TOP STORY

Science Fiction: What Makes A Good SF Story?

Dr. John L. Flynn

What makes a good science fiction story? For decades, science fiction writers, critics and fans have been debating that very question, trying to define an ever-changing genre that really defies definition. Brian Aldiss, the well-known British science fiction writer and critic, believes that “science fiction is a search for the definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge.” Isaac Asimov argued “science fiction is that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings.” Ray Bradbury said, “science fiction is really sociological studies of the future—things that the writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together.” Damon Knight, the award-winning author and founder of the Science Fiction Writers of America, suggested that “science fiction examines the mystery of what makes us human—not in small, every day symbols but in bigger ones of space and time.” While most agree that science fiction is the literature of ideas, of possibilities and of alternatives, the elements that make a good science fiction story still remain a matter of speculation and debate. Nevertheless, a few key insights have emerged that form a consensus of opinion.

A good science fiction story must have a speculative element that is integral to the narrative, if the speculative element can be lifted out of the plot without affecting the overall story, then all the author has done is taken an existing storyline and dressed it up.

Continued on page 6
THANK YOU!
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Literary May/June

A Potpourri of Literary Events

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

Consecutive Reading Series

Saturday, May 4, 11, 18, 25/May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
8:00 p.m. Saturday Night Poetry Series, Mariposa Center for Creative Expression, 5000 Bervyn Rd., College Park, MD. Typically 3 featured readers followed by open mike. Complimentary refreshments included in $5 cover charge. For more info, call (301) 513-9622/email: MariposaPoetry@aol.com.

Sunday, May 5, 12, 19, 26
7:00-10:00 p.m. THE MYTH poetry slam, TEAISM, 408 St, NW (corner of 18th and D Sts), Washington, DC. Cover $5. For program/info, call (202) 638-6100 or email GalAegnus@aol.com.
Monday, May 6, 13, 20, 27
7:30 p.m. SLAM&Cide! downstairs at XandO, 3001 N. Charles St., Baltimore. Donation: $5. Open mic—local and national features—slam. Cash prize for 1st and 2nd place SLAM winners! Hosts: Baltimore Slammaster Nicki Miller and Gramma Dave Schein. For directions, call (410) 889-7076. For more info, contact Nicki at: GalAegnus@aol.com, or Dave at: grammadave@yahoo.com.
May 13: Jeffrey McDaniel/Venice Beach; May 20: Demetrius Tha Poet/Philby; May 27: Memorial Day/No venue.

Tuesday, May 7, 14, 21, 28
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 Swissa. For more info, call (410) 455-5325 or email tms@infamous.net.

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

Literary May

Saturday, May 4
Sunday, May 5
3:00 p.m. Readings For Reading at The Learning Bank, 1200 W. Baltimore St. Eleanor Lewis, Megg Magee, Reggie Harris and Rosemary Klein read their poetry. Donations are welcome but not required. For more info, call Moira Egan at (410) 644-1261 or Peggy Hoffman at (410) 659-5452.

Monday, May 6
7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. The Student Writers Alliance moderated by Sidney Parrott, a Howard County school teacher, meets. Tuesday, May 7
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. Members of the Harford Poetry Society read their original work.
Saturday, May 11
2:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. Kevin Reilly discusses his debut novel The Lost Treasure of the Incas, a crime story/thriller.
4:00 p.m. Thy Mother’s Glass Mother’s Day Poetry Reading at Barnes & Noble Inner Harbor. Hosted by Diane Scharper. This year features readings by sons—David Beaudouin, Michael Fallon, David Kreibel and others. An open reading follows. For more info, call (410) 704-2588. To be included in the open reading send poems to Diane Scharper, Towson University, English Department, Towson, MD 21252.
Sunday, May 12
2:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. The Wine Glass Poets meet.
4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse At The Minas Gallery. Barbara Hubbard and poets from Western Maryland read their work. Open mic after featured readers. $3 admission.
Monday, May 13
6:30 p.m. Enosh Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Novelist David Anthony Durham reads from his novel Walk Through Darkness.
Tuesday, May 14
12:00 noon. Poetry At Noon at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” is the topic of the readings in the Pickford Theater, 3rd floor of the Madison Building, 1st and Independence Ave., S.E. Guest readers are Lite Assistant Editor and poet Dan Cuddy, Yvette Neisser of Silver Spring, and Heddy Reid of Washington. For more info, call (202) 707-1308.
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event. Poet Tracey N. Thomas reads.
6:30 p.m. Enosh Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Elizabeth Stevens and Marta Knobloch read from their latest work. Ms. Stevens’ book Cherry Pie and Other Stories (Lite Circle Books) follows on various kinds of loss. Ms. Knobloch’s most recent work, La Virago (Campanotto Editore) is a fact-based play (in English and Italian) about Caterina Sforza, “The Virago,” a widowed countess who valiantly defied Pope and a foreign army to defend her sons’ inheritance.

