title of the work; author's name, address, and phone no.; a short author's biography. As this is a blind juried contest, entry is open to everyone, including board members of MWA. Winners will be announced before April 2001. All entrants will receive a list of winners. Only manuscripts with a SASE stamped with sufficient postage will be returned. All other manuscripts will be destroyed after the contest. The decisions of the judges are final.

Deadline: Postmark no later than Dec. 30, 2000. "Late" entries will be held for next year's contest. Submission fee: \$15 per entry (non-MWA), \$10 per entry (MWA members). Mail to: MWA Annual Writing Contest, P.O. Box 129, Arnold, MD 21012. For more info, write to above address, visit the MWA website: www.marylandwriters.org, or email ScottDMorrow@hotmail.com.

- **Experimental Forest**, a bi-monthly magazine, is looking for the best poetry around. Any style or subject. Send submissions with a SASE and a short bio (if desired). Send to: *Experimental Forest*, c/o Jeanette Trout & Kevyn Knox, 223 A Bosler Avenue PA 17043. Email: xxforest@yahoo.com; Web: www.geocities.com/paris/salon/9699.

- *Oxygen*, a literary quarterly for women, announces its **Oxygen Writing Contest**. 1st prize \$50; Honorable Mention \$25. Winners will be published and receive a year's subscription. Prose of any genre, any length sought—short stories, essays, memoir, plays, humor satire, cartoons, novellas. Deadline: November 1, 2000. Mail manuscripts to: Oxygen, P.O. Box 16366, Baltimore, MD 21210. Subscriptions \$10/year; sample issue \$3. For more info, call (410) 467-1605.

- From October 7 to November 4, the **Gomez Gallery**, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 100, Baltimore, is staging a fascinating exhibit featuring three artists from one family, each working in a different media. They are Amalie Rothschild and her two daughters Amalie R. Rothschild and Adrien Rothschild.

Long respected in Baltimore, painter and sculptor **Amalie Rothschild** displays a selection of works on paper, articulating a connection between seemingly disparate ideas and modes of expression throughout the history of art. Classical thematic, modernist abstraction and post-modern appropriation are uniquely juxtaposed to create imagery that is at once playful and thought provoking. Color is used sparingly and is subordinated to linear simplicity. Combining a calculated geometry with a passion for primal form, Rothschild's work sensitively questions the nature of artistic expression and timelessness.

Photographer **Amalie R. Rothschild** graces her current exhibition with a nostalgic nod to the musical heyday of the Fillmore

East during the 60s and 70s. Included in the work is an eclectic range of musical performers such as B.B. King, John Lennon, Tina Turner, Miles Davis, Janis Joplin, the Who, the Grateful Dead, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones and many others. Amalie R. was the one photographer who was given free reign and access to any and every show at the Fillmore. Her black and white documentary-style images give an insider glimpse to Bill Graham's (the owner of the Fillmore) mind and vision as well as never-before-seen images of the various musicians on and off stage.

Quiltmaker **Adrien Rothschild** has the same mathematical precision and simplicity for design as her mother. Her quilts are intricate studies of color relationships and repetitive patterns. Although at times the quilts will have similar designs, Adrien individualizes each piece with the use of different color schemes to set a tone.

Gallery hours are 10 to 6 Tuesday thru Saturday, or by appointment. For more info, call (410) 662-9510.

• **Power, Politics & Style, Art for the Presidents** at the Baltimore Museum of Art runs from September 24, 2000 to January 7, 2001. The exhibition spotlights 15 different presidents throughout history, including Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hayes, Roosevelt, Kennedy, Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. Visitors will learn about the politics that made them president and see style that made them legends. One hundred magnificent objects, including everything from furnishings and fashion to portraits and china, are featured in the display, exploring their fascinating place in history as well as their symbolic role at the White House.

• On Thursday, November 2 at 7 p.m. the Baltimore Museum of Art's Joshua Johnson Council presents the **Fifth Annual Poetry Jam** for poets of all ages to wow the world with spoken words—to speak up and out about art at the BMA. This year poets are challenged to consider Joshua Johnson's portrait, *Charles Herman Stricker Wilmans*, or Sam Gilliam's abstract *Medley*. The jam is hosted by award-winning poet Gayle Danley.

Note—The Joshua Johnson Council, named after the earliest name-identified African-American artist, fosters an appreciation for art through educational activities, performances, and other programs.

• During October, Borders Atrium gallery at **Borders Towson** exhibits a photography show by Edward Yealldhall. Borders Cafe Espresso gallery presents a mixed media exhibit by local artist Julie Gross.

• Until October 7 the **Canton Gallery**, 2935 O'Donnell St., is exhibiting "Aquavision," recent paintings by Cathy Yrizzary, colorful acrylics of goldfish and other tropical fish in an impressionistic style. On Friday, October 13 from 7 to 9 p.m. there will be a reception for the opening of an exhibit of paintings by Baltimore artist Dave Thompson. The exhibit is called "How Green is my Alley." His work focuses on the alleys of East Baltimore. The paintings use an abstract flat perspective held together with a deft use of color. Thompson's show runs from October 13 to November 11.

The Canton Gallery has a website for

Continued on page 14

FEATURE

Life, the Universe, and R.V. Gorski

Local writer and playwright R.V. Gorski believes that more people should go to poetry readings: "It might stink, it might not be Omar Khayam, but it is real." Poetry is "better than anything Steven Spielberg can put on a screen; it is thoughts, words and pictures—it is primary, it is the queen of literature, without which all the rest of our stories would lack color." Poetry is not just for writers: "everything begins with poetry." Mr. Gorski imagines that "hundreds of thousands of years ago, poets did not have a favorite place by the fireplace with the others, murmuring and jabbering in the background—they were the people who left the imprint of the strange hands upon the archeological caves in Europe and Asia."

Thus began a conversation over coffee at Donna's with R.V. Gorski. This colorful, inquisitive writer was born in Yugoslavia "in a city that was destroyed 35 times throughout history: Nis, or in Latin, Nissus," where the Romans built their first arms factory. Childhood was spent "under the Communist yoke" until his family emigrated to Chicago. Bilingual, he thinks in both English and Serbo-Croatian, but feels "caught between two languages, customs, people, memories, pictures" and calls language an intrinsically "inadequate" mode of expression. Mr. Gorski prefers to write in English, as "it is able to describe more than any other language." He adds that "a little bit of filtering" of his native language always comes into the writing process.

Poetry is a chameleon, both product and mirror of the surrounding culture. R.V. Gorski finds the poetic form "more powerful and descriptive" in English, but "more expressive and feeling" in Serbo-Croatian. He describes "folk poetry," which reflects the "historical times" of the country and is often based on a traditional story with powerful, emotional themes: "A mother has two sons. When the sons grow up, one marries a Serbian girl, one marries a Turkish girl." Since the Serbs are under Turkish domination, the Turkish wife pushes her husband to kill his mother. The man can't stand the nagging, and decides to kill his mother. The wife demands proof: "cut out your mother's heart and bring it to me." The son kills his mother, cuts out her heart, wraps it in a silk scarf and puts it in his gerkin. On the way home, his horse stumbles and horse and rider fall to the ground. The dead mother's heart rolls out and asks the son: "Did you hurt yourself, my child?"

To R.V. Gorski, history is less important than the "individuals in the story—I cannot live without a human spirit." The importance of history lies in how it impacts those individuals. His play *Ganglion 2188* (illustrated by Greg Beigel; Baltimore: Pygmalion Press, 1997) examines "the little corner of the mind where you reflect and you can't believe this hasn't happened to us sometime before. There is no Christian, no atheist who doesn't have this corner."

From *Ganglion 2188*:

ILINKA: Yes, Beazley, these human loves, and there are many kinds, are most powerful and they can truly impact on the vortex units. Sometimes I am convinced that even after cleansing them of all information, somehow they still remember. I

suppose that once they've tasted human love, even if we were to return them to less advanced creatures, they would still find a way to link with each other.

BEAZLEY: What kind of creatures?

ILINKA: Say, like wolves, bears, seals or even (trails off) trees.

BEAZLEY: Trees would be most inconvenient since they do not have locomotion and this love activity seems to require movement and proximity for inoculation. I do not see what they could do if they were trees.

ILINKA: They could bend toward each other until they touch. Or break.

