St. Louis Humanities Festival, April 13 & 14, 2012
A Sense of Place

Last spring our Center, the Missouri Humanities Council, and the Center for the Humanities at the University of Missouri-St. Louis co-sponsored “Celebrating the Humanities Day.” We were fortunate to have Richard J. Franke, founder of the Chicago Humanities Festival; Geoffrey Galt Harpham, president and director of the National Humanities Center; and several St. Louis Arts and Humanities organizations attending the celebration. This year, Webster University and Cinema St. Louis will join us in kicking off a similar two-day event on April 13 and 14. The theme is “A Sense of Place.”

Why a sense of place? We are certainly bound by the physical form of the human body in terms of here-there, near-far, up-down, above-below, right-left. But place is more than simply the few square feet of space we occupy. In fact, place is more than a set of landforms or a grid of city blocks. Place is space brought to life and animated with the complex meanings and intentions that we give it. Place is something we develop through experience and knowledge. Our sense of place can derive from a favorite rock next to the river, or from a city or geographical region. A community’s sense of place emerges through shared experiences and stories (history) that help connect place and people, and that transmit feelings of place from generation to generation. These shared perceptions and experiences enable people from different backgrounds to fashion a local culture expressing their communal attachment to a specific place.

However multifaceted a sense of place may be, the most common attitude is to accept it as part of the everyday world. But the everyday world is not simple, and that is why we chose this theme. The meaning of place is complex and contested in ways we do not see until there is a change either in ourselves or in the way we understand the place with which we identify. For example, minorities living in urban ghettos might identify with the city as a whole, but their identity will include meanings that contradict or contest those
of the non-minority population. The socio-demographic characteristics of urban poor minorities limit their access to cultural amenities and neighborhood role models that give affirmative meanings to that urban environment. Adolescents may see a grid of city blocks as borderlines in ongoing gang wars. Their sense of place is one in which they survive, not one in which they thrive. Moreover, their entire neighborhood may be “displaced” if it is seen by city administrators as expendable, a place that can be razed to build a highway, a sports stadium, or something else that increases tax revenue.

Eminent domain used to destroy a neighborhood is depicted in the documentary *Battle for Brooklyn*. This film, shortlisted for an Academy Award in 2012, was produced and directed by Michael Galinsky and Suki Hawley. They began work on the movie in 2003 after reading a flyer describing the passionate fight waged by residents and business owners of Brooklyn’s historic Prospect Heights neighborhood when their property was condemned to make way for the Atlantic Yards project: building 16 skyscrapers, plus a basketball arena for the New Jersey Nets. Between 2003 and 2011, the story follows graphic designer Daniel Goldstein, the last homeowner in his building, as he battles Bruce Ratner’s Forest City real estate company, which planned to subvert democracy and bypass oversight while completing the Atlantic Yard Project. *Battle for Brooklyn* is an intimate chronicle of the long fight waged by one Brooklyn community to save their sense of place— their neighborhood—from destruction.

Just as some urban dwellers do not identify with the cultural amenities of the city they inhabit, some portion of a nation’s citizens do not identify with their national heritage. One space in which almost all urban dwellers feel “out of place” is the natural world. Yet, nature is part of our national identity as expressed in our national park system. Our natural heritage should aid the cultural groups that make up our country to express their unity through diversity and attachment to these “placeless” places allow them to build loose survival networks there. Still, globalization and modern technology have tended to produce placeless environments lacking the diversity and richness of experience and meaning. These placeless landscapes are those with no special relations to their physical locales. Fast food and chain restaurants, roadside strip shopping malls, gas stations, convenience stores, and department stores are often cited as examples of placeless landscape elements. Given the right circumstances, however, even these can take on a sense of place. Consider the classic placelessness of an airport terminal. In the 2004 movie, *The Terminal*, Tom Hanks plays the part of a man who is denied entry into the United States and at the same time cannot return to his native country due to a revolution. The ordinarily placeless terminal becomes a home to this trapped character and to those that help him survive. The movie’s theme may seem far-fetched, but it is not entirely fictitious. The film is partially inspired by the 18-year stay of Mehran Karimi Nasseri in the Charles de Gaulle International Airport, Terminal I, Paris, France from 1988 to 2006. Both the movie and Nasseri’s real-life experience demonstrate the basic fact that a sense of place is truly what you make of it.

We hope you will join us April 13 and 14 as we explore “A Sense of Place.”