Wednesday, May 15
Thursday, May 16
7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. American History Book Group discusses This Hallowed Ground: The Union Side of the Civil War by Bruce Catton.
Friday, May 17
Saturday, May 18
12:00 noon-3:00 p.m. Poetry in the Shade,” the Lite Circle’s Spring/Summer 3rd Saturday poetry series at Something Special Coffee Shop, 504 Main St., Laurel MD. Featured reader: Victoria Gaile Laidler (see “Baltimore’s Poetry Winners, page 5) followed by open mike. Free. Info: lite@toadmail.com.
Sunday, May 19
2:15 p.m. The Lite Circle hosts a publication party for Elizabeth Stevens, author of Cherry Pie & Other Stories. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, Poe Room. Info: lite@toadmail.com.
4:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. Philosophy Book Group discusses a collection of Arthur Schopenhauer’s works entitled Philosophical Writings, edited by Wolfgang Schirmacher.
Monday, May 20
7:30 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. The Science Fiction Group discusses Harry Turtledove’s Case of the Toxic Speld Dump.
Tuesday, May 21
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. Poet Dennis Barnes reads his work.
Thursday, May 23
7:00 p.m. Barnes & Noble Ellicott City. A Novel Idea, a discussion of Lalita Tademy’s epic novel

The Big Literary “Spot” Lites

Borders-Columbia, 6151 Columbia Crossing Circle. Phone: (410) 290-0062.
Borders-Towson, 415 York Rd. Phone: (410) 296-0791.
Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch, 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore. Phone: (410) 396-5494/396-5847.
Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor, 501 Churchville Rd. (Rte 22), Bel Air, MD. Phone: (410) 877-1625.
Mystery Loves Company Booksellers, 1730 Fleet St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 276-6708 or (800) 538-0042.
WordHouse Salon at Minas, 733-35 S. Ann St., Fells Point. Phone: (410) 732-4258.
XandO, 3003 North Charles St., Charles Village. Phone: (410) 889-7076.

Sunday, June 22

The Griots Circle of Maryland presents a celebration of Juneteenth in the African oral tradition. A Juneteenth (observed on June 19) is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery. At the library stories, songs, proverbs, poetry and African drumming featuring Banjo Butler, Janice Curtis-Greyhene, Felisse Keeling, Tinku Ikuaku and Judge homas Curtis will be performed.

Tuesday, June 25
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. Program TBA.

Wednesday, June 26
6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poe Room, a launch party will be held to celebrate the publication of Reginald Harris’ Ten Tongues, the second volume of poetry produced by Three Conditions Press. Harris will read from his book, following which there will be a book signing and a reception, provided by New Psalmist Baptist Church catering. The Three Conditions Press is a subsidiary of the Maryland Poetry & Literary Society.

Tuesday, June 4
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. John Kehring presents a slide show featuring his photography and reads his Nautical Poems.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poe Room. Ben Schrank reads from his new novel Consent.

Wednesday, June 5
6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poe Room. Lauren Porosoff Mitchell reads from her novel, Look At Me.

Sunday, June 9
4:00-6:00 p.m. WordHouse At The Minas Gallery. The Poets of WordHouse read their work. Open mic after the featured readers. $3 admission.

Tuesday, June 11
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. A recording of a radio program originally broadcast in 1982 featuring poet Hugh Burgess will be played. Mr. Burgess will also be present and will comment on the program and subsequent events.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poe Room. Poets Jennifer Michael Hecht and Michael Lally read latest work.

Tuesday, June 18
1:00 p.m. Harford Poetry Society Event at Rockfield Manor. Poet Susan Beverley Tegeler from Western Maryland will read.

From Western Maryland will read.

6:30 p.m. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Central Branch. Poe Room. Poet Felicia Morgenstern reads from her book The Night Mother Earth Told Father Sky She Was Tired of the Missionary Position.

Saturday, June 22

Normally, in our sf/fantasy issue we write about some topic relating the science or technology. But this time I am moved to write something different. I raise my editorial voice against the plague of meanness that is sweeping our country.

First, a definition from Mr. Webster (7): “Mean: characterized by petty selfishness or malice; contemptibly disobliging or unkind; tending to harass or distress by reason of vexatious characteristics or conditions. “I believe that this sort of mean behavior is endemic in our society today, despite the momentary solidarity engendered by 9-11. Every day I hear mean comments, directed both at me and others, uttered by both friends and strangers. Meanness has practically corrupted our humor. Many people think it’s funny to comment unfavorably on a person’s, even a friend’s, appearance. I know one individual who refuses to overweight other people as people. “Part of this is due to the disappearance of tact in our society—if you have an opinion of someone, no matter how mean or ill-considered, you are encouraged to say it. It is called “assertiveness” or “expressing your feelings.” Usually, though, when such feelings are expressed, other people’s are trampled upon. Whatever happened to the Golden Rule? It seems a reverse Golden Rule, call it a Brass Rule, operates today: “Do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.” Plenty of brass is shown today, by nearly everyone.

Meanness is particularly valued—yes, valued—in the workplace. Mean people get promoted faster than nice ones. I’ve seen it over and over again. Only in the workplace the mean person is “a hard charger” or “a tough guy.” The mean person is “a hard charger” or “a go-getter,” “on the fast track.” You don’t want to cross a hard charger on the fast track. Mean people are idolized in the literature on success. They are the ones who are always looking out for number one. Let’s do it, okay? Can’t we all just get along?

David W. Kriebel, Editor

I Hear America Singing

Each issue we will select one patriotic poem and print it in this special section. Poets whose work is selected will receive a $25 savings bond.

By “patriotic poem” we mean any poem which:

• celebrates the United States or its democratic and pluralistic ideals;
• eulogizes the victims of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001;
• honors our men and women in uniform—military personnel, police, firefighters, postal workers, and medical personnel.