R.V. Gorski believes the human story has become trivialized today: "We have been fed to live advertised lies." After the revolutionary war, "all the men and women who made our country possible—such as Patrick Henry, Ben Franklin, Samuel Adams, Thomas Payne—became marginal and unknown." Now, thanks to advertising, we know George Smith from New York as we are exhorted to "sell, sell, sell, work hard, excel" in the pursuit of being first. "Nowhere does it say, if you feel sad, put your head on my shoulder, let me comfort your soul." Mr. Gorski laments the "debauchery" of our country's soul: we have "forsaken our soul for convenience, facility to do business." We hurtle through things on earth at such a fast pace that we forget who we are. "No one asks why the rush to industrialization and to be number one." He quotes Alexis DeTocqueville (*Democracy in America*): "People in America don't have any ghosts—we are afraid to look at the past."

R.V. Gorski's work celebrates the individual and the ongoing story of the human spirit. "I write because I see the individual and the Force—there is a Force, this process, to which we belong, of being, growing, changing, never ending, not peace. Peace implies inactivity and boredom. My motto is 'question everything.' At the end of the human formula, the good or evil on which we base our entire lives means nothing to the force of life." While a dispassionate universe "disregards those traits in human beings," it is humans who "create the duality of the universe," such as good and evil: "You can't have one without the other." The universe presents a "great inflexibility" from which we steal certain things. When writing, "I sit down, and at the flick of a finger, sometimes it just happens—communion with the Great Beyond Here."

From *Ganglion 2188*:

MARY: That's right, that's right, and what about the joy of togetherness in which one blissful second can mean a thousand lifetimes and the slightest touch of a loved one is like the burning of a million galaxies. I don't think that you and your cold logic will ever be able to understand such things, Ilinka.

ILINKA: But the Eternal Entity will, and so your reason of existence as vortex units would have been justified, for myriads of other beings will be created because of your experiences and information. Think of it, billions of dreams, achievements, joys of life, laughter, entire civilizations, histories, paintings, music and all other untold varieties of vforms and configurations, the Entity will create based on your information. Consider the wildest and most impossible dreams of your host bodies magnified by untold times in some future reality. Creation is really a constant change of matter and energy and all their intricate and

Continued on page 8

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Lite Verse at Bibelot

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TENTATIVE FALL/WINTER SCHEDULE

♦ Friday, Oct. 20, *Bibelot Timonium*
Dust the cobwebs off of those Halloween poems & ghost tales and join Lite staff in **Fright Verse!**

♦ Friday, Nov. 17, *Bibelot Woodholme*
Music: **Brian McQuade**
Poetry: **Felicia Morgenstern**

♦ Friday, Dec. 16, *Bibelot Timonium*
Poetry: **Barbara DeCesare**

For more info, email lite@toadmail.com

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Feature, cont. from p. 7

infinite concretions, forms, beings, and phases. It is but the result of a regeneration cycle of the Entity. Once initiated, it cannot be reversed, and the Entity must bide its time for all these things to evolve, to play out their individual parts so that the Entity can observe its handiwork and, when entropies consume time and space, to begin all over again, never creating the same thing twice. The process is eternal and never-ending. And you, the vortex units, are a most important part of it, for it is you who record the universal change without which, the Entity would be blind and oblivious to its own handiwork.



Cast of dramatic reading of Heaven's Choice gives a final "curtain call" last Spring at Bibelot. Lite staff photo.

It is soon apparent to the reader or listener that, to paraphrase Douglas Adams, writing is a metaphor for "life, the universe, and everything" to R.V. Gorski. "Life is a burglar—nature is pretense. It has to be to survive. What makes it tolerable is a little bit of love, friendship and association, a tear-drop into a salty sea." Life itself is a process of "change and continuation. In this universe, as far as we can see it with science, heart, and art, there is no beginning, no end, only change. Death is a frightening first step to somewhere else."

This pound of throbbing flesh,
this pompous earthly braggart
obsteporously screams
into the oblivious ear of Eternity:
I am, I am, look! Look!

It is I, it is I, it is I,
who turns the skin of inexorable Muses
to icy, chilling goose flesh,
I, the seminiferous,
I, the prickly needle
in God's endless 33 1/3.

—R. V. Gorski

R.V. Gorski has appeared as an extra in several films, including *Poets from Planet X*, *Crybaby*, *Avalon*, *He Said, She Said*, *Guarding Tess*, and *The Stalwarth Assassin*, and in three episodes of the *Homicide* TV series. His plays include *Ganglion 2188*, *Heaven's Choice*, and *The Glass Waltz*. He attended the University of Illinois, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and Chicago State University. He worked in steel mills, banking, and taught mathematics before moving to Maryland to work for the government.

Favorite poets: Shelby, Beaudolaire, William Cullen Bryant, Longfellow, Edgar Allen Poe.

Favorite writers: Dickens, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Mark Twain, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, Thomas Mann, Erich Maria Remarque, Edna Furber.

Favorite Yugoslav writers: Nusic, Njugos, Petar Kocic.

P.E. KINLOCK

Lite Sightings:

THEATRE REVIEWS

Grace and Glorie. The Vagabond Theatre, Baltimore, MD, Sunday, Oct. 1, 2000.

This poignant comedy written by Tom Zeigler was smartly directed by Amini Johari-Courts, a lyrical production that dwells on life introspection in which experiences and patterns of behavior were remarkably exposed and enhanced by the actors.

The plot centers on a feisty country old woman, Grace Stiles, afflicted with terminal cancer, who wishes to end her days alone at her family cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. This rustic woman believes that she does not need help or anybody around and firmly states that to Gloria Whitmore, a sophisticated urbanite who from a successful New York business woman has become the volunteer worker, assigned by the local hospice center, that periodically visits Grace.

Gradually the relationship between "Glorie" and Grace deepens: consoling each other, discovering faith and the meaning of life, and establishing a spiritual bond that helps them, facing the inevitable, to come to terms with death.

Joan Corcoran as Grace excellently portrays a cantankerous 90-year old recluse, vibrant, eloquent and witty, who reveals a realistic approach to life and appreciation for its meaning.

Charlene Harris as Glorie is the vivid picture of a very clever but frustrated woman trying to escape from the tragedy that is consuming her life—her sons' death—and who gains new perspective on values and on the ups and downs of life.

The climax is touching and runs smoothly without any emotional eruptions.

This play has been performed with success since 1990 in Jacksonville, Alabama, and also on Broadway, just to mention a few places, where Lucie Arnaz and Estelle Parsons starred. Tom Zeigler is also well-known for his other comedies *Home Games* and *Weeds*.

MEAGAN GREYSON

The Lonesome West. A Washington-Baltimore area premiere at the Theatre Outback, HCCC, Columbia, MD, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2000.

This play of wild vitality, by celebrated British-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, was presented by RepStage, the professional theatre company in residence at the HCCC. It was conceived as the last part of the Leenane trilogy which comprises "The Beauty Queen" and "A Skull in Connemara," completely independent of them but similar in ghastly ambiance. This black comedy vaguely reminisces the works of Synge, O'Casey and Friel. The plot focuses on two violent feuding brothers, Valene and Coleman, who live in the fictional western town of Leenane (Galway), a place where it seems to rain all day and offers few amenities to entertain the "culchies." No sensible person would ever want to spend time with the Connor brothers, tied together by iron bonds of hatred, lacking in their dysfunctional behavior of any genuine familiar affection. The brothers' enmity is a constant explosive violence over their past and present grievances, expressed in a daily bickering that erupts into fights as they wrestle each other to the ground in deadly struggle. They return from the funeral of their father, hastened to his grave by Coleman's apparent accident with a shotgun, when they are visited by Father Welsh. He falls into one of his many faith's crises, exacer-

bated by their persistent warring, imploding for his ineffectual conduct as a priest. Exasperation over the brothers' periodic hostilities is conducive to a very desperate act of self-punishment for his inadequate ability to solve this and other parishioners' problems. In an ultimate act of despair, Father Welsh drowns himself in the river after sending an eloquent plea to the brothers. His letter states that, in order to redeem his soul, they should become true brothers by putting a stop to their contentious behavior, and leads to a temporary truce. The play, in two acts, acquires at the end a simple moral message when Father Welsh's death subtly changes the brothers' rivalry and pettiness, going from apologies, accusations and near-fratricide to a deliciously funny agreement.

This production owes a great debt to the artful direction of Kasi Campbell who shows great ability in casting McDonagh's humorous and compassionate eye on these bleak surroundings.

The four actors give the play its true courage and fortitude: Bruce Nelson as Coleman Connor renders a bravura performance in capturing that sense of violence, ready to erupt from a simmering seethe to a smoldering volcano, with the verbal panache of the Irish folks. Christopher C. Walker as Valene depicts a perfectly fussy and prissy character. Steven Carpenter as Father Welsh is very convincing as the non-self-confident clergyman, touching in his weakness and frequently maudlin. Susan Linskey as Girleen Kelleher, the village carrier of liquor, the "poteen," and mail, is very real as a "randy" seventeen year-old girl, not so tough as she seems to be.