Jian Leng
Associate Director
The Center for the Humanities
Review of

A Natural History of the Piano: The Instrument, the Music, the Musicians—from Mozart to Modern Jazz and Everything in Between

By Stuart Isacoff

Knopf, 2011, 361 pages including index, notes, appendix, and photos

1. Piano in the House

I could have been no more than four or five when my mother, at the age of 27 or 28, bought a piano. (It is only in retrospect that I can appreciate how young my mother was at the time.) She had never owned one before, had never played one, did not grow up in a house that had one, and had no interest in playing it. She bought it for me and my older sisters, as part of our cultural education, as it were. My mother, a widow who strove to do right by her children, like many people without a great deal of education, believed in the mysteries of culture and education as a sort of tonic and talisman. What she did not have in life, her children would get. And so, a piano. I should say that in fact she did not buy the piano but rather the Settlement Music School, an austerely marbled place that smelled like a blend of antiseptic, candles, and the wood and metal of new musical instruments, as I recall my childhood impression, gave us this upright, rosewood piano. My mother had signed up my sisters for lessons at the music school—I was too young at the time, she thought—but she did not own a piano and was too poor to buy one. As the authorities at the school thought it pointless to sign up my sisters but not have an instrument on which to practice at home, my mother was given a piano for free, sort of. She had to pay the cost of moving it from wherever it was—I think a family in the neighborhood had donated it; the music school was about five blocks from my home—and of having it tuned once it arrived. The total cost of this, as I remember clearly, was $45 and my mother at the time made $28 a week as a school crossing guard. It was not until some years later that I realized how much getting this piano must have meant to my mother as she sank a considerable portion of her earnings into it. Despite the cost being highly discounted, my mother had a sizable equity in the instrument.

I remember how excited my sisters and I were the day the instrument arrived. I could scarcely sleep the night before, thinking about the piano, our piano, that was coming the next day. Our house was so small, the living room so tight and close, that the piano, like a sentinel, loomed over the portable black-and-white television, the modest rack of dated encyclopedia and the plastic-covered sofa and seemed to absorb the room, transforming it from low brow to high brow, transforming us from utter barbarians to, at least, cultural parvenus, almost instantly. It was to do so for years, even after no one played it anymore. We watched in amazed delight as the tuner twisted and pulled the wires and monotonously played the keys, adjusting the pitch and tone. I felt like Brandon de Wilde’s character watching Shane fire his revolver: the piano tuning was simply breathtaking. I never knew such a job even existed. And the piano, alas, was terribly out of tune and needed more than a little tempering.

The piano changed my family’s life. Most importantly, it introduced us to classical music, not only through the pieces we learned to play but also because we developed something of an interest in it. My mother took her children to the Academy of Music to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra and its conductor, Eugene Ormandy; she took us to the Robin Dell, an outdoor theater where one could camp on the hillside for free, to hear Van Cliburn and Andre Watts, both huge fan favorites at the time; we would watch operas on public television like Carmen and Amahl and the Night Visitors. Don’t misunderstand: most of our musical listening was still rhythm and blues and pop music. But we began to appreciate music more. We had a semblance of taste.

I liked Errol Garner so much when I was a kid watching him perform on television that I adopted his habit of boosting myself on telephone books when I played, which I did not need and which certainly had no good effect on my posture or my playing. I learned to listen to Oscar Peterson and Nina Simone, not only whose singing but particularly whose piano playing impressed my sister Lenora. My sister Rosalind became quite adept at playing the piano and gave several recitals including one
at my school when I was in the sixth grade, which made me very proud. In fact, I remember her practicing so vividly that I cannot abide hearing those childhood practice tunes like Beethoven’s “Fur Elise,” Bach’s “The Anna Magdalena Book,” Mozart’s “Turkish March,” Brahms’s “Waltz in A-Flat Major,” and other such pieces played by the most accomplished pianists as they interfere with how my sister played them and how her playing made me so fond of them. Although I loved the sound of the instrument, how the noise of our upright came right at your head and face when you played like a cleansing and mystic wind in the wild wood, I was an unskilled player with a poor ear, a thick head for theory, and desultory practice habits. Moreover, it was impossible for me to play in front of people. The mere thought of it gave me diarrhea and the sweats, the worst kind of willies. I had no chance at a career as even a modest amateur musician.

