Every Time a Bell Rings

As a naturalized American citizen from a different society, I always work to enhance my understanding of American culture. Holidays offer opportunities for insights into American traditions, and the Christmas showing of *It’s a Wonderful Life* is just such an opportunity. This 1946 film, directed by Frank Capra, starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed, is one of America’s most beloved movies. In 2008 the American Film Institute named it one of the best ten films in the “classic” American film genre. *It’s a Wonderful Life* was acknowledged as the third-best film in the fantasy category, representing as it does the American tradition of a timeless populist paradise standing against the forces of big business.

Although most Americans know this movie and its message, I had to investigate the contexts of numerous traditions to comprehend that message. In addition to unearthing some surprising facts, my research on this piece of American culture reminded me of an early observation I had made about my new home—the contradictions underlying even its strongest principles. These contradictions enable the progressive dynamism of America, but they can also hinder that dynamism.

The movie begins on Christmas Eve with George Bailey (James Stewart) standing on a bridge contemplating suicide. Heaven intervenes in the form of Clarence, Angel Second Class, who is assigned to save him and in doing so earn his wings. Two head angels briefed Clarence on George’s life. George repeatedly sacrificed himself for the well-being of others. When George’s father had a fatal stroke jeopardizing the future of the family’s Building and Loan business, Henry F. Potter (Lionel Barrymore), a heartless slumlord and majority shareholder, tried to convince the board to cease providing home loans to the working poor. George persuaded them to reject Potter’s proposal, but their agreement included the condition that George run the Building and Loan himself.

As the years passed George and his wife Mary (Donna Reed) raised a family, and George initiated Bailey Park, a housing project where inhabitants do not pay Potter’s high rents. But, on that fateful Christmas Eve, George’s Uncle Billy, partner in the Building and Loan, on his way to deposit $8,000 to the business’s account, lost the money. A bank examiner inspecting the business’s books that very day reported the missing money. Potter swore out a warrant for George’s arrest for bank fraud, leading George to the bridge. But before he can take the leap, Clarence appears and jumps in, pretending to be drowning. George rescues him; Clarence reveals himself to be George’s guardian angel and shows George what would have happened had he never existed: Bedford Falls is an amoral Pottersville, home to nightclubs and pawn shops;
Bailey Park does not exist. George runs home, happily taking in details of his restored life, including the police officers waiting to arrest him. A flood of people arrive with money to save George and the Building and Loan. As the movie closes, the group sings “Auld Lang Syne,” and George finds a gift from Clarence, a copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* with an inscription: “Dear George, Remember no man is a failure who has friends. Thanks for the wings, Love, Clarence.” A bell on the tree rings, and George’s daughter remembers that every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.

It might be beloved now, but *It’s a Wonderful Life* was not so popular when first released. It earned less than its production cost of 3.7 million dollars. Although it ranked as both Capra’s and Stewart’s favorite film and was nominated for five Academy Awards (but won none), it was considered a flop. So why did it become such a popular holiday movie? By accident. It became popular because it was cheap and was shown widely. The copyright that National Telefilm Associates held lapsed due to a clerical error in 1974. Networks were required to pay royalties, but the film entered the public domain and was broadcast frequently on local stations. Although CBS now owns the rights, that lapse enabled the film to find the audience it never had theatrically, and it earned a place among the most-beloved holiday and family movies of all time.

The things we love about the movie now, however, were considered dangerous at the time. In 1947, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) branded *It’s a Wonderful Life* and seven other films as subversive. At the time of the “red scare” the FBI analyzed the content of movies, searching for evidence that Hollywood communists had inserted propaganda into popular films. The FBI set up three categories of common devices that were used to turn non-political pictures into carriers of political propaganda. These devices included smearing values or institutions judged as particularly American, such as wealth, free enterprise and the profit motive; glorifying values or institutions judged to be particularly anti-American, such as failure or triumph of the common man; and making casual references to current events that belittled American political institutions.

*It’s a Wonderful Life* fit into the first two categories. Lionel Barrymore as the Scrooge-like banker, Mr. Potter, is the most hated character in the film. He is so evil that, unlike many films of the time, his conversion is not even contemplated. According to the FBI, this was a common trick used by the communists. And one of the outcomes we now most admire, the salvation of George Bailey, representing the triumph of the common man, satisfied the FBI’s second condition. Of course, the Baileys are also bankers, so the struggle is between the big-city banker (Potter) and the small banker (the Baileys). Capra was clearly on the side of small capitalism, and the FBI was on the side of big capitalism. The FBI interpreted this struggle as communist propaganda.