Some have observed deep influences of socio-religious meaning in all this about the diminishing effectiveness of the church; however, for others it reflects the playwright's mischievous and zestful enjoyment in exaggerating his characters when they confront paradoxical situations.

MEAGAN GREYSON

Lite welcomes theater reviews.

Write us or send email to:
lite@toadmail.com.

An Outsider

To sit and stare
Upon my lonely perch
An outsider to the world
Their lives unfolding
Mine... so unknown
Every dream
Someone else's reality
Never my own
Never my own
All around me
The sky falls
No one seems to notice
I am the only one who cares
The leaves fall
The wind blows
The earth sleeps
And still I do not live
New leaves grow
Warmth arrives
The world awakes
Yet here I sit and stare
Upon my lonely perch
An outsider to the world

Heather Danielle Shoemaker

I met him while tending bar at this little place off the Interstate west of Omaha. Located as it was across from the Greyhound Bus Terminal, I could watch the busses pull off the Interstate and into the Greyhound lot. The boss inflated drink prices so the locals drank elsewhere, and nearly all the business came from the Greyhound passengers.

One night about eight, I watched a coach pull in accompanied by a resounding clap of thunder that cracked the sky and let loose a deluge. The wind drove sleet and rain hammering against the front plate glass. I remember thinking the boss would be in a bad mood because the weather would keep customers away. Sure enough, all the Greyhound passengers stayed in the terminal except one. A skinny, shriveled up kind of guy, I watched him walk slowly across the street with his head down. Though soaked and miserable, he seemed resigned to the weather.

He opened the door, glanced left and right at the empty room, then closed the door quietly behind him. As he walked to the bar, the wind moaned outside. He paused, cocked his head toward the sound, then slid onto a barstool. From his pocket he took out an airline ticket envelope and a handful of crumpled, damp bills. He wasn't old, yet seemed that way from his slow, deliberate movements. He put the envelope back in his pocket and dropped the bills on the bar.

"How much Scotch will this buy me?" His voice was tired, strained.

I spread the bills out. "That will get you three fingers."

He nodded and I poured. I watched him suck down half the drink in one jolt, and his eyes filled with tears. At the time I thought it was from the Scotch.

"Where're you headed?" I asked.

"Omaha Airport. I'm catching an overnight flight to Switzerland."

"Vacation?"

"No." He didn't elaborate.

I said, "Some nasty weather tonight," to make conversation.

He stared at his drink. "Don't worry, it will stop raining in precisely one half hour."

I smiled. I figured he was a joker, but I'd play along. "Exactly thirty minutes, huh? Not a minute more or less?"

"If the bus leaves on schedule, the rain will stop in a half hour." He downed the second half of his drink and wiped away the tear that tracked across his dry cheek.

"What makes you think the rain will stop when the bus pulls out?" I asked.

"Because I'll be on the bus."

"So?"

"It's a long story." He stared at his empty glass for a second, then rubbed his eyes. I figured I was getting hustled, but the boss wouldn't be in till ten and there was no one else in the place to talk to. I poured another for him.

He nodded his thanks, then stared for a moment at his reflection in the mirror behind the bar—as if he was looking back in time. The wind rattled the front window.

"Two years ago I was part of a British mountaineering team making an ascent on the Matterhorn. We were taking the classic route Whymper took in 1865. All of us were experienced climbers, and Sir Roger Watt, the team leader, and two guides had made the climb before. The weather was good when we started, and we made the eleven thousand foot mark by the end of the first day. That

Weather Man

by
Frank Andreotti

Illustration by Vonnie Winslow Crist

night, as the wind flapped and ruffled the tent, we stayed up late telling stories and singing songs." I saw a flicker of smile come and go. He continued, "At first light we resumed the climb and made the fourteen thousand foot mark by noon. Then the weather turned bad.

"With only a thousand feet left to the summit, the wind started to howl. It was a mournful, lonely wail that seemed to come from all points of the compass at once. Pellets of ice were the wind's teeth, and she snapped and bit at us without mercy. Most of the other climbers wanted to turn back, but Watt and I were determined to climb the last thousand feet. We left them huddled together to wait for us and started up alone. Watt, more experienced than I, led the way along a narrow ridge with thirty feet of rope between us. The route was not particularly steep and our crampons gave us good traction on the ice."

"Crampons?" I asked.

"Cleats with spikes that fit over our boots."

"Ah."

"I was climbing over a rock that Watt had climbed over moments before, when suddenly it slipped out from under me. As I lost my balance and started to slide, I called out for Watt to brace himself, but the whine of the wind filled his ears. He didn't hear me. He didn't know I was in trouble until the line went taut and yanked him off his feet. Sprawled out in the snow, we slid down slope with arms and legs outstretched. I made a swing with the ice ax, but my weight and momentum pulled it loose. Suddenly the mountain fell out from under me. I was in air. Watt managed to get his ax into the ice and it held. The

sudden jolt left me swinging like a pendulum at the bottom of thirty feet of rope. Dismal, gray scud sped by below my feet. Terrified, I called out to Watt, but the wind howled like a living thing. He couldn't hear me and I couldn't hear him.

"Each minute was agony as I tried to pull myself up the line. I was close to exhaustion and consumed with fear. Though not a religious man, I prayed to be saved. No—I begged to be saved. That's when I saw the first one."

"The first what?"

"The first Sister. She was a beautiful, sensuous woman with long, pure white hair, and billowing, white robes. She hovered beside me, defying gravity, with her arms outstretched.

"She said, 'I am the North Wind. Do you want my help?' I was struck dumb. She smiled, and three more, equally beautiful women floated up next to her. Their radiant faces seemed remarkably similar, and they seemed oblivious to, and unaffected by, the wind and sleet.

"She said—softly—sensibly—'These are my sisters, the East, West, and South Winds. Do you want our help?'"

"I struggled to regain my voice. 'Yes, please save me,' I said.

"She smiled again. 'We are all alone here with no one but ourselves for company. If we help you, will you stay with my sisters and me for the rest of your days?' I was desperate. I agreed.

"She said, 'Swear it. We are so lonely. Swear you will stay with us the rest of your days.'

"I swore! Who wouldn't? At that moment,

I would have sworn to anything! Suddenly my weary arms found new strength. Hand over hand, I pulled myself to the ledge until Watt was able to grab my wrist and drag me from the void. When I turned around, the Sisters were gone. I asked Watt if he'd seen them. He looked at me like I was crazy."

For an instant the lights in the bar flickered, followed by a flash of lightning and a burst of thunder that made my heart jump in my chest. I wiped the beads of cold sweat from my forehead.

"Then what happened?" I asked.

"I told my other companions of the Four Sisters, and they insisted I saw a fogbow—an optical effect produced when the sun strikes the clouds at high altitude. I didn't believe them, and yet the alternatives were even less appealing."

He paused to sip his drink. I was impatient to hear the rest. "So what did you do?"

"We never finished the climb. I left the mountain with the rest of the team. By the time we reached the lower slopes, the wind was fierce and heavy with rain and sleet. That was when the fear began to grow. All the way back to the States, the weather was miserable. I flew to the desert—to Las Vegas, Phoenix—the rain and wind followed. And I knew—in my heart—it was the Sisters. I'd broken my word. The curse of The Sisters has clung to me for two years."

"Two years? Wherever you go?"

"Everywhere. In the north, wind and snow. In the south, wind and rain. My wife and children left me. They couldn't take anymore, and I don't blame them. Always the wail of the wind—the voices of the Sisters." A gust assailed the front windows and they bulged inward from the strain, as if something powerful and malevolent was trying to get in. A chill slithered up my spine like a wet snake.

And then I grinned and poured another double shot of Scotch for him. "You had me going for a minute. That was a good story, friend. It rates another drink on the house."

The door burst open, two men came in, and the blast of wind in my face took my breath away. I watched both men strain to close the door and didn't breathe again until they got it latched. With shaking hands, I poured a shot of Scotch for myself and laughed at my own foolishness. The two men sat at the far end of the bar, and, while I served them, the stranger quietly left. A while later the Greyhound coach pulled out of the terminal, onto the Interstate, and headed east.

The rain and wind stopped instantly!