I sometimes wondered why my mother was indifferent to whether I learned to play the instrument but was much stricter with my sisters. I thought it was probably a holdover from a Victorian notion of girls playing the piano not because it was ornamental but because, as Craig H. Roell suggested in his *The Piano in America, 1890-1940* (1989), “the moral value of music” domesticated and socialized men and because music permitted an avenue of expression for women that was creative and liberating. I think my mother wanted that for her daughters, a certain type of genteel power and certain type of technical facility with an art form, in a sense, facility with another language. My mother thought that mastering the piano for two working-class black girls with the skill of a dancer. Her technique was scorchingly facile and rich. That piano seemed to hum, burn, and nearly sashay across the floor as she made it bounce and vibrate. It was jump music and gospel all mixed with classical in some alchemy of this girl’s imagination that I could not fathom. The music, to my young mind, seemed both holy and perverse. So, I could only drop my mouth in awe, as if I were watching a kind of greatness and perhaps something that I was not quite old enough to understand: how her music combined the erotic and the ethereal. Her name was Elaine Brown and she was to become famous in the ensuing years as a member of the Black Panther Party, its Minister of Information, eventually becoming its chairman when Huey Newton went to Cuba to escape criminal prosecution in this country. She was ruthless, sometimes brutal in enforcing “discipline,” extremely smart, and apparently ran the Party better than Newton did, a major feat considering how misogynistic the group was. She was also to be accused of the murder of Panther bookkeeper Betty Van Patter by former radical leftist-turned-right-winger David Horowitz. And, to a lesser extent, she would be known for her recordings as a piano player, singer, and songwriter. (She wrote the Panthers’ anthem.) After she finished playing that day, I told her I loved her playing, absolutely loved it, with such earnestness that she laughed at the intensity of my worship, calling me “sweet.” She had all the tough exoticism of a North Philly girl, another country to those of us who dwelled in Southwark District, at the other end of the big city. I wondered if she was used to such responses, used to being adored. If she was, she did not show it. She cupped my chin in a
friendly, almost grateful, way and I
never wanted to wash my face again.
I thought someone had touched me
that was not quite of this world. To
say that she was just a high school
kid who could play the piano well
was to project such a banal distortion
upon the experience as it to render
its recitation dishonest. I sometimes
wonder if one of the last thoughts I
will have of this mortality in my last
hour, last minute, will be of Elaine
Brown playing my mother’s piano
in my family’s small Philadelphia
rowhouse back in the middle 1960s,
“rocking the joint,” as it were. It
was the closest I ever came to seeing
and hearing someone who seemed
sublime: innocent, knowing, sensual,
charismatic, dangerous, and alive. It
was good to own a piano.

2. Why There Are Pianos

Pianists do tend to be a distinct
species within the world of musi-
cians—a fact often remarked on by
other players, though not always
with approval. Traditions of profes-
sional life force many pianists to be
loners, and the very self-sufficiency
of the piano imposes its own isola-
tion. Because the piano can play
both melody and harmony at the
same time, piano pieces are complete
in themselves, whereas single-line
instruments generally require part-
ners (usually pianists) to supply the
harmonies. Since the piano is not an
orchestral instrument, most pianists
have little opportunity to social-
ize with other musicians . . . They
spend a great deal more time alone
than do players of other instruments.
This can make them slightly looney,
or it can make them reflective, or
both.

—Pianist Susan Tomes, Beyond the
Notes: Journeys with Chamber Music

It was cellist Mstislav Rostropo-
vich who helped me deal with this
performance anxiety. One night,
I was about to play the Tchaikovsky
First Piano Concerto with him and
the Vienna Philharmonic. I went
to his room and said, “Maestro,
I’m so nervous I don’t know what
to do.” He had the perfect answer.
“Remember,” he told me, “no matter
what happens tonight, we’ll go out
after the concert and have a nice
dinner. It’s not like being a pilot,
when if you make a mistake every-
one dies.”

—Pianist Yefim Bronfman, quoted in A
Natural History of the Piano

Le concert, c’est moi.

—Franz Liszt

What did Mark Twain, Emily
Dickinson, Louisa May Alcott, Edna
St. Vincent Millay, Frederick Dou-
glass, and Robinson Jeffers have in
common? The obvious answer is
that they were all noted American
writers. The less obvious answer is
that they all owned pianos and that
all of them could play them at least
to some extent. The nineteenth cen-
tury in the United States and Europe
was the age of the piano craze. Ev-
everyone was buying pianos. Makers
like W. W. Kimball were intent on
making pianos as cheap and plenti-
ful as Ford was later to make cars.
Pianos were on the prairie and in the
cottage. Booker T. Washington, the
great black educator and founder of
Tuskegee, complained about poor
southern blacks buying pianos on the
installment plan when they could ill-
afford and clearly did not need them,
although Washington himself owned
one and one of his daughters became
pretty proficient at playing it.

As Stuart Isacoff informs us in
his highly entertaining, accessible,
and richly researched book (what
pianist has he not heard or heard
of?), what the piano had going for
it, from the beginnings in the eight-
teenth century, was that it “gave the
musical world something for which
it had long clamored: a keyboard that
offered unhampered musical expres-
sion.” He continues, “By changing
the amount of strength she exerts
on its keys, a pianist can modulate
the instrument’s tones, making its
sweet, nuanced shades of sound
appear to ‘sing.’” The pianoforte,
as it was originally called, (literally
“soft-loud”), responded to touch,
could be percussive or singing,
play dance or harshly experimental
pieces, be chime-like or pointillistic.
It was a composer’s and a player’s
dream. According to Isacoff, the
only other keyboard instrument that
could do this before the piano was
the clavichord whose “sound was
so diminutive it was impractical as
a performance vehicle.” (It might
be noted in passing that Christo-
pher Hogwood has made a number
of recordings of keyboard pieces
by Bach, Handel, and others on the
clavichord. And Keith Jarrett made
an album of clavichord impro-

continued on Next Page
visations in 1986 called “The Book of Ways,” which, at times, made the instrument sound as if strings were being struck by a plectrum. None of these recordings affords sustained listening to anyone except those few score people in the world who like what sounds like a harp, a lute, and a toy piano cobbled together by a slightly tone-deaf person.