We have not come far from such judgments. The Democrats have been called socialists for passing a health-care bill. I come from a country known as socialist and, as I understand the “Obamacare” bill, it appears to reward privatized health-care insurance and pharmaceutical industries while redistributing a little wealth to the poor. In a sense, the health-care industry becomes a well-paid utility.

The irony for me is that to these same accusers,
China’s health-care system would not be seen as socialist, let alone communist. As part of reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China privatized large portions of its health-care system. The same market forces that helped China become an economic power have undermined its health-care system. Central government funding plunged, and citizens were expected to make up the difference out of their own pockets. During the 1990s the average expenses that individuals paid rose to 60% of the total health-care costs. Although the Chinese government has recently initiated reforms, they will not provide effective, convenient and affordable health care to all citizens until 2020. Much as in America, patients with health insurance or sufficient savings can get first-class treatment, but millions of the uninsured and poor dread serious illness that would bankrupt their families.

So perhaps it “is” universally true that life is wonderful, but to live it wonderfully is another issue entirely.

We at The Center for the Humanities wish you a very happy holiday season.

Jian Leng
Associate Director
The Center for the Humanities

Review of

*The New Road to Serfdom: A Letter of Warning to America*

By Daniel Hannan

HarperCollins, 2010, 200 pages with index

It is commonly thought among the Left that members of and advocates for the Tea Party, the latest populist (or not, depending on which detractor you talk to) political sensation to sweep the nation, are anti-intellectual yahoos who populate flyover land. This caricature may have some element of truth in it, but it is certainly striking that one of the bestselling books among this loosely knit political faction is Nobel Prize-winning Austrian economist F. A. Hayek’s anti-statism classic, *The Road to Serfdom*, first published in United States in 1944. This surely shows an interest in complex ideas. This would indicate that the Right is trying to bolster its arguments with authorities (Milton Friedman is popular with Tea Party readers as well) as the Left does by reading Krugman, Keynes, and popular writers like Naomi Klein. Interestingly, Hayek himself was highly suspicious of intellectuals, thought that writers, professors, journalists and the like who make up the intellectual class as a whole were arrogant about the fact that they read books and magazines, shockingly ignorant about many practical matters, snobbish or romantic about most things that poor people do and like, and had an obsession that bordered on megalomania that the world would be a much better place if they were in control and that indeed all economic, cultural, and political forces in the world can be controlled and directed. The Tea Party may have been influenced by Hayek’s contempt for intellectuals, which may have led to their misguided support of inferior, opportunist candidates like Christine O’Donnell, Tom Tancredo, Carl Paladino, and Sharron Angle, all of whom had the basic appeal of being abject parodies of anti-intellectualism. Nonetheless, Hayek and the Right’s distrust of the intellectual class is justified, if only because intellectualism—expertise in letters, words, fact-finding, academic research, and the rhetoric of rational claims—is the virtue most claimed by the Left. (I have always posited that the Tea Party’s great fear about Barack Obama is not that he is secretly a foreigner—although that is one of their fears—but that he is an intellectual or a pseudo-intellectual, and exhibits all the worst instincts of the breed.)

David Hannan, a Conservative MP who has both familial ties with as well as deep affection for the United States, alludes to Hayek with his title, *The New Road to Serfdom*, as he makes an implicit appeal to the Tea Party with his book. Certainly, Tea Partiers will buy this book: it is short; it is a well-written and nicely argued polemic; and it defends both the United States and American Exceptionalism. But it is probably even more instructive for liberals and the Left to read as it encapsulates in an attractive manner the thinking of the Tea Party, what their members desire and what they believe. For Tea Partiers, in the end, will go to Hannan’s book, not for information (they will certainly get that, but they have other sources for even more of the sort of facts that are in Hannan’s book) but rather for affirmation that they are right.