Poems should be no more than 40 lines long. Please submit only one poem per entry to:

Attn: Patriotic Poem
Lite: Baltimore’s Literary Newspaper
PO Box 26162, Baltimore, MD 21210
Email: lite@toadmail.com

ONE OR MORE WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

A Manifesto Against Meanness
The Local Literary Scene

As usual, this column kicks off with an account of things the erstwhile Great Critic did not do or meant to do but did not finish. Thus I started off my literary March by visiting the Howard Community College Book Festival on March 16. I missed all of the several readings and workshops (featuring artists like Michael Collier, Kendra Kepelke, Linda Joy Burke, Tam Hart, and Daniel Mark Epstein) since I was trying to hawk Lite Circle Books in the book pavilion, but I heard they were pretty good. The other thing I missed that weekend which got positive reviews was Write Now 3: An African-American Literary Experience, an April 15-17 literary conference co-sponsored by Coppin State University and famed Baltimore bookseller Sibanye. The conference was headlined by Haki Madhubuti who was honored with a Lifetime Achievement award along with Lucille Clifton. Break-out sessions and workshops featured notable writers like Kwame Alexander, Olu Woods, Tonya Matthews, and Reggie Harris. The person who put me on the latter event was a co-founder and area open mic host BLEEK BLEEK and POZATIV CHAINGE have been hosting an open mic at Barnes and Noble Inner Harbor since September 1999 (the last Tuesday of every month at 7:30 PM), and they recently started hosting an event the first and third Tuesdays of every month at the Comedy Factory. Getting on BLEEK’s e-mail list, like being on Maritza River’s (Mariposa Center for Artistic Expression), is a great way to find out what’s going on in literary Baltimore. You can write to BLEEK at bleek4@juno.com. More on BLEEK in a minute. I meant to interview him about Write Now 3, but then I got caught up in the usual family dramas…

March 22 found me at Gallery 409 for the Friday Poetry Open Mic and Slam hosted by Poetology. I enjoyed checking out the artwork in the gallery while the show was set up—don’t remember who did the painting of the continental U.S. as a slave ship, but it definitely stuck out in my mind. The upstairs reading venue was this Great Critic’s idea of paradise. Like if you crossed the cast and set of “A Different World” with the scene on Tuesday nights at Funk’s Refreshments, comfy chairs with lumbar support and bathrooms for pregnant Great Critics, and smoking (for the unpregnant). The evening was hosted by Poetology’s Complex and opened by Poetry for the People’s Olu Woods. The featured reader for the evening was Flomentalz, a “master of personification” featured on HBO Def Poetry Jam whose rants on breastfeeding, the life of food inside the refrigerator, menstruation, and bowel movements were well received by the audience. I could only stay for the first round of the slam that followed, so I don’t know who won—but I must say I personally was blown away by Patrick from DC, who read a revelation of a poem about discovering the meaning of love at Reagan National Airport (this last pronounced in tones of wonder and rage). Very cool.

On March 26 I went over to the Barnes and Noble at the Inner Harbor to check out the POZATIV CHAINGE open mic. The featured poet, Lisa Williams, read a fine mix of work that included “Here We Go Again,” which cast current events in the light of TV images from the 1970s, and “Vanishing,” a look at a woman divest ing herself of her own personality. DC’s Dri Fish, whose CD was set to be launched at Gallery 409 April 26, read a couple of memorable pieces during the open mic portion of the program. I also enjoyed the work of Catalina “Cat” Clark, particularly the first thing she read (“I speak to whoever will listen/But mostly they just watch me talk”).

I rounded out my Circuit April 6 with a visit to the Maryland Poetry Festival at the Central Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library where, true to form, I skipped all of the readings and workshops in favor of hawking Lite Circle wares. But I did find a couple of cool books there (see book reviews), so it was worth my while.

One final note: now that the new Lite Website (www.litecircle.com) is up and running, we’ll be able to keep our calendars and announcements more current. I already owe an apology to Olu Woods for failing to publicize the Intercollegiate Poetry Slam 2002, a Poetry for the People event at the Heritage Theater April 18 that featured poets from area universities and colleges. Don’t let me miss anything else that needs some “Meter and Metaphor” attention—please contact me if you have something coming up that you would like to see (or place) in this column. My e-mail address is kyemleya@toadmail.com and I look forward to hearing from you.

LITERARY PERSONALS

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POETRY: FIRST PRIZE

Suspended Animation

We left the atmosphere in a glittering swarm of endless duplications of our shiny carapaces, their apheliodal entrails sturdily trickling, counting down to a less likely tomorrow as we fled the noisy light of our reddening sun.

A blue star in the constellation of the Dragonfly was chosen again and again by the fanned array of holy images, no matter how many times magicians shuffled their whispering surfaces. For days, everyone took turns at the telescopes.

Beyond familiar stars the field worked for years, connecting us with invisible filaments to our past. When an unexpected demonstration of a doctrine of the sacrament of physics turned our brothers to a sudden flash, then cooling cinders drifting in the house of dreams we opened the curtains in a silent void, wrapped in the blanket of time. Sleepwalking toward entropy, we float onward and sealed their doors against the pressure of grief.

We entered the stacked, small cavities of oblivion of our destination, lost in an altered cosmology.

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F.J. Bergmann

POETRY: SECOND PRIZE

The Celebrity

We didn’t storm the streets in fear as people did in yesteryear, or photograph, respectfully, the apparition in our sky—instead, we put his name in lights! We sent out nosy satellites to harvest samples, poke and pry, and ask him questions, eye to eye.

Perhaps, when next his orbit brings him sunward-side of Saturn’s rings, he’ll find, as stars of Terra do, that he has dropped from public view; and fly past, with a dusty sigh for the pomp and praise of days gone by.