The first star of the instrument was Mozart, who certainly beat out his rival, Muzio Clementi, in their piano duels. (Clementi was a technical wonder but rather mechanical, “all flash,” according to Isacoff, who reminds us that we remember Mozart for his music and Clementi for his exercises.) Clementi had the last laugh as he started his own piano business and made much more money selling pianos than making music. (Composer John Field got his start demonstrating Clementi’s pianos.) Franz Liszt, who had all the demeanor of a rock star, was, of course, the most famous of all western piano virtuos. Women fainted and threw jewelry (a bit more tasteful, one supposes, than women throwing their pant-ies and house keys, as they used to in the 1960s and 1970s for singers Tom Jones and Teddy Pendergrass). Beethoven probably wrote the most innovative, epoch-changing music for the instrument. Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson were probably jazz’s equivalent of Liszt.

Isacoff describes everything about the piano—how it was originally constructed and how that construction improved and diversified over time, how the pedals work, the sorts of things that can be accomplished musically on a piano—and about pianists—their fears of performance, the problems and inconvenience of travel (with very funny stories about touring pianists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), the occupational hazards and physical ailments, the incredible musical achievements of a wide and wild variety of the instrument’s players. Isacoff has four categories of pianists—the Combustibles (“figures like the turbulent Ludwig van Beethoven, rock ‘n’ roll’s Jerry Lee Lewis, and jazz avant-gardist Cecil Taylor, who bring edge-of-your seat volatility to the keyboard”), the Alchemists (“musicians such as jazz pianist Bill Evans, impressionist Claude Debussy, and bebop eccentric Thelonious Monk, who are masters of atmosphere . . . transform[ing] the mundane ingredients of musical composition into haunting, resonant worlds”), the Rhythmitizers (“musicians who take the percussive ‘pop’ that brings every piano tone to life and place it at center stage. They bring the swing to jazz, the spice to salsa, and the trance to minimalism”), and the Melodists (“whose streams of tones suggest sinuous waves, rising and falling and curling back on themselves in soft arabesques”), variants of earth, air, fire, and water.

In a book as comprehensive as this, it can seem like something of a cheap critical shot to bring up those who are missing, but a few strike me as curious. Although Liberace is mentioned (as is the “Bronze Liberace”, as he called himself, Little Richard), other schmaltzy types like Roger Williams and popular television pianists like Peter Nero were not mentioned. I heard a lot more Williams as a kid than I did Thelonious Monk or Oscar Peterson and liked him too. As I did Nero who was on television more than, say, the piano duo Ferrante and Teicher, who are mentioned in the book. I am also a little disappointed that Vince Guaraldi, who wrote and performed “Cast Your Fate to the Wind,” probably the most popular jazz piano tune of the 1960s, and the soundtracks for the Charlie Brown television specials, was not mentioned. But I think most surprising was the lack of any discussion about Keith Jarrett (his name is mentioned on page 321 in the appendix.) I can’t think of hardly any jazz pianist who has had his influence over the last 30 or so years with his improvised solo concerts (his Koln Concert is the best-selling solo piano record ever), his piano trios and quartets, and his orchestral music. Jarrett’s impact has been both as a player and as a jazz composer (his “classical” compositions seem a bit school boyish). Jarrett has also made a number of competent classical records—Bach, Mozart, Shostakovich—and has performed on a number of keyboard instruments including the organ, the harpsichord, and the clavichord. One would think that this considerable body of work would have merited him several paragraphs. A Natural History of the Piano is not necessarily weakened by Jarrett’s absence, but to anyone with some familiarity of the modern history of the instrument, it seems a bit strange.
Panel Discussion on Race and Africana Studies on Friday, April 20, 2012

The Center for the Humanities and the African and African American Studies Program present the first of a series of roundtable discussions about the future of African American and Race Studies across the disciplines at Washington University in St. Louis on Friday, April 20, at 1:30 pm, Danforth University Center, Room 234.

The aim of the discussions is to bring together various noted external professors with WU scholars to talk about race studies, black studies, where they are and where they are going, in light of the changing world of the university since the time of the debut of Black Studies Programs nearly fifty years ago. Each panelist will present his or her view about where the study of race is at this time from his or her disciplinary perspective. After that, we will have a general discussion about race and the disciplines, the role of Africana or Black Studies as an interdisciplinary and ideological mechanism for the study of race, the rise of comparative race studies, how the humanities have been shaped by the study of race in the last fifty years, and any other pertinent topics that the panel and the audience wish to engage.

This first panel is devoted solely to the humanities. There will be subsequent panels on the social sciences and race and the natural sciences and race in the fall 2012.