Hannan’s thesis is that the American Left and its liberal fellow
travelers, obsessed by their anti-Americanism, have always wanted to Europeanize America and now, under President Obama, they are getting their best chance to do just that. To be sure, Hannan is neither rude nor petulant about Obama. (The overall tone of the book is accessible, friendly, with an easy charm and wit.) His civility stems from a range of facts: Obama is “a likable fellow”; he “won a handsome mandate”; he is “the supreme representative and exemplar of a great nation”; but perhaps most important is “No friend of the United States wants an American president to fail. The security and prosperity of the world are underpinned by the strength of the United States.” So, while the book expresses distinct unease about where the United States is going under Obama, it is no tactless screed against the president.

But Hannan is clear: “The platform on which [Obama] was elected, and the policies he is now implementing are not a series of solitary initiatives lashed randomly together. They amount to a sustained project of Europeanization: state health care, government day care, universal college education, carbon taxes, support for supra-nationalism, bigger government, a softer foreign policy.” The problem is, according to Hannan, that “the bits of the European model that are most visibly failing are the bits that [the U.S.] seem intent on copying: a larger government role in health care and social security, state ownership of key enterprises, from banks to the auto industry, regulation of private salaries, higher state spending, and political centralization.” For Hannan, this trend amounts to an “un-American” unraveling of America itself; for him, the belief in smaller government, deep suspicions of highly centralized national government, lower taxation, and strong federalism are not only the very elements that make the United States what it is and make it different but what makes our country necessary for the world because of those differences.

Hannan realizes that American intellectuals have been particularly attracted to the European model, that Europe seems more sophisticated, cosmopolitan, discarding nationalism and patriotism as old hat, even dangerous, because nationalism begets militarism. They believe that Europe’s grand welfare statism and its willingness to arbitrate in international courts are the wave of the future for the developed world.

Hannan proceeds to challenge these ideas: America’s strong nationalism and patriotism are better mechanisms for integration than anything Europe has; indeed, America was designed to integrate diverse peoples. It has surely done less well with people of color, but it has done better in this regard than nearly any other white-dominated nation and many non-white nations.

The European welfare state has spawned a powerful network of governmental agencies that are answerable to no one but their own whims and illusions, not to the politicians that brought them into existence, nor to the voters who cannot vote for them. Thus, the super welfare state creates a leviathan bureaucracy that justifies itself through its trained experts and exists to perpetuate itself. Hannan argues that more direct elections are better for overall government, but advocates of super welfare states tend to want to thwart that process whenever they can. Thus, cries from the Left that Obama should be made a benevolent dictator for our own good. (Incidentally, Hannan advocates strongly for the primary, as it insures that candidates must answer to voters and not to the powers who run the parties; for Hannan, this is one of the most impressive features of the American political system, and the one least imitated in democracies in Europe.) The federalism of the United States, severely compromised since the passage of the income tax amendment of 1913, still remains vital for a strong independent state. The more affairs become centralized and regulated nationally, the more remote the seat of power is from the people themselves and the more inefficient and ineffective the political process as it more closely resembles something that is imposed on people rather than being generated from them. Switzerland, one of Europe’s most successful states, is also its most federated and its most militarized.

The European Union is not all that it is cracked up to be; in fact, it is a great deal less than the sum of its parts, and its claims largely exist in studies, books, and decrees, not as accomplishments in the real world. This is the sort of declamatory politics that the Left especially loves as it makes the declamer feel good about himself or herself because the declaration “sends a message.” In short, America is a far better, far more exemplary country than its intellectuals or its Leftist critics are willing to grant or can even recognize. Hannan’s conceit is that perhaps if a foreigner points out some of America’s wonders, many Americans themselves may better appreciate their own country.

To be sure, all of the challenges that Hannan raises against Europeanization can themselves be challenged, but that is not really quite the point of reading the book. What makes this book interesting to read is that it does raise the important question about America’s identity and the future of that identity in the world and what that identity means to the world. In short, what is America worth as we all, Left and Right, come to some understanding about what makes our country unique? It has been unique at what price and at what cost, at what gain and at what loss? The Tea Party, whatever its shortcomings, whatever its motivations (racist or inclusive, divine or profane), adds an important voice to the debate about America’s identity and America’s fate and raises questions about what our country is, has been, and ought to be. The intellectual class dismisses or ridicules that voice at its peril. Hannan makes the case for the Tea Party better than anyone in that movement has made the case for itself. Sometimes, as with Tocqueville, it takes a foreigner to remind us of the providential history that may, despite all odds, be truer than we suspect.
Monday, January 3
Come join the Book Bunch! This month’s selection, 84, Charing Cross Road by Helene Hanff, follows a New York writer with a passion for English literature who writes to a London bookstore in search of rare classics. Registration is required. 7pm, SLCL-Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 994-3300.