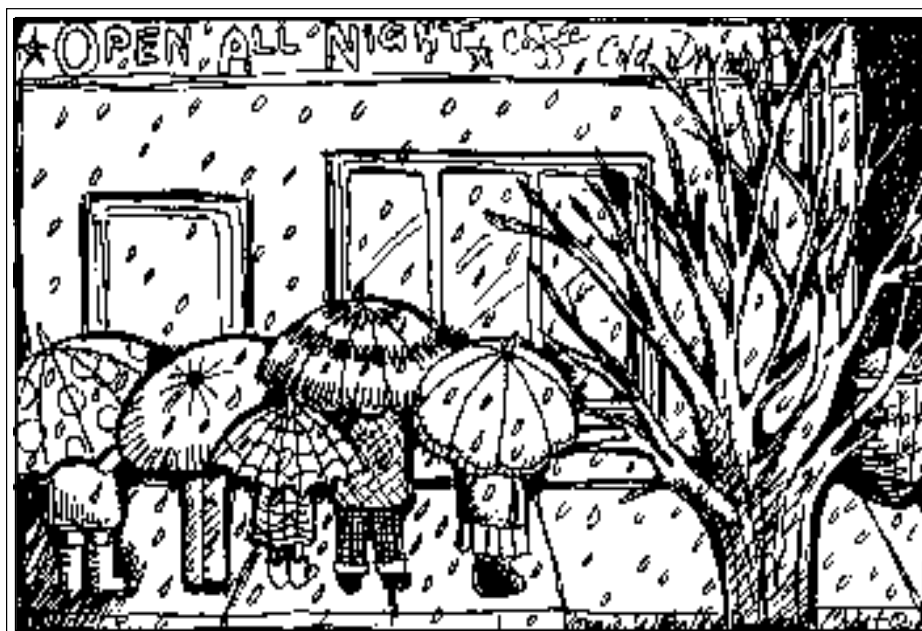
Amazed, trembling, I walked outside and looked up at the star-filled, night sky. I took a deep breath to calm myself, and the chill of the air froze me to the marrow. I smelled an electric coldness that I'd never smelled before. It was unnatural, frightening. And yet I felt relief, too—like the scythe of the Reaper had passed over and I was spared.

East, down the Interstate, the sky was as black as the asphalt. Flashes of internal lightning gave the roiling clouds an angry red glow.

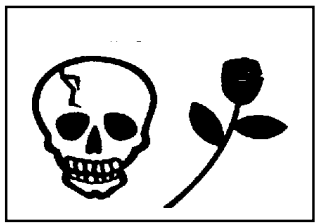
I never saw him again. And I never did catch his name. To this day I think of him as the Weather Man.

He said he was catching a flight back to Switzerland—headed, no doubt, for the mountain where it all began. Headed back to keep his word.

I hope he found the peace he sought. ☪



The Lite Circle Announces
Through A Glass Darkly



New Mystery/Gothic Horror/Dark Fantasy anthology is **open for submissions until April 1, 2001** (or when full). Needed theme appropriate: stories (under 2,500 words), poems (under 50 lines), and essays (under 2,000 words). Check with editors for other non-fiction. Editors: Vonnie Winslow Crist, David Kriebel, P.E. Kinlock. Assistant Editor: W.H. Stevens. Anthology will be issued in a 6" x 9" trade edition

of about 190 perfect-bound pages and will debut at Balticon 2001. First time rights preferred. Pay: in copies at this time. To submit, please send your work along with a reading fee of \$3 per poem and \$5 per prose piece to: *Through a Glass Darkly*, % Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. All reading fees will be waived with an advance order of 2 books at our low advance price of \$9.95 each (total: \$19.90) — final price after publication will be higher. **Please, original work only** (no copyrighted characters, e.g. *Star Trek*, *Dark Shadows*, etc.)

[To see the kind of work the editors selected for their 1999 anthology, *Lower Than the Angels*, which featured work from Neil Gaiman, Jack Chalker, A.C. Crispin, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Bud Sparhawk, Balticon Young Writers Contest winners (age 18 and under), and many more, send \$17 (check or m.o. — includes postage) to: Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com.]

The Lite Circle Announces
The DarkLite Poetry Contest



Lite Circle Books is sponsoring *The DarkLite Poetry Contest*. Entries should be Mystery, Gothic Horror, or Dark Fantasy poems of 30 lines or less. First, second, and third place prizes and certificates awarded. Winners published September 2001 in the book, *Through a Glass Darkly*. All entries considered for publication. Deadline: April 1, 2001. \$5 entry fee covers up to 2 poems, \$2 entry fee for any additional poems. Include SASE for notification. Send poems and a check/money order payable to *Lite Circle, Inc.* for entry fee to: *DarkLite Poetry Contest*, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. More information: <http://litecircle.dragonfire.net> or email: lite@toad-mail.com. **Please, original work only** (no copyrighted characters, e.g. *Star Trek*, *Dark Shadows*, etc.)

[To see the kind of work the judges/editors selected for their 1999 StarLite Contest and anthology, *Lower Than the Angels*, which featured work from Neil Gaiman, Jack Chalker, A.C. Crispin, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Bud Sparhawk, and many more, send \$17 (check or m.o. — includes postage) to: Lite Circle Books, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210. For more info, email: lite@toadmail.com.]

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Haunting Addiction

I am awe struck
 by the alien,
 the delicious abandoned house.
 Every gritty footstep,
 cobweb,
 squeaking hinge,
 thrills me.
 Loose floor boards
 threaten to swallow me
 into the void of the basement
 (always damp, always dirt).
 I sneak inside
 not expecting ghosts
 really.

Curiosity
 (a certain voyeurism)
 draws me. Hush,
 walk softly trailing dust.
 Words scrawled on walls
 on paper fragments
 are profound messages
 from another world.
 Forsaken possessions tantalize:
 baby shoe
 cracked cup
 dried herbs tied with ribbon
 comb (voodoo is possible).

I take the stairs,
 eyes raised, expectant,
 and fit my feet into the hollow treads
 perfectly.

An open door at the end of the hall
 invites me.
 I fall deeper
 into another woman's life.
 Hand-stenciled roses border the ceiling.
 Blue sea glass remains scattered on the window sill.

When I look out to the lawn
 through a wavy pane

I see what she saw
 as she stood there for the last time.

A chill,
 the aura of her presence in my skin
 startles me.

She inhabits my flesh
 for a lark.

Judith Grey

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A Conversation with Mary Jo Putney

by Catherine Asaro

The novels of Mary Jo Putney Putney have garnered both critical and popular acclaim. Ms. Putney has won numerous awards, including TWO RITAS and two Romantic Times Career Achievement Awards, and her books have placed on all the national bestseller lists, including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. Her work reaches across genre lines, with a wide following among readers of historical fiction, romances, and contemporary romance. Known for her depth of characterization, she brings a gratifying psychological insight to her portrayals of human nature.

Both well-educated and well-traveled, Mary Jo earned degrees in English Literature and Industrial Design at Syracuse University in New York, and has worked in California and England. Then she came to Baltimore, Maryland, liked what she found, and has lived here ever since. I recently had the pleasure of interviewing the articulate and personable Ms. Putney over lunch ...

Catherine: Your novels satisfy on many levels, both as entertaining stories and thoughtful commentary. When you write, do you think of the story first or the underlying themes?

Mary Jo: The themes don't always emerge at the beginning of the storytelling process. About half the time I start with a character who has been in my mind for awhile or has maybe appeared in another book. The other half I'll have a plot concept. If you start with the plot, the theme appears more quickly. Themes always creep in; I have a strong interest in growth and transformation.

Nobody has a life that's always easy. The difference between a good and a bad life is often how you cope with it. I like writing romance because it is an optimistic genre and there is a lot of potential for change. Possibly one reason the United States has the largest romance markets in the world is this belief that we can grow, change, and improve ourselves. It is so much an innate part of American heritage. We believe that people can become better, that there is room to improve, that a person with a terrible, terrible childhood has a chance for a meaningful life. These qualities are very much a part of what I write.

C: Your most recent book, *The China Bride*, takes place both in China and Britain. What motivated you to write about China?

MJ: Asia has always fascinated me. My mother lived in China as a girl, and I grew up with things Chinese all around, Mandarin embroidery and jade beads. I also remember sitting in schoolrooms when I was young, and they had those map racks that hung on the wall. Whenever the map of the world was up, I would look at those blank places in Asia and wonder about them.

This is actually the third book I've done with an Asiatic setting, and I've been moving ever Eastward. The first is set in Central Asia and is based on a real rescue mission to Bokhara. The second, which is a related book,

is set in India. And it made sense (I was heading east) to go to China. It also seemed like a fascinating and different culture, the polar opposite of Western culture. The pieces fell together in my mind, particularly since I had a character left over from another book who had a yearning to explore, to see the world, who had a passion for adventure. It made sense that he was not going to marry the girl next door. He went to China.

C: Your books are known for the high quality of your research. Do you do a lot of research? How do you feel about putting background into the story?