Panelists:


Ben Vinson III is the Herbert Baxter Adams Professor of Latin American History and Vice Dean for Centers, Interdisciplinary Programs, and Graduate Education at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). He is the former director of the Center for Africana Studies at JHU. A specialist on colonial Latin American history and issues of race, particularly in Mexico, his research interests and publications include contemporary African-American/Afro-Latino relations, 20th century African-American/Mexican relations, the history of transnationalism, and the African Diaspora. His major publications include: Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico (2001), Flight: The Story of Virgil Richardson, A Tuskegee Airman in Mexico (2004), Afriméxico (2004, co-authored with Bobby Vaughn), African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2nd edition, (2007, co-authored with Herbert Klein), Black Mexico (2009, co-authored with Matthew Restall), and Expanding the Diaspora: Africans to Colonial Latin America (2012, co-authored with Sherwin Bryant and Rachel O’Toole).

Rebecca Wanzo is Associate Professor in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research interests include theories of affect, African-American literature and culture, critical race theory, popular culture (particularly the history of genre fiction and graphic storytelling in the United States), critical race theory, and feminist theory. Her first book, The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling, was published by SUNY Press in 2009.

Moderated by Gerald Early, Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters and Director of the Center for the Humanities at Washington University.

The event is free and open to the public with a reception to follow. For more information, please visit http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu/
**Thursday, March 1**

St. Louis County Library invites you to join them in the East Room on the first Thursday of every month for a lively discussion of the next mystery book. 10am, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

The Trailblazers Adult Book Club invites you to a discussion of *A Discovery of Witches* by Deborah Harkness. 10am, SLCL-Jamestown Bluffs Branch, 4153 N. Highway 67, 994-3300.

**Book Journeys: Heaven Is For Real* by Todd Burpo tells the story of the four-year-old son of a Nebraska pastor who, during emergency surgery slips from consciousness and enters heaven. Books will be available to check out at the Circulation Desk two weeks before the scheduled discussion. 2pm, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Trailblazers Adult Book Club invites you to a discussion of *A Discovery of Witches* by Deborah Harkness. 2pm, SLCL-Jamestown Bluffs Branch, 4153 N. Highway 67, 994-3300.

**FV Mystery Book Club** will discuss *Blind-sighted* by Karin Slaughter. A small Georgia town erupts in panic when a young college professor is found brutally mutilated in the local diner. But it’s only when town pediatrician and coroner Sara Linton does the autopsy that the full extent of the killer’s twisted work becomes clear. 7pm, SLCL-Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd., S., 994-3300.

**Friday, March 2**

The Machacek Book Discussion group invites you to join them to discuss the current selection. Please call 781-2948 for the selection. 11am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948.

**Saturday, March 3**

You are invited to join a discussion of Christopher Farnsworth’s *Blood Oath*. No registration required, 10am, SLCL-Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 994-3300.

**St. Louis Writers Guild** invites you to a workshop: “Your Perfect Pitch: Landing Agents, Publishers and Editors,” a Panel Discussion, and a Preview of the Missouri Writers Guild Conference. 10am, Kirkwood Community Center, 111 S. Geyer Rd. For details and registration for door prize, please visit www.stlwritersguild.org.

The Saturday Afternoon Book Club will be discussing *The Three Miss Margaret* by Louise Shaffer. 2pm, Webster Groves Public Library. The library is in its temporary location at 3232 S. Brentwood Blvd., 961-3784.

**Sunday, March 4**

The BookClub’s 434th discussion will be on *Earthsea Trilogy: A Wizard of Earthsea; The Tombs of Atuan; The Farthest Shore*. For more information about time and venue, please send an email to lloydck@klinedinst.com.

**Monday, March 5**

The Faculty of Languages and Cultures in the UMSL Department of Anthropology, Sociology & Languages share international perspectives on the poetics of “bodies” in Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish, along with translations in English. This annual event is in recognition of National Foreign Language Week. 12:15pm, UMSL, JC Penney Conference Center, Room 402, 516-5698.

Historian Julie Winch will discuss her book *The Clamorgans: One Family’s History of Race in America*. Winch uses the history of the Clamorgans of St. Louis to chronicle how one family navigated race in America from the 1780s through the 1950s. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

River Styx celebrates its Sixth Annual Schlafly Micro-Brew Micro-Fiction contest with literature, music, and beer! The festivities will feature readings by popular local writers and a Nano-Fiction contest for all attendees. Admission is $3. 7pm, Schlafly Tap Room, 2100 Locust St., downtown St. Louis.

**Tuesday, March 6**

The Webster Groves Public Library will discuss *There But For The: A Novel* by Ali Smith. 6pm, Webster Groves Public Library. The library is in its temporary location on 3232 S. Brentwood Blvd., 961-3784.

You are invited to a discussion of *The Book of Ruth* by Jane Hamilton. No registration required, adults. 7pm, SLCL-Meramec Valley Branch, 625 New Smizer Mill Rd., 994-3300.

**Wednesday, March 7**

Thornhill Book Chat invites you to a discussion of *Angry Housewives Eating Bon Bons* by Lorna Landvik. Copies of the book are available for check out one month prior to the meeting. 10:30am, SLCL-Thornhill Branch 12863 Willowyck Dr., 994-3300.