Tuesday, January 4
Come join the Machacek Book Discussion Group. Please call for the current selection. All are welcome. 10am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948.
The Adult Book Discussion group will be looking at Loving Frank by Nancy Horan. Light refreshments will be served. 7pm, SLCL-Meramec Valley Branch, 625 New Smizer Mill Rd., 994-3300.

Wednesday, January 5
University City Public Library presents Anita Hagerman, lecturer in Washington University's English and Performing Arts departments and at Webster University, who will lead a book discussion of The Giver by Lois Lowry for grades 4 and up. Tickets will be given out to Washington University's Edison Theatre's upcoming production of The Giver. 7pm, 6701 Delmar Blvd. Call 727-3150 for more information.

Borders Book Club in Sunset Hills will be meeting to discuss Broken For You by Stephanie Kallos. 7pm, Borders–Sunset Hills, 10990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 909-0300.

Thursday, January 6
The Trailblazers Book Club will be discussing Knit the Season by Kate Jacobs. Registration is required. 1pm, SLCL-Jamestown Bluffs Branch, 4153 N. Highway 67, 994-3300.

Book Journeys will be discussing Twenty Wishes by Debbie Macomber. Registration is recommended. 2pm, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Come join the Writer's Workshop, where writers 16 years and up are invited to present their own works-in-progress of fiction, poetry, and essays in a supportive atmosphere of constructive critique. A moderator will lead the discussion. 7pm, SLCL-Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 994-3300.

Saturday, January 8
Write-Along Writer’s Workshop is a place where writers age 16 and up can come to have their work critiqued among a group of peers. Please bring a sample of your work to each meeting. 10am, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Left Bank Books invites you to a reading and book signing with award-winning health writer, Julia Maranau, author of The 100 Best Ways to Stop Aging and Stay Young. 2pm, LBB-Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

Monday, January 10
Join Left Bank Books as they host John Lescroat who will be reading from his book, Damage. 7pm, Left Bank Books CWE, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Tuesday, January 11
Join the Grand Glaize Library Discussion Group! This week’s selection is Harry Truman’s Excellent Adventure by Matthew Algeo. On June 19, 1953, Harry Truman got up early and hit the road. This book is available two weeks prior to discussion at the front desk. 2pm, SLCL-Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 994-3300.

Come to the Sachs Evening Book Discussion. Copies of the selection are available to check out prior to the meeting. Ask for one at the circulation desk. 7pm, SLCL-Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhart Pl., 994-3300.

The Foreign Literature group will discuss Daisy Miller by Henry James. 7:30pm, Washington University’s West Campus, 7425 Forresty. Call 727-6118 for more information.

Wednesday, January 12
Join the Bookies Book Discussion Group to discuss I am Nujood by Nujood Ali. Visitors welcome; open membership. 2pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 994-3300.

Boone’s Bookies Book Discussion Group will discuss Sarah’s Key by Tatiana de Rosnay. Refreshments will be served. Registration is encouraged. There are afternoon and evening groups available. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL-Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Rd., 994-3300.

Authors @ Your Library invites you to meet Kim Edwards! She will talk about her new book, Lake of Dreams, as part of Left Bank Books’ Annual Reading Group Appreciation Night. There will be special discounts, give-aways, and more. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave, 367-5031. (Guests may need to call Left Bank Books to register for seats, 367-6731).

Thursday, January 13
The Urban Street Lit Café Book Discussion Group will be looking at Getting to Happy by Terry McMillan. 6:30pm, SLPL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

Come join For the Love of Wisdom: A Philosophy Book Discussion Group! They will be discussing How Philosophy Can Save Your Life: 10 Ideas That Matter Most by Marietta McCarty. Call ahead to reserve your copy. 7pm, SLPL-Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

MURDER OF THE MONTH CLUB will be looking at Hell Gate by Linda Fairstein. 3:30pm, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Friday, January 14
The Great Expectations Rock Road Book Discussion Group will be discussing The Tea House on Mulberry Street by Sharon Owens. Pick up your copy at the Rock Road Branch. 10am, SLCL-Rock Road Branch, 10267 St. Charles Rock Rd., 994-3300.