MJ: I was always interested in history. In grade school I read the Thomas Costain Plantagenet History of England just for the fun of it. I find it easy to do research. For each book, I've had at least two or three topics I didn't know that much about, that I had never researched before. I assume that people who read historicals are interested in history, so there's a good chance that any research I do will interest them.

For one book, I researched cattle drovers, the way they drive livestock from the far ends of Britain to big cities like London, sometimes hundreds of miles. Cattle, pigs, geese. They actually walked geese through tar and then through crushed shells so the birds would have these little boots. When they did turkeys, they had the birds spend the night roosting in trees. Fascinating stuff. For that same book, I researched the canal system in England, which had an enormous economic impact, although that wasn't the focus of my story. With *The Burning Point* I researched demolition.

Research gives a sense of a different place. I think one reason people read historical novels is to go to a different place. I also get ideas for plotting from my research, because the most wonderful things just turn up. The hardest part is weeding out about ninety-five percent of it.

But I think you can't just start a book and decide "I'm going to become a researcher and do history this time." It helps to have a lifetime hobby of reading and layers and layers of understanding so you have a sense of what is plausible and what isn't.

C: I've noticed how you use layers in your books. In addition to telling a good story, you layer in a lot under the plot, not only about the historical era where the story is set, but also commentary for our culture. *The Wild Child* is about a woman who wanted independence in nineteenth century England, yet it also implicitly comments on the roles of women in our own culture. Do you do that intentionally or does it come naturally?

MJ: It's hard to say if it's on purpose or natural, but it evolves out of the writing. [Laughs] I have a preachy side, so I would say it comes naturally.

At the same time, as you write, it becomes clear that these things do reflect on us. The heroine in *The Wild Child* lives a very, very free life, essentially allowed to do what she wants because she's considered mad. Yet the freedom and independence that she values so

much are fragile. She exists in the "walled stage" of her garden, at the mercy of the males who control her life. The book has a sequence based on the records of some alarming research on mental health care in the early nineteenth century, about what could happen if a man decided he wanted a woman's property or he just found her irritating. Pretty scary stuff, and that thing still happens occasionally.

C: It was unsettling, but effective. I was also struck by the evocations in *The Wild Child* to *The Secret Garden*. Although they are very different stories, *The Wild Child* is in some senses an adult retelling of that theme, with the roles reversed. I thought it a clever play on literary conventions.

MJ: Now that you mention it, of course, the parallels are obvious. My only contact with *The Secret Garden* was a very nice movie that came out a few years ago. I never read the book as a child, so I can't say it's programmed into my hard drive. But it is a setup that can work again and again. Another is a role-reversal of the *Beauty and the Beast* story, in this case with a normal guy. Here the beast is not ugly—she is considered mad. These archetypal patterns work well in storytelling because they speak to themes we struggle with as humans.

C: Your recent contemporary, *The Burning Point*, has stirred a lot of debate over its theme of domestic violence. Did you expect that reaction?

MJ: I knew I might get flamed. But that one struck me as a story that needed to be told. Domestic violence has come out of the closet in the last ten or fifteen years. Many stories have been written about the subject. I think our culture encourages violence, particularly male violence. Aggression in humans is essential for defense, yet it's so easy for it to run out of hand. The fact is, our culture tends to allow destructive behavior in young men—drink too much, drive too fast. Get killed in cars. And some are more likely to hit, too. But that doesn't mean someone is forever condemned and beyond help.

The Burning Point is a story where a couple had fallen in love very young—and then broke up because of violence. The young man involved, Donovan, had an abusive, alcoholic father; Donovan had been raised in abuse until he got large enough and strong enough to face down his father, to make him back off and stop abusing other members of his family. The violence that protected his family turned into a potential for violence within himself. As he says, much later in life, he'd gone over to the dark side. He had learned that violence solved problems.

He tries to overcome his background. That's the subtext of the relationship. He has a lot of good in him, he's much alone in the world, and in love with this beautiful, vibrant young woman, who is so healthy that she doesn't understand the subtle kinds of control going on. His insecurities make him more and more frightened that he might lose

her. Eventually it reaches the point of physical violence. But much more often it is psychological intimidation. She learns to take care not to say things that might set him off. This situation is common. When she realizes what is truly going on, she decides, "this is unacceptable" and leaves. She flees across the country, completely breaks off contact, and divorces him long distance. As soon as she accepted that the situation was bad and getting worse, she was out of there.

After she left, he took responsibility for what happened and spent a lot of time working on himself. He went to a battered women's shelter, he went into a counseling group, he realized that alcohol was often a trigger, so he just plain stopped drinking. His father had been an alcoholic, and he had the potential to go the same way. He consciously thought about what he had done wrong and how to change it. Even so, at ten years later, he wasn't sure if he was healed enough, and that is part of what they have to work out.

What made the book controversial was that ten years later, they're thrown together again and they find that they still love each other. So there's a matter of establishing trust. Can she trust him? Can he trust himself?

It's impulse control that manages our aggression. The difference between his behavior at 21 and 31 is control. If we just assume that anyone who was ever violent is evil and must be condemned forever, we are not dealing with the gray areas of real life. I think it's an optimistic story, showing the potential for change.

C: Many of your books have this idea of redemption. I'm thinking of *The Rake*, which is a favorite of mine, where a man in Regency England is an alcoholic but doesn't know it, because groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and twelve-step programs didn't exist back then. That one has received incredible reviews.

MJ: That book has spoken to many people. It's a good analogy to *The Burning Point*, because with alcoholism you can love somebody and hope that they can overcome their problem. The same is true with violence, but

Continued on page 13

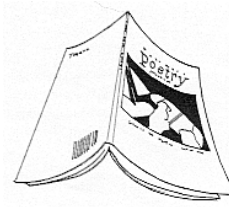


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Society's Page

Issue 4

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and Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society



President's Comments, Maryland State Poetry and Literary Society

Recent events speak to MSP&LS's long-standing interest in public readings. September 28 marked the beginning of the Century of the Millennium Readings series, held in conjunction with UMBC. Rebecca Jones, Gary Blankenberg, and Hiram Larew, winner of the 1999 ArtScape award in poetry, were the featured readers. The second reading occurs October 19 at 7:00 p.m. in the Albin O. Kuhn Library, 7th floor at UMBC. Barbara Simon has been carrying the torch for the Society in this new liaison. At the Baltimore Book Fair, we once again hosted readings at the Coffee Bar tent. Mario Susko, whose international reputation includes having his latest collection named the best book of poetry published in Croatia in 1999, was a featured poet. Also featured was poet Bertha Rogers, from New York, whose "A House of Corners" won MPR's chapbook contest. We also sponsored her reading at Barnes and Noble in Annapolis.

In a slight departure from our usual practice, we are shifting—in one new program at least—our attention from writers to readers. The concept is breathtakingly simple. We propose to sponsor gatherings of people who love to read and who are willing to share their favorite passages, paragraphs, or pages with others by reading them aloud. Where will these take place—and how will they be organized? Well, we are working on that by talking to libraries, churches, retirement centers, and community centers to probe their willingness to provide facilities. As to format, each reader will be afforded, say, twenty minutes to make an introduction and complete his/her own reading. The schedule of readers will be organized in advance from information submitted to the coordinator of each session, which should run approximately an hour and a half. The time allotment for each reader will be twenty minutes or so (shorter pieces are just fine!). The material may be humorous or serious and may come from any source—although polemics and sales pitches are not encouraged. Writers may of course read but—this time—not their own stuff. All sessions will be open to listeners as well as to readers. Anyone who is interested in participating may write to me at 4 Killala Court, Timonium, 21093. (Email: wordrite@gateway.net) I need this information: name, address, telephone numbers, title and/or subject of proposed reading selection, estimated length of reading (with brief introduction), and any special information that might restrict a reader's availability.

The title of this new program is Readers Forum. Let's hope it flies!

Hugh Burgess

ArtScape's Spotlight On Local Authors

Though ArtScape's planners have pulled back considerably from showcasing local writers, Barbara DeCesare and Chester Wickwire were spotlighted at ArtsScape 2000. Each deserves notice, but they couldn't be more dissimilar.

Barbara DeCesare is young, buoyant, sassy, cute, and enjoys poetry and life, and doesn't care who knows it. She has a nervous but infectious laugh. She is a comedienne. She is cool. She is a mature woman with children and responsibilities. She writes about relationships, both funny and sad. She has some of the feminist anger—her book was published by Anti Man Press—but she writes with compassion for the hurting. She writes in the vernacular of the year 2000 Baltimore. Poems in her book *jigsaweyesore* are hymns of sexual desire. A reader's body temperature rises after reading poems like *where is the fireman* or *a man with a lizard tongue* or *the new neighbors f*ck constantly*. But there moments of sadness and loneliness in Ms. DeCesare's work. In fact the three poems just mentioned, if viewed from another angle, are sad and lonely.