Peggielene Bartels will discuss and sign her new book, *King Peggy: An American Secretary, Her Royal Destiny, and the Inspiring Story of How She Changed an African Village*. This event is co-sponsored by Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

**Thursday, March 8**


Dr. Jeannette Batz Cooperman will discuss and sign her new book, *The St. Louis Women’s Exchange: 130 Years of the Gentle Art of Survival*. Cooperman is currently a staff writer for St. Louis Magazine. She was accepted into the American Society of Journalists and Authors and has won national awards for her narrative journalism and investigative reporting. Books will be for sale courtesy of Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

Read, Reflect, Relate: A Philosophical Book Discussion Group will discuss *Bud-


dha’s Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom by Rick Hanson. 7pm, SLPL-Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

Saturday, March 10

The Mystery Lover’s Book Club will discuss The Last Kashmiri Rose by Barbara Cleverly. Please call ahead. 10am, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Local authors will present their books to readers who appreciate hometown talent, vision, and voice. This year’s featured speaker will be St. Louis’s own Keisha Ervin, author of the Essence bestsellers Chyna Black, Me & My Boyfriend, Mina’s Joint and Hold U Down. Ms. Ervin will tell her story about the beginning of her writing and becoming published, and will offer encouraging words for aspiring authors. Books will be available for purchase. 2pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

Monday, March 12

Vivian Gutierrez, visual artist and writer, describes the art and poetic verses in her new book, Glimpses. Her poems, which she will read in both Spanish and English, reflect her perspective on the inner strengths of women. 12:15pm, UMSL, JC Penney Conference Center, Room 402, 516-5698.

You are invited to join a discussion on Margaret Truman’s The President’s House. The daughter of former President Harry S. Truman recalls life in the White House, discusses some of its former residents, describes various sections of the house, and offers a tour of the nation’s most famous dwelling. 1:30pm, SLCL-Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 994-3300.

Lisa Lutz presents the long-awaited fifth installment in the bestselling, Edgar-nominated series about an eccentric family of private investigators, The Trail of the Spellmans. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Tuesday, March 13

You are invited to a discussion of Pearl Buck in China by Hilary Spurling. One of the twentieth century’s most extraordinary Americans, Pearl Buck was the first person to make China accessible to the West. Buck went on to become the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. This book is available at the Circulation Desk two weeks prior to discussion, adults only. 2pm, SLCL-Grand Gaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 994-3300.

Urban Street Lit Café Book Discussion will discuss The Morning After by Kendra Norman-Bellamy. This compelling sequel to Three Fifty-Seven A.M. from an Essence bestselling author revisits the characters who were affected by Ms. Essie’s redemptive prayers and are now facing desperate struggles. 6pm, SLPL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

Are you interested in some literary conversation or just like to talk about the books you enjoy? Join one of our Sachs Evening Book Discussion groups! Copies of the book will be available to check out prior to the meetings. Please ask for one at the circulation desk. 7pm, SLCL-Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 1640 Burkhartd Place, 994-3300.

HQ Tuesday Night Book Discussion Group. Join us in the East Room on the 2nd Tuesday of each month for a book discussion. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Station Open Mic at the Kirkwood Train Station, 7pm, 110 W. Argonne Dr., free and open to the public, www.stlwritersguild.org.

You are invited to an Author Event with Joshua Foer, author of Moonwalking with Einstein. This quirky and engaging memoir recounts Joshua Foer’s yearlong quest to improve his memory under the tutelage of top “mental athletes.” He draws on cutting-edge research and venerable tricks of the mentalists trade to transform our understanding of human memory and remind us that, in every way that matters, we are the sum of our memories. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

The Foreign Literature Reading Group will meet to discuss In the Country of Men by Hisham Matar. 7:30pm, Washington University West Campus, 7425 Forsyth, 727-6118.

Wednesday, March 14

Join the Bookies to discuss A Painted House by John Grisham. Visitors welcome; open membership. Adults. 2pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 994-3300.

Boone’s Bookies: Book Discussion Group will discuss The False Friend by Myla Goldberg. Celia and Djuna were childhood best friends in upstate New York. Walking home from school one day through a wooded area, Djuna disappears and is never found. Twenty years later, Celia returns home and attempts to set the record straight. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL-Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Road, 994-3300.


The Urban Book Discussion Group will discuss Golden Hustla by Wahida Clark. 7pm, SLPL-Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

Thursday, March 15

Book Journeys will discuss Deep End of the Ocean by Jacquelyn Mitchard. Nine years after three-year-old Ben Cappadora’s kidnapping, a twelve-year-old boy knocks at the door of the Cappadora house, looking for yard work. 2pm, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Ashley Ream will discuss and sign her book Losing Clementine. Clementine has the wit and sharp tongue of Dorothy Parker, the talent of Picasso, and an ex-husband who still wants her. Accompanying Ms. Ream is local author Susan McBride, who will talk about her newest book, Little Black Dress. Books for sale courtesy of Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

Author Event with acclaimed novelist T.C. Boyle, who will discuss his latest book, When the Killing’s Done, an action-packed adventure about endangered animals and those who protect them.
The St. Louis Writers Guild invites you to a lecture by Cole Gibbsen, author of Katana. 7pm, Buder Family Student Commons, Maryville University Campus, US 40/I-64 at Maryville University Drive, St. Louis County. Free and open to the public. For map and directions, please visit www.stlwritersguild.org.