Saturday, January 15
Come join the Saturday Reading Club Book Discussion Group! Please call for the current selection. 12:30pm, SLPL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

SLPL-Baden Branch will be presenting Six: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Six St. Louis area authors will honor Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Dream” and his words by sharing their words. Each author will read from his or her books. Authors include: Stanley Pitchford, The Gift of Rhyme; Rose Jackson-Beavers, Backroom Confessions, Quilt Designs and Poetry Rhymes; Brenda Matthews, The Pastor’s Wife Does Cry!; Edward Booker, A Hole in My Heart and Caught in the Net of Deception; Earl Austin, Jr., You Might Need A Jacket; and Carletta D. Washington, A Mother’s Reflection. A brief Q & A and reception will follow the presentation. Books available for sale. 1pm, SLPL-Baden Branch, 8448 Church Rd., 388-2400.

St. Louis County Library with Left Bank Books will host three-
time Edgar Award-winner T. Jefferson Parker, who will sign and discuss his dark masterpiece, The Border Lords. 2pm, SCLL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Sunday, January 16
The BookClub invites you to their 420th discussion. This month they will discuss The Housekeeper and the Professor by Yoko Ogawa. Contact Lloyd Klinedinst at 636-451-3232 for details about time and location.

Monday, January 17
The River Styx at Duff’s Reading Series will feature poets Jake Adam York and Allison Joseph. 7:30pm, Duff’s Restaurant, 392 N. Euclid. Call River Styx at 533-4541 for more information.

Tuesday, January 18
Come join the Machacek Book Discussion Group. Please call for the current selection. All are welcome. 10am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanian Av., 781-2948.

Authors @ Your Library presents Anthony John, Jody Feldman, and Cole Gibson. They will talk to teens and adults about the craft of writing and the road to publication. Anthony John will also talk about his new book, Five Flavors of Dumb. Jody Feldman is the author of The Gollywogger Games, a Texas Bluebonnet Award book and Midwest Booksellers’ Choice Honor book. Cole Gibson’s debut novel, Katana, is due out in Spring 2012. 6pm, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Av., 352-2900.

SLPL-Kingshighway Branch will be hosting a book discussion group. The group will be covering A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens. 8:45pm, SLPL-Kingshighway Branch, 2260 S. Vandeventer Av., 771-5450.

The Florissant Valley Annual Book Discussion Club will read Sharon Owen’s The Tea House on Mulberry Street. 2pm, SLCL-Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd., 994-3300.

Join the Pageturners and discuss South of Broad by Pat Conroy. Refreshments will be provided. Recommended for adults. Registration is required. There are afternoon and evening groups available. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL-Tesson Ferry Branch, 9920 Lin-Ferry Dr., 994-3300.

The Tuesday Afternoon Book Discussion Group will be exploring Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford. Books are available for checkout one month prior to the discussion. Newcomers welcome. 2pm, SLCL-Cliff Cave Branch, 5430 Telegraph Rd., 994-3300.

Come join the Book Club and discuss Animal, Vegetable, Miracle. Stop by the circulation desk to pick up a copy of the book. Visitors and prospective members welcome. 7pm, SCLL-Prairie Commons Branch, 915 Utz Lane, 994-3300.

Wednesday, January 19
Authors @ Your Library presents Dr. Thomas Hoerr, Sally Boggsman, and Christine Wallach, who will discuss and sign their new book, Celebrating Every Learner: Activities and Strategies for Creating a Multiple Intelligences Classroom. This important book offers a practical guide to understanding how Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) can be used in the classroom. Books available for sale courtesy of Left Bank Books. 6pm, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Come to one of the Sachs Afternoon Book Discussions. Copies of the book will be available to check out prior to the meetings. Please ask at the circulation desk. 2pm, SLCL-Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhardt Pl., 994-3300.

Mystery Readers Book Club will discuss Man in the Brown Suit by Agatha Christie. 2pm, Kirkwood Public Library, 140 E. Jefferson, 821-5770.

Join the Wednesday Afternoon Book Discussion Group for a lively discussion of Blue Shoes and Happiness by Alexander McCall Smith. Books are available for checkout one month prior to the discussion. Newcomers welcome. 2pm, SLCL-Cliff Cave Branch, 5430 Telegraph Rd., 994-3300.

The Eureka Hills Book Discussion Group will be discussing The Glass Castle by Jeanette Walls. 6pm, SLCL-Eureka Hills Branch, 103 Hilltop Village Center, 994-3300.

Trailblazers After Dark invites you to a discussion of Lemon Tart by Josi Kilpack. 7pm, SLCL-Jamestown Bluffs Branch, 4153 N. Hwy 67, 994-3300.

Join the Wednesday Evening Book Discussion Group as they look at Her Fearful Symmetry by Audrey Niffenegger. 7pm, SLCL-Cliff Cave Branch, 5430 Telegraph Rd., 994-3300.

Join the Evening Book Discussion Group for a discussion of Broken for You by Stephanie Kallos. 7:30pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 994-3300.

The FV Evening Book Discussion Group will discuss Kathryn Stockett’s The Help. 7:30pm, SLCL-Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd., South, 994-3300.

Left Bank Books invites you to the Current Affairs Reading Group as they discuss Eating Animals by Jonathan Safran Foer. 12pm, LBB-Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

Thursday, January 20
SLPL-Julia Davis Branch will be having a Manga Book Discussion. Please call for the current book. 6pm, SLPL-Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

The Book Journeys invites you to a discussion of To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee. 2pm, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

You are welcome to join local author Laura Ray who will offer a memoir and cookbook that is both hilarious and heartfelt, Brain Dead in the Burbs and Cooking Your Way Back to Sanity. 7pm, Left Bank Books Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

The Lesbian Reading Group invites you to their discussion of Live Through This by Sabrina Chapadejev. 7:30pm, Left Bank Books-CWE, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Saturday, January 22
The Mystery Lover’s Book Club will be looking at The Poet by Michael Connelly. Groups of five or more should call in advance. 10am, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Come to the Writer’s Workshop to meet peers and enhance your writing skills. 10am, SLPL-Baden Branch, 8448 Church Rd., 388-2400.

The Buder Branch Book Discussion Group will be discussing All the Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy. 1pm, SLPL-Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Bring your favorite book to discuss at SLPL-Cabanne’s Book Discussion Group. 1pm, SLPL-Cabanne Branch, 1106 Union Blvd., 367-0717.

Write-Along Writer’s Workshop is a place where writers age 16 and up can come to have their work critiqued among a group of peers. Please bring a sample of your work to each meeting. 10am, SLCL-Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 994-3300.

Saturday Morning Perks Book Club invites you to a discussion of River of Doubt by Candice Millard. 10am, Kirkwood Public Library, 140 E. Jefferson, 821-5770.

Sunday, January 23
Award-winning poet Jane O. Wayne ex-
Join the U City Book Group for their discussion of Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help*. 7pm, University City Public Library, 6701 Delmar Boulevard. Call 727-3150 for more information.

You are invited to join the Novel Ideas Reading Group for a discussion of *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese. 12pm, Left Bank Books Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

**Thursday, January 27**

Come to SLPL-Schlafly Branch and join the Book Discussion Group as they discuss *Dreamer: A Novel* by Charles Johnson. New members are always welcome. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

The Gay Men’s Reading Group welcomes you to a discussion of Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf. 7:30pm, Left Bank Books-CWE, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

**Saturday, January 29**

Celebrate Black History Month with a special program of African-American Spirituals: The History Behind the Songs. Did you ever hear an old gospel song and wonder where lyrics came from or the history behind the song? Storyteller Loretta Washington will answer these questions and sing some of the oldest gospel songs for your listening pleasure. Sit back, relax and listen as some of the most popular spiritual songs and stories are shared. 10am, SLCL-Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhardt Pl., 994-3300. *There is also a 2pm showing at the SLCL-Bridgeton Trails Branch, 3455 McKelvey Rd., 994-3300.*

Writers Read (NEW!) Join us for Reading Like a Writer by Francine Prose. Fiction writers of all levels and interests are welcome! We’ll choose one literary novel per month and meet to discuss how the writer puts things together, what works and what doesn’t. (Note: This is not a critque group. We will not be reading each other’s writing, just discussing the craft of writing based on the novels we read as a group.) 4pm, Left Bank Books-Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

**Wednesday, January 26**

The Central Book Discussion Group will be looking at *Abundance: A Novel of Marie Antoinette* by Sera Jeter Naslund. 3pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.

Join the Bookies Book Discussion Group to discuss *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. Visitors welcome; open membership. 2pm, SLCL-Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 994-3300.

**Monday, January 31**

Gary Geddes reads from *Falsework, Skaldance, and Kingdom of Ten Thousand Things: An Impossible Journey from Kabul to Chiapas* and shares thoughts on ways writing changes our lives. Geddes, UMSL visiting writer-in-residence, has written and edited more than forty books of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama, criticism, translation, and anthologies and won a dozen national and international literary awards, including the Gabriela Mistral Prize from the government of Chile. 12:15pm, Rm. 78, JC Penney Center, UMSL, no registration required. Call 516-5699 for information.

**Upcoming Events and Notices**

The Missouri Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators meets every month in three locations. The St. Charles group meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm at the Mid Rivers Barnes & Noble. For more information, contact Stephanie Breece at smbears@charter.net. The Florissant group meets the second Thursday of each month at 7pm at Florissant Presbyterian Church. For more information, contact Sue Bradford Edwards at suebradfordedwards@yahoo.com. The St. Louis City group meets the third Sunday of the month at SLPL-Buder Branch at 2:30pm. For contact information, email Jessica Saigh, jessicasaigh@swbell.net.

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, playwright, screenwriter and children’s book author/illustrator Jules Feiffer will exhibit his watercolors and cartoons that relate to dance and movement. The exhibit is called *A Dance to Jules Feiffer*. Originally organized by Jacob’s Pillow dance festival in 2009, this exhibition includes cartoon strips interspersed with watercolors and political commentary with dance imagery. The collection includes signed, limited edition prints. The exhibit will take place from December 3, 2010 until February 13, 2011. Millstone Gallery, COCA, 524 Trinity Ave., St. Louis, MO. Visit www.cocastl.org for more information. Free and open to the public.

**Gitana Productions** is currently accepting personal essays that amplify the rich shared experiences between Irish and African Americans. Select essays will tour St. Louis and be featured at the MCPEAKE concert on March 11, 2011. The deadline is **Feb. 12, 2011**. Application and guidelines are available at http://stlouis.missouri.org/501c/gitana/submit2.htm. If you should have any questions, contact Cecilia Nadal at 721-6556 or at gitana@stlouis.missouri.org.

**Abbreviations**

STL: Saint Louis; B&N: Barnes & Noble; KPL: Kirkwood Public Library; LB: 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.

Check the online calendar at http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu/stl_events for more events and additional details. To advertise, send event details to litcal@artsci.wustl.edu, fax 935-4889, or call 935-5576.
The Center for the Humanities in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis is pleased to announce the Sixth Faculty Fellows’ Lecture and Workshop Series for Spring 2011. Professor Lutz Koepnick will kick off the series with a lecture on Tuesday, January 25th, at 4 p.m.

Lutz Koepnick is Professor of German, Film and Media Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. He has written widely on German film, visual culture, and literature, on media arts and aesthetics, and on critical theory and cultural politics. Book publications include: After the Digital Divide? German Aesthetic Theory in the Age of New Media (2009); Window / Interface (2007); The Cosmopolitan Screen: German Cinema and the Global Imaginary, 1945 to the Present (2007); Caught by Politics: Hitler Exiles and American Visual Culture (2007); and Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of German Culture (2004). Co-edited or co-authored volumes include: After the Digital Divide? German Aesthetic Theory in the Age of New Media (2009); Window / Interface (2007); The Cosmopolitan Screen: German Cinema and the Global Imaginary, 1945 to the Present (2007); Caught by Politics: Hitler Exiles and American Visual Culture (2007); and Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of German Culture (2004).

Faculty Fellow Lecture, “On the Art of Contemporary Slowness”

Tuesday, January 25th, 4 p.m., Formal Lounge of the Women’s Building

These lectures and workshops are part of the Center for the Humanities’ Faculty Fellowship Program (http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu). EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Refreshments will be provided. Please contact the Center at 314-935-5576 to order a free parking sticker and to reserve a seat. The complete schedule for the Faculty Fellows’ Lecture and Workshop Series for Spring 2011 will be available by February 2011.