Octogenarian Chester Wickwire has a fine booming voice that is almost formal in its sound. His sentences pull up to a full stop with the volume of the last word down a decibel or two. He was a preacher for many years. He is the Chaplain Emeritus for Johns Hopkins University. He has lived more in one lifetime than most people could even imagine. He is highly respected by those he marched with in the Civil Rights Demonstrations years ago. Chester Wickwire was motivated by a passion for human decency. He has been to El Salvador, to Israel, to Guatemala. He grew up in Colorado, participated in fundamentalist tent revivals. He was stricken with polio many years ago, and walks with crutches today, but he walks. He married his Mary Ann many years ago, raised a family, and still is very much in love with life. His poems are stories told in a straightforward but highly descriptive style. His poems take the reader back into the earlier moments of the 20th century. Events live again.

This writer hopes that in the future the ArtScape planners will give the microphone to the artists of the Baltimore literary community. There are many fine writers in the journals published locally. However, next year some of the winners of

Maryland Arts Council (MAC) grants for poetry will be featured as readers. But will the authentic voice of the people be heard? DeCesare and Wickwire are nothing if not authentic. Academic poets, more involved with Greek myths, or some convoluted theory derived from Derrida and other French madmen, may be of academic interest, but they are not the voice of the Baltimore community. Poetry slams? They have their place. They give new poets a hearing, though the introvert would hardly expose his or her work to an audience more attuned to broad crude emotion than a perceptive quiet sensibility. No one will accuse Barbara DeCesare or Chester Wickwire of being quiet, but the Reverend Wickwire's work would not be appreciated by the audience of a poetry slam. Ms. DeCesare could hold her own, but the quiet, more thoughtful moments in her work would escape notice. That is why these community poets, who write about real life as lived, not theorized, should be given the podium. MAC grants go to the well-oiled, but the well-oiled's poetry often has no life.

Dan Cuddy

What's new at marylandpoetry.org

Maryland Poetry Review's web page has recently moved to a new address, been refurbished, and now offers many new features: There is our interactive Kids' Page, which gives kids the opportunity to send in poems and see them published on our site, or send in questions about poetry and read their and other Qs and As on the Q&A page. A second major addition is Society's Page, this newsletter of the MSP&LS, available both here in print and online. It features the goings-on of the society, essays, articles, poetry and more. The web site provides an archive for past issues of SP. In addition to these two new forums, we have redesigned and are maintaining a calendar of MSP&LS poetry readings, a mailing list, a list of MPR outlets across the country, and a publications page, where all MSP&LS publications—from back issues of MPR to chapbook-contest winners to the latest publication from Three Conditions Press—may be purchased through Pathway Book Service's easy-to-access toll-free line, fax number or email or postal address. As a standing feature, we maintain information for poets, such as submission guidelines, contest and upcoming theme announcements and MSP&LS membership information. Finally, we are about to post the winner of the best poet/poem of the millennium poll, accompanied by an essay by the editor-in-chief of MPR, Rosemary Klein, about the winning poet/poem. Please visit us at <http://marylandpoetry.org>!

Poetry

Last Night

Past midnight
footsteps approach

I wait
too disturbed for sleep

My voice rises
his eyes flash

He pushes
I grab

On pulling apart
a son becomes lost

Later his mother
asks why

I cannot
begin to answer

After tons
of hours

Fatherhood ends
in an instant

-Dennis Barnes

After The Storm

Our fallen oak lies mute,
dying roots trace the air
with rigid lines, only yesterday
supple in the soil; limbs, twigs
and leaves silently yield juices;
birds, squirrels gone, decay
left to the bore and buzz of insects.

Then rain comes down thick
as tightly woven cloth, pools
in winding bandages on ravaged
ground, seals fissures where for seven
decades the earth held firm, sustained
that living glory against the sky.

Now coming home in zero cold the dancing,
rising, curling smoke calls us to the fire
inside, made of the substance that cooled us
in its shade last year, calls the children to see
stories in the flames. Fragrance, like Ariel, rises
and leaves. Our tree is gone.

Except in memory and this poem.

-Elizabeth Burgard

Putney, cont. from p. 11

we haven't come as far there. *The Burning Point* is more controversial, I think, because it deals with a problem where the man hurts someone else, but *The Rake* deals with a problem where he hurts mostly himself. Also, people have been looking at alcoholism with AA since 1940, I think, when AA was founded.

When I wrote *The Rake*, I wanted to be careful that the heroine was not an enabler, that codependent behavior wasn't going on. He had to realize he was destroying himself first of all, that while she loved him she could not save him. The real climax of the book comes at the end when he's alone, he's sent her off. He's very, very close to taking another drink, thinking, why does it matter, and then he realizes, it matters to *him*. And that's the point where you know that he will be all right.

C: The heroine is unusual for a novel of Regency England in that she is older, almost six feet tall, and she had authority in her own right. I liked the commentary it made on how our perceptions of beauty and power affect how we view ourselves and conduct our lives. That theme seems to run through your books. Your stories are supportive of strength in women, an inner strength.

MJ: I try to write women I'd like to read about—women who are strong but believable in terms of their own time period. There have been unusual people in any era, there have always been strong women. The woman in *The Rake*, Lady Alys, as it eventually becomes clear, is the only daughter of a duke, his only child and heir, so she was raised to have authority. She also feels she's too tall, that she's undesirable, she doesn't fit into the normal pattern of society. She has a tremendous will, as does her father, which at a tender age causes her to leave home and make her own way. There were women like that.

C: You portray such characters with optimism. So often in our literary canon, female characters pay a price for having strength or being sexually desirable. Put the two together, and it's almost certain the character will end up bereaved, suffering, or dead. It's almost as if her sexual power must be neutralized. Look at *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In your stories, the women go through difficult times, they deal with being different—and then they get a life. They achieve success on a personal level through their growth.

MJ: Well, if you read history, you find individuals like that, individuals who are fascinating. No matter how wild some of it may look, it's always based in history, on all these interesting and different women out there. It's more fun to write about the unusual person, maybe a schoolteacher who's the daughter of a Methodist preacher and feels she can't live up to the spiritual level of her father, as I did in *Thunder and Roses*. Or my heroine in *Silk and Secrets*, who goes off to Persia and becomes a warlord, rather like the real Lady Hester Stanhope in Lebanon.

They're still women; they are strong in themselves and they're comfortable. They don't have to be men to be strong.

C: Your stories seem to say that a woman deserves to achieve what she values. Although it's a simple concept, it's rather radical when you consider the body of our literature.

MJ: That's true. In that sense, romance is

subversive compared to other literary forms. It's not surprising that it has those values; it is a genre published and written by women, for women.

C: Do you consider what you write subversive?

MJ: Absolutely. That's one of the fun things about romance. It's empowering, because the woman does have power and she achieves what she wants. The traditional female issues of relationship and emotion are celebrated, they're not brushed off as trivial. They're seen as significant foundations of a larger society, pair-bonding and raising the next generation. Without them, there would be no civilization. Instead of dismissing these as mere trivial female things, as our patriarchal culture tends to do, the romance says "these are important." I suspect these things are important to men, too, they just don't like to admit it in public.

C: One of the most popular science fiction subgenres right now is science fiction romance. It's read by both men and women. A reason given for its popularity is that it mixes ideas of science fiction, a literature of ideas, with stories of family, courtship and love, and so combines two aspects of being human. Yet we associate those two aspects as "female" and "male." Do you think romance is primarily read by women and tends to involve things we confine to the female sphere, or do you think it will become popular among both men and women?

MJ: Some romances probably spend more time on the emotions and the nuances of the relationship than the average man is going to be interested in. That type probably wouldn't be particularly popular with men. A male reader may be interested in love and relationships, but chances are he will get really bored with pages and pages and pages of thinking about about the relationship. Some female readers will also.

But there's such a broad range of romance. The best romances are simply very good books. A man who doesn't know he's reading a romance may just settle down and find himself reading a terrific story. A friend of mine had sent her manuscript in to a publisher, and somehow it got lost and ended up in a Jacob Javits Center in New York, with the title page missing that said it was a romance. The place where it had landed, everybody loved it, men and women, they didn't know it was a romance, they just thought it was a really good book. She's a very fine writer.

C: The same is true of your work. You have a wide diversity in your writing, which seems to reflect the growth and changes we're seeing in romance. Do you think this reflects the growing audience for the genre?

MJ: The line between romance and mainstream is blurring. The same thing is probably true about other genres. Instead of being a hard and fast line, where inside the fence you can do one thing and outside the fence you can do others, more books are falling in between. They may have mainstream themes but romantic values. That's probably where I would put my books. One reason I wanted to write contemporaries as well as historicals is that you can deal with contemporary issues in a way that you can't in historicals, at least not directly. And I felt the need for a challenge to do a different type of thing.

Among genre fiction, I think romance

now has the largest share of the market. For paperbacks, about half of the books sold are romances.

C: The diversity is in the characters too. You often portray people from different cultures interacting with one another. People who are different.

MJ: I'm always interested in the feeling of otherness that people have, the experience of feeling like an outsider. Many of us go through that, male and female, especially in adolescence. It's somewhere inside of us. People from different cultures are a metaphor for that need to accept ourselves. It works well in fictional terms and finds a psychological echo in most people.

The main character Troth in *The China Bride* fantasized that she would be more acceptable in her father's culture. She wasn't acceptable in China. Her unbound feet were too large, she was too tall, she was "impure" in her blood because of her mixed heritage. She dreamed that if she went to Scotland where her father grew up, everything would be all right. When she got there, she found it wasn't true. She would never be truly Scottish either. For her, the real maturity came when she accepted herself as she was. The real romance is that the hero loved her differentness, he loved every aspect of her. His acceptance helped her accept herself, just as she accepted what was unique about him.

C: You write a great deal about acceptance. That seems to be a theme in romance.

MJ: Very much so.

C: Why do you think romance is so popular?

MJ: Maybe that goes back to it being by and for women. Women have always been great readers, probably even in the Middle Ages, from what I can determine. Women have enjoyed losing themselves in books. Men as a group are more likely to want to do something physical, or at least watch something physical; hence the popularity of sports. A woman who is hard-working, with a job, a family, she is one busy and tired woman. But she can go into a romance for fifteen minutes or half an hour, whatever amount of time she has, and it's like visiting another world. She can come out of it full of energy, ready to face her life again, refreshed and with her values confirmed. Since women as a group tend to be bigger readers than men, the genre is very popular.

The big mainstream bestsellers tend to be books that both men and women read. If you have a book that has a good strong action plot, but also has strong relationships—that's a book with a broad potential readership.

C: Do you think one reason for the growth of the romance genre is that as women make strides forward in gaining equality, they're more assertive about the books they want to read?

MJ: They're more willing to admit reading them. Jayne Ann Krentz, one of the goddesses of romance, said that a real test of courage for a woman is opening a paperback romance on an airplane. She said this back in the days when so many romance covers were lurid bodice rippers, and it took a strong sense of self-esteem to open a book like that when other people were going to see it and judge you.

Now female vice presidents of corpora-

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Lite

The Lite Circle, Inc.
Guidelines for Writers

1. Founded in 1992, The Lite Circle is a non-profit literary organization devoted to the encouragement of emerging voices in the arts. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* is a bi-monthly publication featuring art, literature, and book reviews. Formerly a quarterly magazine, it is now a free tabloid publication carrying one story and several poems per issue. A literary supplement is published on the off-months. We seek to give emerging writers and artists the opportunity to reach a broad, literate audience, and to keep our readers informed of literary events in Central Maryland. *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper* is distributed in the Baltimore area and Central Maryland, with a press run of 10,000 copies. The Lite Circle also publishes book-length manuscripts in cooperation with authors under the imprints "Lite Circle Books" and "Sunrise Press." The "Guidelines for Writers" apply to all Lite Circle publications, and the term "Lite" as used here refers to all Lite Circle publications.

2. Lite holds one-time publication rights to all material accepted for publication. All other rights remain the property of the author. Terms of payment: For *Lite: Baltimore's Literary Newspaper*, 5 copies of an issue in which submission appears. For Lite Circle Books/Sunrise Press: 1 contributor's copy (unless other arrangements are made).

3. Electronic submissions to Lite are encouraged. Email submissions to: lite@toadmail.com (attachments OK; Microsoft Word or WordPerfect format preferred). Submissions may also be sent as ASCII text in the body of an email; special formatting such as italics or bold should be noted. We will also accept documents on disk (WordPerfect or Microsoft Word format preferred). Please include contact info/short bio. Hard copy submissions to Lite should be on plain 8-1/2" X 11" paper, double spaced, typewritten or computer printed, with no handwritten editing or other marks anywhere on the document. Notes concerning the copy may be made in legible handwriting on accompanying separate sheets. Copy must include the author's name, address and telephone number on the first or last page; for multiple simultaneous submissions, each work must be a separate document, each with the author's name, address and telephone. Please include short bio.

4. Word limits—Poetry: generally no more than 30 lines, but up to 50 lines may be accepted for poems in stanza, section, or any divided format; Fiction: 1,000 to 4,000 words (longer pieces may be used in serialized form); Humor: 300-1,000 words. Reviews: 300 words. Due to the enormous amount of material we receive, response time averages 6-12 months.

5. Lite reserves the right to do all editing appropriate to maintain grammar, stylistic consistency, and standard punctuation without advance notification to the author. We suggest that deliberate deviations from standard grammar and spelling be noted on a separate sheet to avoid editing problems. Lite will do everything possible to advise writers in advance of publication of any proposed changes which may affect the author's meaning or stylistic integrity; writers may withdraw their manuscripts from consideration should they conclude that proposed changes are unacceptable, provided notification is made within three days of notice of proposed changes.

6. Lite will not accept manuscripts which contain the following: sexually explicit language or graphically depicted sexual scenes; gratuitous expletives; pointless or graphic violence; material denigrating any race, nationality, gender, or religion. Authors accept all responsibility for factual errors contained in any submitted manuscript. By submitting to Lite, author agrees to the the editorial policies and conditions as stated in these guidelines.

7. If hardcopy material is rejected, submissions will not be returned unless a SASE of suitable size with sufficient postage is provided.

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Putney, cont. from p. 13

tions are throwing romances into their briefcases, and I think women are more willing to admit it. More romance writers are achieving success with crossovers, like Nora Roberts, Iris Johansson, Tami Hoag, writing stories that everybody can read and enjoy. So it isn't a ghetto anymore.

C: I've noticed the packaging is changing, too. Many covers have a classy, literate style. Although I have to admit, I have a certain fondness for the bare-chested, gorgeous hunk.

MJ: [laughs] I'm no different.

C: Another thing that often comes up with romance is the characterization of the men. Romance writers tend to write men as women perceive them. Or romance shows idealized heroes, from a female perspective. Men and women have been writing idealized female characters for a long time, yet romance is sometimes said to be unrealistic because the portrayal of the men may be idealized.

MJ: Oh, well, popular culture is always getting bashed by the intelligentsia. A newspaper article said that women in men's fiction tend to be men in female bodies. I think of the James Bond girls who can shoot six people and then hop into bed. Likewise, it can be said that the men in romance are really women in men's bodies. They're interested in clothes, they're sensitive and emotional, they're willing to admit they want children. And that is part of the fantasy. It's for fantasy and entertainment. But the really good books in the genre are ones that deal with complex, realistic characters.

C: Your characters seem realistic to me. I wonder if the "unrealistic" label also comes about because the way some women write about their men isn't how men perceive themselves. Romance heroes are called fantasies, but I wonder if it's really more that we see the men we love as more romantic and heroic than they see themselves. In the past, literature has tended to value the man's perception more than the woman's. Romance had become such a big genre now, it's hard to ignore. It's saying the woman's perception of these things should be valued, too. And it's often a positive perception.

MJ: Those are excellent points. Romance is by women who like men. It's not anti-male. Romance is a positive, optimistic genre. The male characters may need a little enlightenment, but they're basically good guys, and it's worth the effort. He learns from the woman to become a better person. If it isn't politically radical, it's nonetheless empowering and subversive.

Just like history is written by the victors, so in a patriarchal society values are defined by men. We come from a strong patriarchal tradition in Western society. But it's becoming more balanced now. A lot of women are writing romance and making a lot of money off of it, which draws attention.

Romance is much stronger in books than it is in television or movies. It's very seldom you see a movie that's pure romance. Romance is internal, and you need a strong plot in a medium as visual as film. Romance is always a good subplot for a broader story.

C: Often when romance is criticized, the critic will pick one of the worst romances they can find and read a lurid sex scene.

MJ: A very fine writer called Joan Wolf said it well, that all genres have trash—but only romance is judged by its trash instead of

its best work.

C: Romance deals with how women feel about their sexuality. The genre tends to be conservative in that the lovers almost always marry, but it also acknowledges that women have sexual feelings.

MJ: Early romances were a lot more ambivalent. That's where the infamous bodice-rippers came from, where a woman couldn't admit she wanted sex, but the man knew she wanted it. Those have been out of style for a long time, because romances reflect the growing feminist movement, how women feel about themselves.

It's not a coincidence that the classic historical romance is Kathleen Woodiwiss's *The Flame and the Flower*. The book was very much from a woman's point of view and very much about sexuality, and it was published the same year the Equal Rights Amendment was proposed in Congress. It had to do with breaking down some of the Puritan boundaries, about women accepting sexuality.

C: One controversy within the genre itself seems to be, "Should we embrace romance as a popular genre read for escapism, or as it a genre where authors explore literary ideas?"

MJ: It can be both. We are a part of popular culture, and publishing is very much in the entertainment sector. That doesn't mean you can't explore complex literary themes within popular fiction. My book *One Perfect Rose*, which made the *New York Times* Bestseller list, is about death and dying. It has romance and a happy ending, but there's also a serious exploration about what you do when you know you only have a few months to live. What values do you espouse? What do you cut out of your life as no longer important? What people do you reconcile with? What bridges do you build? Such themes cut across all kinds of writing. They are significant to everyone. There's no reason why they can't be explored in popular fiction.

C: That connects to another controversy, the perception that romance is written according to formula.

MJ: Shakespeare wrote to formula. He had to write five acts for his plays, fourteen lines for a sonnet. Formula is just another word for structure, expectations that need to be met. All books have them, even literary books where the protagonist ends up staring at cockroaches. You need a sense of your audience if you want to sell a book, or at least it helps. If you're going to write a satisfying piece of fiction, you need to meet certain expectations among the people who might read it.

Romance is about people discovering each other and working through their conflicts to a resolution. That defines the genre. In murder mysteries, someone is being killed, maybe several somebodies. I know a mystery writer who told me that the optimum number of suspects is, I think, four. If you have too many, it gets out of hand, if you have too few, it's not much of a mystery.

Every genre has structures within which it operates, but structure creates room for marvelous creativity. You can say anything you want in that sonnet, and the boundaries in some ways create more challenges, to see what you can do within those boundaries.

C: And it's a pleasure reading how you push them.

LyteBytes, cont. from p. 7

those interested in getting a preview look at the paintings shown. It is: www.cantongallery.com.

• **The Fells Point Creative Alliance** has a new venue. It is 413 S. Conkling St., between Eastern Avenue and Bank Street in Highlandtown. The Alliance's offices will be located there along with a large performance space and a new Gallery. Of course the Alliance is awaiting the opening of its ultimate home at the Patterson Center which will be ready sometime in 2001. For more information about the Creative Alliance's programs & membership, call (410) 276-1651.

• The Lite Circle announces its **Lite Verse at Bibelot** tentative fall/winter schedule:

—Friday, Oct. 20, 8 p.m., Bibelot Timonium: Dust the cobwebs off of those Halloween poems & ghost tales and join Lite staff in **Fright Verse!**

—Friday, Nov. 17, 8 p.m., Bibelot-Woodholme: **Felicia Morgenstern**, a globetrotting teacher, writer and poet, is a popular fixture on the local poetry scene. Her first collection, *Night Mother Earth Told Father Sky She Was Tired of the Missionary Position*, was recently released and hailed by critics as "seductive" and "stunning."

Brian McQuade is a local writer and musician who performs regularly in the Baltimore metropolitan area. His fiction has appeared in local literary publications, including *Lite*.

—Friday, Dec. 16, 8 p.m., Bibelot Timonium: Poet **Barbara DeCesare**.

Open reading follows featured readers/performers. Free. For more info, email lite@toadmail.com.

• Kudos to *Lite's* own Dave Kriebel, who serves as a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Scholar-in-Residence at the Landis Valley Museum in Lancaster, PA. On Sunday, Sept. 10 he gave a well-attended talk at the museum on "powwowing," a traditional magico-religious healing practice among Pennsylvania Germans. A lively Q&A session ensued, and audience members shared personal experiences and recollections.

The Landis Valley Museum opened in 1925. It is a "nationally significant living history museum that collects, conserves, exhibits and interprets Pennsylvania German material culture and heritage between 1750-1940" and "promotes education, research, programs and events for the benefit and enjoyment of its visitors and the community." The museum is located at 2451 Kissel Hill Rd., Lancaster, PA, 17601. For visitor info, call (717) 569-0401. Web: www.landisvalleymuseum.org.

• Don't forget to check out **Writers Conference 2000: Celebrating African American Women Writers**, Wed. Nov. 1-Fri. Nov. 3, 2000, at the Essex Campus of the Community College of Baltimore County, 7201 Rossville Blvd. Featured guests include fiction writers Pearl Cleage (*What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day*) and Marita Golden (*Long Distance Life*); screenwriter Charlotte Gibson ("All My Children"); Richard Wright/Zora Neale Hurston Fiction Award Winner 2000 Tayari Jones; poets Jaki Terry and Sonia Sanchez (the latter tenta-

tively scheduled); non-fiction author Jill Nelson (*Volunteer Slavery*); and journalist Deborah Gregory of *Essence* Magazine. Conference activities include panel discussions, workshops, readings, book signings, a book fair, and a Poetry Slam featuring The Arpeggio Jazz Ensemble.

For more info, call (410) 780-6742 or email cgoodman@ccbc.cc.md.us.

• **The MYTH Weekly Poetry Slam** has moved to TEAISM, 400 8th St. NW (corner of 8th and D Sts.) Phone: (202) 638-6010. Home of the 2000 DC National Poetry Slam Team: Scott Kirkpatrick, Denise Johnson, David Lankford, Tonya Matthews, Twain Dooley. Sunday nights 7:00-10:30 p.m. Open mic and slam signups begin at 7. \$5 cover charge. For more info, email GalAengus@aol.com.

Names in Lite

• **Frank Andreotti** (*Weather Man*) writes from Pine Bush, NY. Recent fantasy and science fiction stories have been accepted or published by: *Amelia*, *ComputerEdge*, *Climbing Art*, *Dark Starr*, *The Martian Wave*, *Outer Darkness*, *Pablo Lennis*, and *The Sixth Sense*.

• **Catherine Asaro** (*A Conversation with Mary Jo Putney*) writes both science fiction and near future suspense novels. She is known for her unique, character driven stories that blend hard science fiction with romance. Her next hardcover, *The Quantum Rose*, and the paperback of *The Phoenix Code* are both due out in December 2000. Her work has been nominated for the Hugo and Nebula Awards and has won many others, including the Analog Readers Poll, Homer, Sapphire, Prism, and National Readers Choice Award. She earned her doctorate in Chemical Physics and masters in Physics, both from Harvard. Her husband is the proverbial rocket scientist. Catherine says she is a walking definition of the word 'absent-minded' and has managed to spill coffee in every room in her house. Her website is: www.sff.net/people/asaro/.

• **Judith Grey** (*Haunting Addiction*) teaches English at Ridgely Middle School in Baltimore County. She spends her summers writing in Maine.

• **Meaghan Greyson** (*Lite Sightings*) 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.

• **Freddy Rodriguez** (*Cover Art*) has been drawing original graphic characters since childhood. He's hoping to someday work for D.C. Comics. He resides in Harford County, MD.

• **Heather Danielle Shoemaker** (*An Outsider*) is 15 years old and a Freshman at Hempfield High School. She writes from Mountville, PA and has previously been published three times. She plays flute in the Hempfield Black Knight Marching band and loves to ride horses.

**Writers Conference 2000:
Celebrating African-American
Women Writers**

**November 1-3
CCBC Essex**

featuring

Pearl Cleage

Fiction
What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day

Charlotte Gibson

Screenwriting
'All My Children'

Tayari Jones

Fiction
Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Award for Fiction 2000

Jaki-terry

Poetry

Sonia Sanchez (tentatively scheduled)

Poetry
'homegirls & handgrenades'

Jill Nelson

Non-Fiction
Volunteer Slavery

Marita Golden

Fiction
Long Distance Life

Deborah Gregory

Journalism
Essence Magazine

2000

WRITERS CONFERENCE 2000: CELEBRATING AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS



Conference activities include:

- Panel Discussions
- Workshops
- Readings
- Book Signings
- Book Fair
- And Poetry Slam! featuring
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For information:

email: cgoodman@ccbc.cc.md.us
or call 410-780-6742.

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CCBC Essex
The Community College
of Baltimore County
7201 Rossville Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21237-3899

CALLING ALL WRITERS! STOP!

You are NOT ALLOWED to put down this magazine without reading about Lite's 2000

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, 2000**. 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. Winners will be notified by March 31, 2001. 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

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