Victoria Gaile Laidler

POETRY: THIRD PRIZE

Unresponsive Sky

The skeleton surrounded by the skin is warm to the touch.
Ask anyone.

It is something like a sea of stars burning among planets.
Black sky.

Quiet voices lost in the universe echoing in the distance.
Silence, the response.

L.B. Sedlacek

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Cont. from page 1

with a science fiction setting or prop. Taking the plot of Nora Ephron’s “When Harry Met Sally” and setting it on Mars does not make a good science fiction story; however, making one of the characters a Martian with completely different views on sexuality and mating rituals might make an interesting story. The speculative element must be an integral part of the story; without it, a good science fiction story would collapse. For example, in “All You Zombies” (1959) by Robert Heinlein, the protagonist uses a time machine not only to meet his grandfather and witness the birth of his great-great grandchildren but also to change gender and mate with himself in order to produce the offspring that follow. Without the time machine, there would be no time paradox, and no real plot behind the story. Time travel, interstellar flight, genetic engineering, first contact with an alien civilization, robots and artificial intelligence, nuclear holocaust and other end-of-the-world nightmares, alien invasion, telepathy and other forms of extrasensory perception, utopias and dystopias, space colonization, and immortality are all elements that might be considered speculative. They form the vast sandbox in which many successful science fiction authors play.

With an entire universe, including all of the events past, present and future, at their disposal, authors like Ray Bradbury, Arthur Clarke, and L. Ron Hubbard have produced science fiction stories with a sense of wonder and awe. Good stories take us to places we’ve never been, introduce us to people we’ve never met, and show us things we’ve never dreamed. By penetrating the known world of the here-and-now and going beyond all barriers and boundaries, science fiction challenges us with new realities and high levels of consciousness and being. Olaf Stapledon in Last and First Men (1930) and Stephen Baxter in The Time Ships (1998) take us millions of years into the future and introduce us to a form of man quite different from ourselves. Similarly, Isaac Asimov in The Foundation Trilogy (1964) and Larry Niven in Ringworld (1970) take us to the very edge of known space and reveal that the vast cosmos is still within our grasp. The very best of science fiction probes the outer limits of our imagination and challenges the human spirit to reach beyond the conventional to the new and fabulous worlds with equally new and fabulous ideas. No other literary genre, from mysteries or gothic romances to tragedies or comedies, does that.

Good science fiction stories may well transport us to the outer reaches of the universe or to the end of time, but they also remain well grounded in science or that reasonable extrapolation of present-day knowledge.5 Science fiction authors rarely violate the laws of physics, and then only for purposes of literary license. For instance, we know that faster-than-light travel is a scientific impossibility with today’s current technology, but many stories have relied on warp drive, wormholes, and other scientific theories to move their starships from one end of the galaxy to the other. Murray Leinster’s alien space fleet in Talents, Incorporated (1962) warps space around it in order to penetrate a separate space-time continuum, anticipating the deployment of “star drive” in Gene Roddenberry’s “Star Trek” (1966) series. In Jack Williamson’s The Legion of Space (1934) and Frank Herbert’s Dune (1965), spaceships break the speed of light barrier by curving or folding space. Alien engineers lend a hand in Arthur Clarke’s 2001: A Space Odyssey and Carl Sagan’s Contact (1985), and help transport the astronaut protagonists through a kind of “star gate” or interstellar “switching station” to the other side of the galaxy. The science in science fiction is quite often what separates a fair story from a really good one, and what separates science fiction from sci-fi, that Hollywood fast-food version of SF that often violates or outright contradicts the laws of physics for the sake of gee-whiz special effects. While we may marvel at the X-Wing fighters attack the Death Star and blow it to smithereens in George Lucas’s “Star Wars” (1977), we must also acknowledge that it’s light years away from good science fiction; it’s really sci-fi, more specifically space opera, not science fiction at all. Starships don’t need wings, particularly crossed wings, to fly in outer space; there’s no up-or-down in space, and since there’s no atmosphere in space to carry sound waves, explosions—no matter how spectacular in nature—would be entirely silent. Science fiction, no matter how hard-core, must always be science-based fiction, or it would be an entirely different form of fiction, like fantasy or horror.

The writing in good science fiction stories is always exemplary, with memorable characters, consistent point-of-view, interesting plotting and style, believable dialogue, and all of the other hallmarks of literary fiction. Naturally, a science fiction writer’s first aim is to tell an interesting, exciting and thought-provoking story. The story may well involve events and settings and ideas that are not commonplace, and perhaps that are not even possible, but a good science fiction writer knows that, if he has created memorable characters, maintained a consistent point-of-view, and done all of the other things necessary to tell a good story, his readers will be much more open and accepting of his extraordinary events and settings and ideas. Science fiction is, with one notable exception, no different from other forms of contemporary fiction. Science fiction stories must tell a clear and articulate story, even if they are about alien creatures or intelligent robots who live on brave, new worlds. The one notable exception, which makes science fiction different from all other

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LITE BYTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ The 44th Annual Smith College Used Book Sale will be held from Friday May 17 to Sunday May 19. It will be held at a new location this year, the 4-H Building at the Timonium Fairgrounds. The hours are: on Friday May 17 from 10 to 8 p.m.; on Saturday May 18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and on Sunday May 19 from 12-5 p.m. From 12-5 everything is at half-price. From 6 to 8 all you can carry for $2. For more information call 410-0821-6241.

■ The Baltimore Writers’ Alliance in conjunction with the Mildred Werba Poetry Contest is offering prizes of $150, $100, and $75 for conjunction with the Mildred Werba Poetry submission fee: $10.00 for BWA Members, $15.00 for non-members. Send a SASE for notification of the winners. Manuscripts will not be returned.

■ Lyndie Vantine & Grant A. Anderson, Drawings, Paintings & Sculpture “will be” the show at the Resurgam Gallery, 910 South Charles St, Baltimore from May 30 to June 23rd. The show opens June 1st to 9 p.m.

Schedule of Upcoming Theatrical Events in the Baltimore Area—courtesy of Shirley Bell:

■ The Mobtown Players, in association with Sons of Patterson Park, will present a high energy updated version of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Director Ryan Whinnem guides n ensemble cast which will perform in a wooded area near the Patterson Park casino. Outdoor performances are scheduled on Thursdays through Sundays at 8 p.m. from May 9 to May 19, 2002. Tickets are $10, $8 for seniors and students. Call (410) 467-3057 for reservations.

■ The Vagabond Players, America’s oldest continuous “little theater,” continues their 86th season with London Suite by Neil Simon from May 2 to May 19.

■ From June 7 to July 7 the Vagabond Players will present Alan Bennett’s London Suite, with a madcap British comedy and a story of running Donald Margulies’ Collected Stories. The play runs to May 19. Collected Stories examines the relationship between a renowned writing professor and her student. Gradually, the mentorship evolves into a deep friendship and these two writers—one established, one aspiring—begin to share their lives with one another. As the play progresses, the separation between teacher and protégé, between public and private lives, becomes increasingly blurred, spiraling the two into a web of deception and betrayal.

■ The Olney Theatre Center is in the midst of running Donald Margulies’ Collected Stories. The play runs to May 19. Collected Stories examines the relationship between a renowned writing professor and her student. Gradually, the mentorship evolves into a deep friendship and these two writers—one established, one aspiring—begin to share their lives with one another. As the play progresses, the separation between teacher and protégé, between public and private lives, becomes increasingly blurred, spiraling the two into a web of deception and betrayal.

A Magnificent Age: The Walters’ 19th Century Collection opens June 16 in brand new galleries after more than four years. The works will be hung in fully refurbished galleries that trace the major developments in European and American art. The Walters is in the rare position of being able to tell the complete story of 19th century art, including romanticism, neoclassicism, realist and genre painting, exoticism, and Barbizon school landscapes. Several local collectors have also made temporary loans to enhance the exhibition. The reinstallation includes a Grand Salon, inspired by William Walters’ 1884 picture gallery, complete with furnishings from his home.

Swash with Color: Highlights from the Watercolor Collection (June 16-October 27). As part of the reopening, the museum also presents this special exhibition of 20 works. Artists represented include Americans John Singer Sargent and Thomas Sully; French painters Corot and Daumier; and Spanish artists Mariano Fortuny and Martin Rico.

I Hear America Singing

Elegy

Chased by leaves, from gold and red trees that turned too quickly to snow of leaves torn and fluttering from desks and files, evening comes down as swiftly as steel.

The gray that always settles into winter background is ankle-high dust.

Heroes move into the shadows – and from the shadows. Call them by name, and courage answers.

People hurry along each street wondering which fear will catch up with them.

No one needs to shut his eyes to visualize the worse. That vision is always there now. But what should we think? What say?

Rosemary Klein

The work of potter Jeri Haas will be on display at the Potters Guild of Baltimore from May 11 to May 31, 2002. The Potters Guild is in the Meadow Mill, Suite 101, 3600 Clipper Mill Road. For more information about the Potters Guild, including classes offered, call (410) 235-4884.

A few notes about upcoming and current exhibits at the Walters Art Gallery:

■ A Magnificent Age: The Walters’ 19th Century Collection opens June 16 in brand new galleries after more than four years. The works will be hung in fully refurbished galleries that trace the major developments in European and American art. The Walters is in the rare position of being able to tell the complete story of 19th century art, including romanticism, neoclassicism, realist and genre painting, exoticism, and Barbizon school landscapes. Several local collectors have also made temporary loans to enhance the exhibition. The reinstallation includes a Grand Salon, inspired by William Walters’ 1884 picture gallery, complete with furnishings from his home.

■ Bits of Broadway, which documents a century of Black Musical Theatre to 1999. The musical runs May 3, 4, 5 & 10, 11, 12 (Fri/Sat 8 p.m., Sun 3 p.m.). For reservations and more information call (410) 772-4900.

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LyteBytes, cont. from page 7

14) These woodblock prints by Hiroshoda, the lead printing maker in Osaka in the mid-19th century, and other artists all come from a single album of actor portraits collected by a Kabuki theater actor and collector. Kuniyoshi and Sadahide were two 19th century printmakers who were adept at creating innovative compositions in three of the major genres of Japanese prints: landscapes, Kabuki theater actors, and legendary warriors.

A few logistics about the Walters: The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and on the first Thursday of every month 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Closed on Mondays. Adults $8; senior citizens $6; young adults (18-25) $5; children under 17 free, museum members free. Free admission from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturdays and all day on the first Thursday of the month. Prices are subject to change & may vary with special exhibitions. For more information call (410) 547-9000.

On Thursday May 16, the Ottobar at 2549 N. Howard Street will host a benefit for LINK: A Critical Journal on the Arts in Baltimore and the World. The benefit is presented in support of LINK #8, Codex, which is slated for release in Fall 2002. Codex examines the book as an object in the digital era. How does a portable, page-numbered, random-access octavo influence the way we think, the way we see, and the way we perceive ourselves? The editors of LINK look at the seductiveness of the book, its place as the seat of the critical impulse, and its effect on authorship, narrative, and the arts.

The Benefit at the Ottobar features a number of musical acts including Practice Finger; Cutter/Hammer who do polyrhythmic rock improv; Monad that does improvisational, psychedelic journeys, featuring experimental musicians John Bailey, Phil Grout, and Tom Boram; The Long Drive Home. Admission is $10, $7 with student ID. Check out www.ottobar.com and/or call (410) 662-0069.

The School 33 Gallery spaces will be filled as follows for May 11 to June 8, 2002:

- Gallery I will feature paintings by Kathryn Henneberry and Mixed Media Works by Edda Lyte. The mixed-media installation recreates a journey of the arts and the body with their far-reaching, thought-provoking metaphors about what it means to be human.

- Gallery II features paintings by Nora Sturges. Ms. Sturges states that her paintings focus on the world of childhood memory and the space which resembles the feeling of space in my mind’s eye, with its simultaneous understanding of images, times, places... An admirer of symbolic story-telling throughout art history, Sturges constructs a world of the on the other, replete with historical references and enriched by an infusion of subtle detail. Rendered in small format, oil and acrylic on panel, each work invites the viewer to enter the painting as a point of contemplation, exploration and reflection.

- “Between Ground And Sky” by Sherri Chambers will be on view in School 33’s Installation Space. This work investigates memory and location, and the way memories of place and experience are stored and re-created to become part of one’s existence. The mixed-media installation recreates a territory of the mind’s eye, fusing what is seen with what is remembered. It prompts questions about the endurance of the remembered image and the complicated origins of the image’s inception.

- School 33 is located at 1427 Light Street in South Baltimore, 8 blocks south of the Inner Harbor. Gallery hours are 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues through Fri. For more info call (410) 396-4694.

- The School 33 Gallery spaces will be on view in School 33’s Baltimore and the World, with a focus on Sturges. Ms. Sturges states that her paintings reflect her work invites the viewer to enter the painting small format, oil and acrylic on panel, each by an infusion of select detail. Rendered in improvisational, psychedelic journeys, at the seductiveness of the book, its place as of the major genres of Japanese prints: 25th century, and other artists all come from a leading printmaker in Osaka in the mid-19th century, and other artists all come from a single album of actor portraits collected by a Kabuki theater actor and collector. Kuniyoshi and Sadahide were two 19th century printmakers who were adept at creating innovative compositions in three of the major genres of Japanese prints: landscapes, Kabuki theater actors, and legendary warriors.

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Once upon a time there was a man named Frank. He had a wife, children and a little family restaurant called “Our Smile.” At the time passed, more gray hairs appeared on his head and a great fatigue would often overcome him. His children were growing up; his wife was aging; and the restaurant was becoming ever more unprofitable. Finally, the day came when there was just not enough money—not even for simple needs. With each new day their dreams of an unclouded old age and their hopes for children’s education became more unreal.

Frank bought the finest food for the restaurant, and his exquisite dishes were served in bountiful portions. Yet, Frank had hardly any customers. Who could say whether this was because of poor, inconspicuous location on wide Hope Street or because Frank was just a natural failure. He did everything he could think of to attract people. It wasn’t for the first time that he had redecorated his small restaurant and replaced the sign with another. Nothing had helped. “It’s too fancy, everyone will think the prices are too high,” his friends said when he dressed the tables in snow-whites linen and napkins with fine patterns and placed exotic plants in the corners of the room. “It’s too primitive now, unfashionable,” they opined after he changed the decor to a homey and cozier style. He even tried to change his demeanor toward his clients. However, when he was hospitable and solicitous his guests frowned at the lack of privacy and when he tried to be a little more aloof and proper they felt that the place seemed cold and lifeless. And when he simply acted at the raised voices proclaiming, “There is no attention in this place!”

His situation became increasingly painful. Our character began to despair. Suddenly he saw with horror that he had wasted his life fussing over unimportant things, and felt ashamed of himself, of his poor life. He felt helpless and unable to go anymore.

Then one frosty winter evening he heard a knock on the door. After a minute or so the closed sign hanging on the door shook. Outside the icy winter wind howled and there, on the threshold, an old mendicant appeared. This hoary pilgrim was tall and had a strange air about him. Snow covered his enormous beard, moustache and flowing hair. He wore the kind of long unbleached linen shirt that no one wears any more. In his dirty hand he held a tall staff glistening with ice. On the tired, weather-beaten face beneath thick beak-brows his dark blue eyes shone with a kind light. Frank let him in and hastened to close the door. The mendicant introduced himself with a strange, foreign name which Frank did not understand at first. He asked him to repeat it, but the combination of unusual sounds seemed to strike his ear in disorder, allowing no familiar combination of unusual sounds seemed to strike his ear in disorder, allowing no familiar...
Barnes Follows Burgess As Editor

Poets Ink will soon appear in its third edition. This broadside has been ably and handsomely edited by Hugh Burgess, who came up with the creative idea to hold workshops, followed by the publication of Poets Ink and readings.

Now Dennis Barnes will become editor of Poets Ink. Barnes, the father of two boys, an outdoor soccer coach, and an engineer, began writing poems when he was a sophomore at Penn State. When he moved to St. Louis, he published several poems and started the North County Writers Group. Then in 1987, he moved to Baltimore, where Dr. Gary Blankenbush "opened the door a little bit to the Baltimore community where [Barnes] had no contacts" by publishing his work in the Towson Times.

Barnes is an active participant in the poetry community, attending readings and workshops that he often finds in City Paper. Doing so he feels is important. "If you want to get stuff published," he says, "you need to have a relationship. It's a poetry community." Taking classes with Don Richardson at Anne Arundel Community College and attending the St. Mary's Festival, Barnes found, helped him hone his craft and develop his voice as well as publish in the Christian Science Monitor and the Patterson Review.

In 1990, Barnes formed the North County Writers Group, which had about 10 active, regular members who met once a month. Under his direction, the group published a broadside titled Pebbles In The Stream. Barnes, who was active in the group until 1998, was “amazed at the diversity” of the poems in the broadside.

Maryland State Poetry & Literary Society welcomes Dennis Barnes.

—Rosemary Klein

Bosnian Poet Reads to UMBC Audience

Reading his work before a packed house at UMBC on February 27, Bosnian poet Mario Susko breathed into life for his audience the figurative three-way tug-of-war among mortality, banality, and hilarity that is the essence of day-to-day life in a war zone that happens to be your home.


There is an underlying spirituality to all of Susko’s irreverent rumination: first ejacrtonfs are given as much deference as transfigurations, and the love letters and armor-piercing rounds he alternately fires off at Catholicism reveal just how deep an influence that faith, with both its promises and its warts, had and continues to have on his work.

Listening to Susko hold forth brought back one particular memory I had forgotten about my own experience in Bosnia, how in 1997, before my airwing was deployed to fly patrols in that country, the U.N. required us to pass a test demonstrating our ability to differentiate among the aircraft and troop formations of the various factions operating in the region. Nearly all of the pilots and personnel failed, and in the end, we were virtually spoon fed the test answers so we could fly our missions. This ingrained confusion, the never knowing for sure who was-who and if and why they might want to kill you, is at the core of what Susko so expertly captures.

As was the case with Vietnam, as time passes and as dust and artillery settle, the world seems ready to undertake a cultural and historical examination of the Balkan conflict. War crime tribunals have been convened, and the first major movies about the war (Hotel Sarejeevo, Harrison’s Flowers) have been released. As for literary examination of what transpired in the Balkans, Mario Susko holds a solid place at the center of emerging work.

—Laura Bajor

PLOWING ON A FRIDAY NIGHT
(for Roland Flint)

It’s so unfair working tonight inside this auditorium filled with Irish music. The flute teases my ears, but after reading a note in tonight’s program thanking the late potato farmer, I tend this crop in silence.

The word “late” has driven me into the field beyond fields where my plow slices through the roots that bind us. My wife taps her foot urging me to come back in and play, but I push further on.

Last summer when he looked so fit, I thought he would reap at least three more harvests, but his cancer rotted the roots and as dust and artillery settle, the world seems ready to undertake a cultural and historical examination of the Balkan conflict. War crime tribunals have been convened, and the first major movies about the war (Hotel Sarejeevo, Harrison’s Flowers) have been released. As for literary examination of what transpired in the Balkans, Mario Susko holds a solid place at the center of emerging work.

—Dennis Barnes
Knothead Rhymes. Something Smells Funky And Other.

The author's family, friends, lovers (past and circumstances. Palm Trees

Marshall's poems also serve to recreate lost government official and as a leader in the speeches in his capacity as a Liberian local Reeves,” transform the author's "No Place" and "Introduction of the Rev. J.

Other works, notably "Between A Rock and the drudgery of the refugee experience and "Refugee" and "I'll Cry Again" capture some who are not knowledgeable about Liberian more accessible to readers (like this reviewer). The pain of being torn away from a poems by Liberian refugee author Rupel

Two themes dominate this slim volume of Two of the other, shorter selections in the book, "Something Smelly" and "Hear My Rap (Little Rapper)" are similarly fresh and appealing. In short, Something Smells Funky is a real hoot, and I do believe that someone could make decent money publishing this in a bound edition with color illustrations and a little judicious copyediting.

The Waits of Palm Trees.

Poetry and Other Writings. Rupel E. Marshall, Sr. American Literary Press. 1999. Available on order from author (6 E. Lake Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21212) for $8.95 plus $2.50 shipping and handling.

Two themes dominate this slim volume of poems by Liberian refugee author Rupel Marshall: the pain of being torn away from a beloved homeland and the ensuing struggle to rebuild an identity in a new society. Photographs and a glossary make the book more accessible to readers (like this reviewer) who are not knowledgeable about Liberian culture, language, and history. Poems like "Refugee" and "I'll Cry Again" capture some of the drudgery of the refugee experience and the heartbreak of separation from loved ones. Other works, notably "Between A Rock and No Place" and "Introduction of the Rev. J. Samuel Reeves," transform the author's speeches in his capacity as a Liberian local government official and as a leader in the Liberian refugee community into poetic documentation of a people's trials and hopes. Marshall's poems also serve to recreate lost ancestors for his children ("The Portrait of a Blessed Woman") and "Daddy Was A Barefoot Doctor") and express wishes for a new generation ("Simone"). The Waits of Palm Trees is a simple yet deeply moving look at humanity's survival in inhumane circumstances.


Turner closes his first chapbook with a poem entitled "Gratitude Prayer," and it seems like a fitting end to a work that pays tribute to the author's family, friends, lovers (past and present), and historical heroes (as well as their oppressors). Poems like "Two Baby Pictures" and "Overheard on a Sunday" capture the beauty in family photographs and relationships, while others (like the title poem and "My Other Name is Fred") reflect the family-like intimacy that can exist even between complete strangers. His love poems run the gamut from celebrations of physicality ("Bummed Chicken," "The First Time") to reflections on the nature and meaning of love ("The Fall") and its end ("Up In The Attic"). The two most overtly political poems in the collection are not among the strongest. "Black Rainbow" has some rhyme-scheme issues, while "Homage" is a better speech than it is a poem) but they set a tone which makes the political message of other poems ("A While Ago" and "Haka 1993") all the more poignant. In the author's opinion, Extended Family would make somebody a fine wedding/engagement/family occasion kind of present. (Note to Hilbert: we can discuss my commission at the next staff meeting.)


The reviewer has been an unabashed LINK groupie since this summer, when she first encountered the sixth installment of the Baltimore “thick journal” (see “Meter and Metaphor” from a few LINKs back). So I do understand what the $9.95! All of the articles are talking about? I regret that I do not—that Postmodernism and Political Theory” class girlfriend took was a long, long time ago, and the only things I remember about it are that all texts are equal and that Professor Folke Lindahl looks like a postmodern Brawny Towel Man. Yam. But I appreciate the journal’s emphasis on the arts in all their variety, and I admire LINK for scooping the rest of the area journalistic establishment on the story of Henrietta Lacks (to whom LINK #7 is dedicated). Okay, and the production values on this journal are positively envious–great layout, huge graphics, and glossy paper that smells good. I usually find one or two articles in each issue that I can read and read obsessively, thinking that someday I too might produce critical insight like this. In LINK #7, those articles for me are Mojca Pongrac’s "A Time of Light," a look at the author’s grandfather’s and father’s work as village photographers in rural Slovenia 1918-1970, and Korie Handwerger’s "The Clone Collector," an impressionistic look at the impact of cloning on the arts (and vice versa). If you can find a copy of LINK, be sure to give it a try.

KATE YEMELYANOY

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Songs of Remembrance & Renewal

Lite is seeking submissions for an ongoing web anthology of work related to the events of 9/11. Fiction, poetry, art, photographs all welcome. Submissions can be accepted by mail to: Lite, P.O. Box 26162, Baltimore MD 21210; by email to: crescent103@aol.com.

SpotLite, cont. from page 8

Linda Joy Burke, Mira Foote, Sam and Virginia Schmidt, Kim Roberts, Emery Pajer, Felicia Morgenstern, Rina Chios, Maren Aukerman, Gary Blankenburg, Christina Collins-Smith, Dan Francis, David Kriebel.

Only three of these participants have any formal education in fine arts. The task was daunting to many of them, most of them language artists, but they each did such an amazing job. Each participant took their assigned stanza and listened carefully to it. They each honored and enjoyed the experience and vision by creating the complement to the words, the ladder by which the words would reach God’s ear. Christina Collins-Smith (Stanza 11) was so intrigued about what had become known as The Blackbird Project, that she invited the project to be the focus of OneTree Production’s annual fund raising event.

The gala evening was hosted by Drs. Pam Zappardino and Charles Collyer in their huge and gorgeous Victorian home in the tiny hamlet of Uniontown. In attendance were the most extraordinary people - artists of all kinds, politicians, educators—and the event was an artistic feast. The participants read their stanzas and explained it. The evening dinner was a gift to all in attendance. We were all reminded, as artists, that the experience of such a great desire and talent to enrich our own lives (and enrich what it means to be alive) of our inherent responsibility to tap our greatness and to help each other achieve our artistic purpose. I am so proud to be part of a vibrant art community, so lucky to have friends who will humor me in my philosophical whims, and so grateful to have something to add, however clumsy, to the art of writing. Amen.

BARBARA DECESARE

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society Presents

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Maryland’s Regional Science Fiction Convention Memorial Weekend—May 24-27, 2002 Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel Single, Double, Triple, Quad Hotel Rates: Call 1-800-WYNDHAM or (410) 752-1100 FOR RESERVATIONS Convention Rates: $50 at the door Author/Guests of Honor: Phil & Kaja Foglio, Mark E. Rogers Fiction Guests of Honor: Dan Francis, David Kriebel. The Boogie Knights Fan Guest of Honor: Dr. Yoji Kondo Costume Guest of Honor: Carol Salton Memorial Weekend—May 24-27, 2002 Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel Single, Double, Triple, Quad Hotel Rates: Call 1-800-WYNDHAM or (410) 752-1100 FOR RESERVATIONS Convention Rates: $50 at the door Author/Guests of Honor: Phil & Kaja Foglio, Mark E. Rogers Fiction Guests of Honor: Dan Francis, David Kriebel. The Boogie Knights Fan Guest of Honor: Dr. Yoji Kondo Costume Guest of Honor: Carol Salton

BALTICON 36

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Tune in to the Morning Sunday Show Saturdays, 10-11 a.m. on WYRE 810 AM

The AM Alternative Listen for the monthly Lite literary report!
CALLING ALL WRITERS!

You are NOT ALLOWED to put down this magazine without reading about Lite’s 2001 Poetry & Short Fiction Contest

Winners in each category will receive the following prizes:

FIRST PRIZE: $75
SECOND PRIZE: $45
THIRD PRIZE: $15

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

All entries must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2002. 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. Submissions on diskette OK (MS Word or WordPerfect preferred). Please include short bio. Winners will be notified by March 31, 2003. Maximum story length 6,000 words. Maximum poem length 50 lines. Please mail entries to:

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

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