Friday, March 16
The Machacek Book Discussion Group invites you to join them. 11am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave. For the current selection, call 781-2948.

Books 'n More, a book discussion club, invites you to join them for a discussion of Kingdom by Clive Cussler. Adults. Registration required. 1pm, SLCL-Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Rd., 994-3300.

Saturday, March 17
The Saturday Reading Club Book Discussion Group will discuss If Sons, Then Heirs by Lorene Cary. Cary is the critically acclaimed author of Black Ice, Pride, and The Price of a Child. 12:30pm, SLPL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

The Buder Branch Book Discussion Group will discuss Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami. 1pm, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Monday, March 19
Dr. John L. Oldani presents Always Wear Clean Underwear: The Folk History of the American Woman in Momism, Corsets, Quilts and Mary Jane Jokes. He gives a new perspective to the definition of the character of the American woman. In honor of Women’s History Month, Dr. Jack’s interactive discussion will offer a new, and lively, perspective on “folk feminism.” Dr. Oldani will sell and sign his books. 10am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948.

The Manga Book Discussion Group will discuss Zone-OO by Kiyo Kyojo. All are welcome to attend! 6pm, SL-PL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

River Styx’s popular reading series continues its 37th season of lively, diverse, and thought-provoking literature with Shara McCallum and Richard Burgin. Admission is $5 at the door, or $4 for seniors, students, and members. The next River Styx event at Duff’s will take place on April 16, 2012. 7:30pm, Duff’s Restaurant, 392 N. Euclid Ave.

Tuesday, March 20
The Afternoon Book Club will discuss J.R. Moehringer’s The Tender Bar: A Memoir. In this bestselling memoir of growing up with a single mother, the author describes how he received valuable life lessons and friendship from an assortment of characters at the neighborhood bar, who provided him with a kind of fatherhood by committee. We will be joined by McGraw Milhaven, J.R. Moehringer’s cousin and local radio personality. Milhaven grew up in New York with Moehringer and will offer his opinions and insights concerning this memoir and growing up with the author. 2pm, SLCL-Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd., S., 994-3300.

The Book Discussion Group will discuss Swampandia by Karen Russell. 6:45pm, SLPL-Kingshighway Branch, 2260 S. Vandeventer Ave., 771-5450.

Do you like to chat with friends about your favorite books? Join our book club! This month’s selection is The Beach House by Jane Green. Stop by the Circulation Desk to pick up your copy of this month’s selection today! 7pm, SLCL-Prairie Commons Branch, 915 Utz Lane, 994-3300.

St. Louis County Library presents Felicia Graber, author of Amazing Journey: Metamorphosis of a Hidden Child. As a small child, St. Louisan Felicia Graber survived the Nazi occupation of Poland by hiding. Amazing Journey is her compelling coming-of-age memoir of courage and transformation. Books for signing will be available for purchase at the event. 7pm, SLCL-Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 994-3300.

Wednesday, March 21
Sachs Afternoon Book Discussion. Are you interested in some literary conversation or just like to talk about the books you enjoy? Come to one of our book discussion groups! Copies of the book will be available to check out prior to the meetings. Please ask for one at the Circulation Desk. 2pm, SLCL-Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhardt Place, 994-3300.

Eureka Hills Evening Book Discussion Group. Join us once a month for our Book Discussion Group for adults. This month’s book for discussion is The Paris Wife by Paula McLain. Stop by the Eureka Hills circulation desk to check out your copy of the next book to be discussed. 6pm, SLCL-Eureka Hills Branch, 156 Eureka Towne Center, 994-3300.

Authors @ Your Library presents William Donius who will discuss and sign his new book, Thought Revolution: How to Unlock Your Inner Genius. Thought Revolution can help you learn to think differently and find out what awaits you in the subconscious. Books for sale courtesy of Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid, 367-4120.

Trailblazers After Dark invites you to a discussion of The Sleeping Doll by Jeffery Deaver. This book club is designed for discussing and reading a mystery book each month. Registration is required. 7pm, SLCL-Jamestown Bluffs Branch, 4153 N. Highway 67, 994-3300.

Author event with Susan Vreeland. In Clara & Mr. Tiffany bestselling author Susan Vreeland again breathes life into an extraordinary novel, which brings a woman once lost in the shadows into vivid color. Clara struggles with her desire for artistic recognition and must eventually decide what makes her happiest—the professional world of her hands or the personal world of her heart. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Thursday, March 22
The Central Book Discussion Group discusses contemporary and classic literature. New members are always wel-
come, and no registration is required. Today the group will discuss anything by Elizabeth Goudge. 4pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave, 367-4120.

The Schlafly Book Discussion Group reads and discusses diverse contemporary literature every fourth Thursday of the month. Change Me Into Zeus’s Daughter by Barbara Robinette Moss is the selection this month. New members are always welcome to attend. 7pm, SLCL-Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 994-3300.

Saturday, March 24
 Classics Books Club: Frankenstein.
This month we will discuss Mary Shelley’s classic science fiction novel about an experiment that produces a monster. Adults, registration required. 10am, SLCL-Mid-Country Branch, 7821 Maryland Ave., 994-3300.

What are you reading? Tell others about it at Cabanne’s Book Discussion Group. 1:30pm, SLPL-Cabanne Branch, 1106 Union Blvd., 367-0717.

Critically acclaimed author Anne Lamott will kick off the Read St. Louis 2012 Memoir Selection events. In Some Assembly Required, Lamott’s new memoir, she enters an unexpected chapter of her own life: grandmotherhood. Stunned to learn that her son, Sam, is about to become a father at nineteen, Lamott begins a journal about the first year of her grandson Jax’s life. By turns poignant and funny, honest and touching, Some Assembly Required is the true story of how the birth of a baby changes a family. Ms. Lamott will be joined at the even by her son and co-author, Sam Lamott. Information about Read St. Louis programs and events will be posted on the organization’s website in February: www.readstlouis.org. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Tuesday, March 27
 As the Page Turns Book Discussion Group invites you to join a discussion of Brunonia Barry’s The Lace Reader.

Having left her hometown of Salem, Massachusetts, fifteen years previously under troubling circumstances, Towner Whitney reluctantly returns after her 85-year-old great-aunt suddenly disappears. Adults, no registration required. 7pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes, 994-3300.

Wednesday, March 28
Join the Bookies to discuss The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot. Visitors welcome, open membership, adults. 2pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes, 994-3300.

Saturday, March 31
Pat Simmons will read from and discuss her latest book in the Jamieson Legacy, Guilty by Association. 2pm, SLCL-Natural Bridge Branch, 7606 Natural Bridge Rd., 994-3300.

A Night of Poetry and Music, with Raven Wolf and Dwight Bitikofer, emcee, at the Kirkwood Train Station. 7pm, 110 W. Argonne Dr., free and open to the public, refreshments, for details please visit www.stlwritersguild.org.

Special Events/Notices
The 2012 New Letters Literary Awards. New Letters magazine invites you to submit a short story, an essay, or 3-6 poems to the 2012 New Letters Literary Awards. Deadline: May 18, 2012. For guidelines, visit www.newsletters.org, or send an S.A.S.E. to Ashley Kaine, Contest Coordinator, New Letters, University House/UMKC, 5101 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110. Authors are eligible. Students may submit up to five poems per entry. Each submission should include a cover letter with contact information, poem titles. Contact information should not appear elsewhere on the submission. The winner will receive $150 and the opportunity to read at the River Styx Literary Feast. All entries should be postmarked by April 13 and addressed to: River Styx Founders Award, 3547 Olive Street, Suite 107, Saint Louis, MO 63103.

Abbreviations
STL: St. Louis; B&N: Barnes & Noble; KPL: Kirkwood Public Library; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; SCCCL: St. Charles City County Library; UCPL: University City Public Library; UMSL: University of Missouri-St. Louis; WU: Washington University; WGPL: Webster Groves Public Library. All events are free unless otherwise indicated. Author events are followed by signings. All phone numbers take 314 prefix unless indicated. All details are subject to change. For details, visit www.newletters.org, or call 935-5576.
Children at Play in China: The Trifling, the Wicked, and the Sacred

Monday, April 16, 4 p.m., Hurst Lounge, Duncker Hall, Room 201

This talk will examine changing views of children and children at play through a study of Chinese religious and philosophical classics, commentaries on these works, as well as Chinese paintings, children’s literature, and playthings. Much of our contemporary western culture conceives of play as joyful and delightfully purposeless, as belonging to the world of an idyllic childhood. But in many other times and cultures, play has been much more broadly and richly conceived. If we look through nearly any part of the Chinese literary tradition, play is envisioned as belonging as much to the world of cultivated gentlemen as to children, as much to the halls of kings as to a family’s courtyard. In Chinese paintings of children playing with tops and kites, play is depicted as carefree and pleasurable; but play can also be cruel, as suggested in famous Chinese paintings of children torturing toads with sticks and string, or stories of boys bullying crickets into fighting matches to the death.

Pauline C. Lee is an assistant professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Program in Religious Studies. Her research interests are in the areas of Chinese thought, Confucianism, comparative ethics, feminism, space and place, children’s studies, and play. Her publications include a forthcoming book *Li Zhi, Confucianism, and the Virtue of Desire* (State University of New York Press, 2012), which examines the sixteenth century thinker Li Zhi and his views on the role of desire in a good life. She has published articles in the *Journal of Chinese Religions, Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, and the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, and has edited volumes on women and Chinese thought.

The lecture is free and open to the public with a reception to follow. For more information, please visit http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu.