Every Movement Scrutinized

It is strange the way an insignificant news item can set off a chain of associations that end up being about important issues. The trivial case in point here is a surveillance video at a Salt Lake City supermarket that showed a dog walking in the front door and heading directly to aisle 16, the pet food aisle, shoplifting a $2.79 chew bone, and running back out the door. Despite the video no arrests have been made. I wondered if this theft might be connected with the increase in abandoned pets due to the economic downturn. What is an abandoned pet to do? If you’re big enough to activate the automatic door opener at the local supermarket, you can turn to a life of canine crime.

Because of the growing economic crisis, people, too, may seek illegal ways to survive, and this could greatly expand the use of cameras. Declining tax receipts and rising safety-net costs now hitting cities and states limit the hiring of additional police officers and drive the search for cheaper, smarter ways to deter crime and catch criminals. The installation of high-tech security cameras, like the ones that videotaped the canine shoplifter, around our streets and other public venues seems to be the most accepted response. Even university campuses are not immune to the growing use of surveillance. On our own campus, the security concerns associated with MetroLink and underground parking gave rise to the creation of a Committee for the Utilization of Closed Circuit Television back in 2006. Although surveillance may not violate privacy laws, the extent and intensity of it certainly ought to raise some questions about where this society is heading.

The use of surveillance cameras arose long before the economy sank. For decades, shops and businesses have used closed-circuit cameras feeding grainy images into video cassettes to deter crime. It was terrorism that provided the push for the increased surveillance in our public spaces today. After the events of 9/11, we have come to accept many more cameras in many more places monitoring our movements. Moreover, the introduction of digital cameras, with more detailed images, makes all our actions available on police and other government agencies’ monitors in real time. Perhaps the most extreme example of this reliance on surveillance is Britain, which has some 4.2 million surveillance cameras, or roughly one for every fourteen people. According to an article in The Week (September 28, 2007), in London, an individual’s movements might be captured on camera up to three hundred times a day.

Not to be outdone, New York City is adding some three thousand cameras throughout the Manhattan financial district. Using face-recognition software to identify known terrorists or criminals, this system will also be able to check license plate numbers against a list of suspected vehicles and sound an alarm if it detects someone leaving a bag or package unattended. Set to be complete in 2010, these cameras will be recording the daily lives of millions of New Yorkers. If New York is the city that never sleeps, then this system will ensure that at least three thousand more “eyes” will be open 24/7. But are New Yorkers safer? In theory, these cameras should be able to detect would-be terrorists from images on file or by their suspicious behavior before they can act. In fact, despite all the fancy computer face-recognition and other sophisticated “anomalous behavior” software, it is more likely that the cameras
The assurance of identification and capture can have its successes. Crime often decreases where cameras are installed because criminals move their operations to places without surveillance. But where does that cat-and-mouse game end? Will there be designated “safe zones”—for example the one proposed by the University City Council that has five outdoor surveillance cameras around its famous Loop area? Or must cameras be everywhere to ensure our safety and security? That seems to be the premise behind the use of traffic cameras in Beijing.

Last summer I found my sister regularly checking the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau site online to see if she had been issued a ticket during the day. There are surveillance cameras all over Beijing. From the video evidence, drivers can be issued tickets for speeding, reckless driving, and red light violations, as well as parking meter violations and parking in no-parking areas (my sister’s favorite infraction). The website includes the license plate number, date and time of the violation, and the amount of the fine. This seems to work well for the government. It reduces the cost of large numbers of police patrolling the streets and, because there is video evidence, there are few appeals to take up the time of judges. Traffic cameras in the St. Louis area identify only red light and illegal turn violations at a few strategic intersections. In any event, both municipalities collect substantial amounts of money through the fines issued by these surveillance cameras, giving them every incentive to continue to expand their scope.

Meanwhile, the places where surveillance began, shops and businesses, are enhancing the technology behind the cameras so it can “read” your thoughts and understand your behavior. As outlined in “The Science of Shopping” (The Economist, December/January 2009), the surveillance cameras in stores may be doing more than monitoring shoplifters. They may be using image-recognition software to measure how shoppers select products and then sort those shoppers by age, gender, and ethnicity. One company offering this technology is VideoMining (http://www.videomining.com/technologies/main.html). There is a reason that most supermarkets have very similar floor plans. They are designed to persuade people to buy things. Thanks to technological innovation, persuasion is a science that can unlock the “innermost secrets of the consumer’s mind.” The science of understanding the consumer’s mind is at work in the “decompression zone,” designed to slow you down at the entrance, and in the placement of such commonly purchased items as milk at the back of the store and the impulse-purchase items next to the register. Watching hundreds of thousands of individual shoppers provides the data on how they choose items and how the store can manipulate store layout, product choice, and display to extract the most money from each customer.

This surveillance software measures not only how long a consumer takes to examine and choose one product over others but also analyzes facial expressions as consumers make decisions, effectively reading their minds. Given the economy, many of us may be frowning as we put anything in our shopping carts. Yet, long after the recession and the threat of terrorism become little more than bad memories, the cameras and the software will still be there watching and analyzing. “There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment,” George Orwell wrote in 1984. “How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.”

Jian Leng
Associate Director
Center for the Humanities
American Lightning: Terror, Mystery, the Birth of Hollywood, and the Crime of the Century  
By Howard Blum  
Crown, 2008, 339 pages with notes, acknowledgements, photos, no index  

1. How the West Was Won and Re-Won

Before the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001; before the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, one of the worst acts of terrorism on American soil was the bombing of the Los Angeles Times Building on October 1, 1910. Nearly 3,000 people died in the 9/11 attack, and 168 people died in the Oklahoma City bombing. Only 21 people died in the LA Times Building bombing, but it was, nonetheless, the most talked about news event of that year; it frightened people across the country as much as Oklahoma City and 9/11 did later. Besides, the LA blast was just one of a series of bombings that occurred that year, and this fact underscored the public’s fear. Just as 9/11 was a battle in a war that Islamic extremists had declared on the West and the Oklahoma City bombing was a small extremist conspiracy’s private war against the excesses of the federal government, the LA Times Building incident was part of an ongoing war, brutal and bloody, between labor and management in the United States. Indeed, acknowledging this conflict as a war and this act as a legitimate expression of warfare, which famous muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens did, would in fact play an important part in persuading the men who were arrested for this crime to plead guilty to the charges.

Ah, the year 1910: earlier, on July 4, in a sun-baked field in Reno, Nevada, the fight of the century (young century though it was and presumptuous as the ballyhoo may have been) took place between black heavyweight champion Jack Johnson and former champion Jim Jeffries, the Great White Hope, returning to the ring after five years of retirement. Johnson beat Jeffries handily in what was a conspicuously, embarrassingly uncompetitive fight and went off into the night with two-thirds of $101,000 and his fawning white mistresses that so distressed the country. (The figurative death of Jeffries and the actual death of Edward VII would make 1910 truly the year that old white Protestant kings died, marking the beginning of the end of Victorianism, of white monarchy, of a certain sort of order in the English-speaking world.) This small, emblematic race war in the ring sparked some of the country’s worst racial violence—surpassed only decades later by the riots that occurred the weekend after the assassination of Martin Luther King. The fight of the century produced small race wars around the country, and the crime of the century in Los Angeles was part of the war between workers and owners. The United States of 1910 seemed a country shaped or misshapen by the excesses of its small, bloody, internal wars. What held the country together, paradoxically, was the passion of the conflicts that seemed on the verge of tearing it apart. And the American West seemed to be the epicenter of it all. Perhaps these are the other chapters in the Great American Narrative that tell the story of how the West was won or re-won.

2. Water and Light in the City of Angels

Howard Blum’s American Lightning tells the story of the bombing of the LA Times Building, how and why it happened, and how the crime was solved. (The chapter describing the actual bombing is worth the price of the book. It is splendidly gripping and deeply moving in its horrific detail.) The main cast of characters is Billy Burns, America’s greatest detective, hired by LA’s mayor, George Alexander, to find the bombers; Harrison Gray Otis, the crude, crass, ultraconservative, union-hating owner of the LA Times and land schemer extraordinaire; Clarence Darrow, the liberal lawyer who was hired by Samuel Gompers to defend the union men who had been accused of the crime (Darrow, by 1910, was suffering from depression and had been defending corporations in order to make money and taking up with a mistress in order to feel young); Lincoln Steffens, the muckraker who came up with the concept of “justifiable dynamiting,” explaining that the conspiracy of capital had left the unions (and, I suppose, anarchists, too, who were heaving bombs with some abandon at this time) with no other option but violence. There is, needless to say, a huge supporting cast in this drama made up of the quirky, the ordinary, the trustworthy, the gullible, the selfish—and a free-love commune thrown in for extra measure.

Blum weaves filmmaker D. W. Griffith into the narrative as a major character, but while Griffith knows both Burns (he assisted him with a case) and Darrow, he is really not involved in the LA Times bombing case, except one can say that he sympathizes with the working folk—as shown in such films as A Corner in Wheat (1909), one of Griffith’s Biograph masterpieces—but then again film is mass entertainment, and how could a filmmaker expect to succeed with, how shall we say, “royalist” sentiments. To be politically elitist in a populist medium was rather like, to borrow Jack Johnson’s phrase, being blonde in a brunette town.
Besides there was more sentimentality to be milked from populism and plain folk, and Griffith was nothing if not a sentimentalist. He was the publicly recognized (and self-proclaimed) master of the new technology of creating narrative with pictures and light called the feature film. And he does eventually move the center of "writing with lightning," a paraphrase of how President Woodrow Wilson would remarkably describe film, from New York to Los Angeles (Hollywood, to be exact), at this time. Why not go to Los Angeles? The weather was lovely and it was a booming town with an exploding population because it had, by the 1910s, the prospect of getting plenty of the one thing that most people worried about before: water.

Blum tells this story with the verve and energy of a novelist. (The book begs to be made into a film.) It would probably disappoint a professional historian, who would proclaim American Lightning "too journalistic," but it will delight general readers. And, after all, Mr. Blum is a journalist and so he ought, perforce, to write as one. For a time, Burns, as he investigated the case, thought that Otis blew up his own building in order to discredit the unions, against whom he had declared war in an effort to save capital and civilization. (Otis was probably ruthless enough, but not crazy enough, to destroy his own building and kill his own employees.) Burns, who was actually sympathetic to the unions, also learned that Otis and a small group of speculators had bought up the worthless San Fernando Valley in the expectation that they would make a killing when the water from the Owens River would be redirected to Los Angeles via an aqueduct, through the valley, at the city's expense. (A variation of this story is used as the plot for the 1974 Roman Polanski film Chinatown.) Labor, who was immediately suspected, proclaimed its innocence, saying the explosion was the result of a gas leak. Labor and the socialists smeared Burns to discredit him as he with dogged determination discovered the culprits: a couple of union men whose job it was to dynamite antiunion sites.

In the meantime, the socialists were gaining political power, or at least political notice, across the country; if they won the mayor's race in Los Angeles, and there was a good chance they might, the water scheme of Otis and his confederates would evaporate, as the socialists were on to what they were doing. Passions ran high and dishonesty ran higher. (The left, including labor and socialists, can smear, lie, and character assassinate with great sanctimoniousness because it is always on the side of the "victims" rather than the defenders of authority. The power elite must do their lying, smearing, and character assassination while preaching piety on the side of law and order: "better the Darwinists who give you a job instead of the collectivists who merely want to get you a raise and utopia" seems to be the essence of their appeal, less sentimental but more realistic in its appeal to your stomach and self-interest rather than your heart and imagination.) Gompers, understanding the new, strange power of the feature film as propaganda, commissioned a film entitled A Martyr to His Cause about the life of J. J. McNamara, one of the defendants in the case. (The other was his brother, Jim.) The film has as much to do with the actual life of McNamara, as most Hollywood biopics have little to do with the lives of their subjects, which is to say nothing at all. The film was a complete fiction but it did generate great public sympathy, and J. J. was, indeed, a likeable scamp with a certain bit of integrity. The brothers are being set up by the capitalists, the unions cried, and many, for a time, were inclined to believe this. J. J. wouldn't plead guilty, for instance, unless he knew for certain that his brother would not be left holding the bag and hang for the crime. As well, for J. J., it was important for the bombing to be considered a political, not psychopathic, crime.

After the McNamara brothers plead guilty, Darrow goes on trial for jury tampering (of which he is, in fact, guilty), but he manages to win an acquittal. The socialists lose the December 5, 1911, LA mayoral election. (The unions lose public sympathy once the McNamara brothers admit that they did actually bomb the Times building.) Otis and his group do, in fact, make a killing with the Owens River aqueduct and the development of the San Fernando Valley. But relations do improve between labor and management—or, at least, the explosive (pun intended) nature of the conflict lessens a bit and everyone seems to step back from the brink. Americans love teasing the Apocalypse but don't quite have the heart and the stomach for fully engaging it to the end. After all, Hollywood films have taught us that there is always a way out for the trapped hero, and there is always a happy ending for us all.

Despite a few minor errors—like referring to Thomas Dixon, the author The Clansman and The Leopard's Spots, the novels upon which the Griffith film Birth of a Nation is based, as "Frank"—Blum's book is recommended.
Events in February

st. louis literary calendar

All events are free unless otherwise indicated. Author events generally followed by signings. All phone numbers have 314 prefix unless otherwise indicated.

Monday, February 2
St. Louis County Library presents author Jonathan Stroud as he reads from and signs his new novel, Heroes of the Valley. Books from Barnes & Noble will be available for purchase. 7pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, East Room, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

St. Louis County Library hosts the Book Bunch, whose selection this month is The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield. Registration required. 7pm, SLCL–Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., Meeting Room 1, 636-225-6454.

Tuesday, February 3
Machacek Book Discussion Group welcomes new members. Call for the current selection. 10am, SLPL–Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948.

The Webster Groves Public Library Book Discussion Group will meet to discuss Detective Story by Irme Kertész. 6pm, 301 E. Lockwood Ave., 961-3784.

Left Bank Books invites you to a discussion and poetry reading with Kristina Marie Darling. 7pm, LBB, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Wednesday, February 4
Thornhill Book Chat will meet to discuss, Alpine for You by Maddy Hunter. Book discussion, book reviews, and book gossip. 10:30am, SLCL–Thornhill Branch, 12863 Willowyck Dr., 879-7730.

Borders Book Club will discuss Harriet and Isabella by Patricia O’Brien. 7pm, Borders Cafe 10990 Sunset Hills Piz., 909-0300.

Thursday, February 5
Mystery Lover’s Book Club will discuss Skinny Dip by Carl Haasen. 10am, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, East Room, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

WU Assembly Series invites you to a lecture on entrepreneurship presented by Maxine Clark, Chief Executive Bear of Build-A-Bear Workshop. 5:30pm, WU Danforth Campus, Graham Chapel, 935-4650.

Left Bank Books invites you to a discussion and book signing with Kyle Beechy, author of The Slide. 7pm, LBB, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Observable Readings, hosted by the St. Louis Poetry Center, presents Delmar Revisited: The Former Delmar Magazine. Visit with editors and featured poets Jeff Hamilton, currently a lecturer in English at Washington University in St. Louis; Stephanie Schlaifer, an artist and freelance editor; and Scott McKelvie, who teaches composition at UM–St. Louis. 8pm, Schlafly Bottleworks, 7260 Southwest Ave., 241-2337.

Saturday, February 7
The Mystery Lover’s Book Club will discuss Size 12 Is Not Fat by Meg Cabot. SLPL–Carondelet Branch, 6800 Michigan Ave., 752-9224.

St. Louis Writers Guild invites you to a workshop, “The Future For The Nonfiction Freelancer (Your Yellow Pad and Pen Just Won’t Get It Anymore),” presented by Harry Jackson Jr., featured Health & Fitness and Travel writer in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Register in advance: free for SLWG members, $5 for nonmembers. 10am, B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd., 971-6045.

Monday, February 9
Authors @ Your Library presents Donna Brazile. Keynote speaker for Black History Month, she will discuss this year’s theme, “The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas.” 7pm, SLPL–Central Branch, 1301 Olive St., 241-2288.

Author Frank Fuerst discusses his book Alzheimer’s Care with Dignity. 7pm, SLCL–Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., 636-225-6456.

Tuesday, February 10
Former President Jimmy Carter will sign his book We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land. This is a ticketed event. Purchase We Can Have Peace... from Left Bank Books to receive a ticket. More details at www.left-bank.com. 5pm, LBB Downtown, 321 N. 10th St., 436-3049.

The Tuesday Night Writers’ Critique group will meet to read and critique each other’s work. We welcome visitors. For more info contact 9p4a-p8bp@dea.spamcon.org. 7pm B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd.

Brentwood Public Library Book Club will meet to discuss The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz. 7pm, 8765 Eauilie Ave., 963-8630.

The Main Street Books Second Tuesday Book Club will meet to discuss Call of the Wild by Jack London. 7pm, 307 S. Main Street, St. Charles, 636-949-0105.

St. Louis County Library’s Reader Rendezvous group will discuss The Zookeeper’s Wife by Diane Ackerman. 7pm, SLCL–Tesson Ferry Branch, 9920 Lin-Ferry Road, 843-0560.

Join the As the Page Turns book discussion group while they discuss Garden Spells by Sarah Addison Allen. 7pm, SLCL–Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 638-2210.

HQ Evening Book Discussion will meet to discuss Winter Wheat by Mildred Walker. 7pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

St. Louis Writers Guild invites you to Open Mic Night. Please register in advance at www.stlwritersguild.org. 7pm, Wired Coffee, 3860 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 971-6045.

The Foreign Literature Discussion Group will meet to discuss Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe. The book is available at a discount from Left Bank Books and Borders Brentwood. 7:30pm, Washington University West Campus, 7425 Forsyth, 727-6118.

Wednesday, February 11
Bookies Book Discussion Group will feature this month Pope Joan by Donna Woolfolk. 2pm, SLCL–Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 822-0051.

WU Assembly Series is pleased to present the creator of the Angry Little Asian Girl, Five Angry Episodes and the comic strip Angry Little Girls: artist, cartoonist, and actress Lola Lee. 4pm, WU Danforth Campus, Graham Chapel, 935-4620.

Cindy Lovell, education coordinator at the Mark Twain Museum, will discuss the controversies of Huckleberry Finn. 7pm, Lindenwood University, 209 S. Kingshighway, Sibley Hall Chapel, 949-2000.

Boone’s Bookies will discuss Oh My Stars by Lorna Landvik. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL–Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Rd., 636-227-9630.

Thursday, February 12
HQ Afternoon Book Discussion Group invites you to join them to chat about Crossing to Safety by Wallace Earle Stegner. 2pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

SLCL–Indian Trails Branch invites you to join the Murder of the Month Book Club, which will be discussing Consigned to Death by Jane Cleland. 3:30pm, 8400 Delport Dr., 428-5424.

St. Charles Community College invites you to SCC Coffeehouse, an open-mic evening. 7pm, Daniel J. Conoyer Social Sciences Auditorium, 4601 Mid Rivers Mall Dr., 636-922-8407.

Friday, February 13
The St. Louis County Library Foundation presents poet, author, and activist Nikki Giovanni. Giovanni is the first recipient of the Rosa Parks Woman of Courage Award and holds the Langston Hughes Medal for Outstanding Poetry. Giovanni will read excerpts from her newest collection of love poems, entitled Bicycles: Love Poems. 7pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Saturday, February 14
Romance Readers Book Club will discuss Dark Lover by J. R. Ward. 10am, SLPL–Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton, 352-2900.

Write-Along Writer’s Workshop asks, Are you a writer? Come get critiqued by
your writing peers! We offer support, constructive criticism, and positive feedback. Please bring a sample of your writing. All genres of writing are encouraged, and all ages are welcome. 11am, SLCL–Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 428-5424.

The St. Louis Classical Club will sponsor a talk by Dr. Anna Amelung. "Sex in the City: Erotic Roman Poetry." 1:30pm, SLCL–Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 636-527-2148.

Monday, February 16

River Styx's popular reading series continues its 34th exciting season of lively and thought-provoking literature with its first reading of 2009, featuring two new voices in poetry: Rane Arroyo and Sahar Alam. Admission is $5. 7:30pm, Duff's Restaurant, 392 N. Euclid, 533-4541.

Tuesday, February 17
WU Assembly Series and the Interdisciplinary Project in the Humanities invites you to a lecture, "FanZ and Enthusiasts: The Passions of Modern Reading," by author and professor Janice Radway. 12pm, WU Danforth Campus, Olin Women's Building, Formal Lounge, 935-4620.

The Tuesday Night Writers' Critique Group will meet to read and critique one another’s work. We hope to be able to meet twice/month starting in January. For more information, contact 9p4a-p8bp2dea@spamcon.org, 7pm, B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd.

St. Louis Public Library invites you to a Book Discussion Group. The discussion will be about the book *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. 7pm, SLPL–Kingshighway Branch, 2260 S. Vandeventer Ave., 771-5450.

The St. Louis County Library invites you to the Bridgeton Trails Book Discussion Group. The book this month is *Slavery by Another Name* by Douglas A. Blackmon Edgerton. SLCL–Bridgeton Trails Branch, 3455 McKelvey Road, 291-7570.

All those age 18 and over are welcome to the St. Louis Writers Guild's Loud Mouth Open Mic Night. Please register in advance at www.stlwritersguild.org, 8pm, The Mack, 4615 Macklind Ave., 971-6045.

Wednesday, February 18

WU Performing Arts Department in conjunction with the department’s production of *Hamlet* presents a staged reading, the 1603 Quarto Version of the play, *Hamlet: The Actors’ Version*, performed by Washington University faculty and graduate students. 7:30pm, WU Danforth Campus, Edison Theatre, 935-5858.

Pageturners Book Club meets to discuss *The Princess Bride: S. Morgenstern’s Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure* by William Goldman. 2pm, SLCL–Tesson Ferry Branch, 9920 Lin-Ferry Dr, 843-0560.

Wednesday Night Book Discussion Group will discuss *Cold Sassy Tree* by Olive Ann Burns. 7pm, SLCL–Cliff Cave Branch, 487-6003.

Evening Book Discussion Group will discuss *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V. S. Naipaul. 7:30pm, SLCL–Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 822-0051.

SLCL invites you to join the Book Discussion Group. Are you interested in some literary conversation or just like to talk about the books you enjoy? Copies of the book will be available to check out prior to the meetings. Please ask for one at the circulation desk. 2pm, SLCL–Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhardt Pl., 636-728-0001.

Join the Eureka Hills Book Discussion Group, which meets once a month on every third Wednesday of the month to discuss a new and exciting selection. Stop by the Eureka Hills circulation desk to check out your copy of the next book up for discussion. 6pm, SLCL–Eureka Hills Branch, 103 Hilltop Village Ctr., 636-936-4520.

Internationally best-selling author Barbara Delinsky discusses her latest novel, *While My Sister Sleeps*, which explores the unique and emotionally complex world of siblings. Contact danielle@left-bank.com about a special reception for reading groups. 7pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Thursday, February 19
Fiction writer and author of *The Passage*, Murray Farish, will read from his work. 1:30pm, Webster University, Pearson House, 8260 Big Bend Blvd., 968-7170.

You are invited to join Ha Jin while he discusses and signs his latest, *A Free Life*. John Dalton, St. Louis novelist and author of *Heaven Lake* will serve as master of ceremonies. Books will be available for purchase at the event from Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Saturday, February 21
Missouri Romance Writers of America (MoRWA) invites members and guests alike to “Channel Your Inner Superwoman,” a presentation by published author Michele Dunaway as she discusses how to set and keep writing goals. Visitors are also welcome to the general meeting at 10am. 11am, B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd., 843-9480.

Buder Branch Book Discussion Group will discuss *The Spirit of St. Louis* by Charles Lindbergh. 1pm, SLPL–Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 352-2900.

Sunday, February 22
The BookClub’s 397th discussion will feature *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* by Barack Obama. For more information, venue, and time email lloydjk@klinedinst.com or call 636-451-3232.

Monday, February 23
The Quest for Black Citizenship in St. Louis: An Evening with Sylvester Brown Jr., *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* columnist. 7pm, SLPL–Central Branch, 1301 Olive St., 241-2288.

Left Bank Books invites you to a performance reading and discussion of Christoph Hein’s *Settlement* (translation by Philip Boehm). 7pm, 399 N. Euclid, 367-6731.

Tuesday, February 24
As the Page Turns Book Discussion Group will discuss *Bad Luck and Trouble* by Lee Child. 7pm, SLCL–Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 638-2210.

Poetry at the Point presents Keith Byler, who has had poems published in several anthologies and magazines, including *Emergency: True Stories from the Nation’s ERs and Hurricane Blues*. Also appearing is Lloyd Kropp, author of *The Drift and Greencastle*, among others. Doors open 7pm; readings, 7:30pm. The Focal Point, 2720 Sutton, 636-225-5423, or email info@stlouispoetrycenter.org.

LC Book Club will meet to discuss *The Measure of a Man: A Spiritual Autobiography* by Sidney Poitier. 6pm, SLCL–Lewis & Clark Branch, 9909 Lewis-Clark Blvd., 868-0331.

Wednesday, February 25
Bookies Book Discussion Group will meet to discuss *Shadow Divers* by Robert Kurson. 2pm, SLCL–Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 822-0051.

The Central Book Discussion Group will discuss *The Winter of Our Discontent* by John Steinbeck. Call Popular Library at 539-0396 for details. 4pm, Meeting Room 1, SLPL–Central Branch, 1301 Olive St., 241-2288.

Thursday, February 26
The Book Discussion Group will discuss *Someone Knows My Name* by Lawrence Hill. 7pm, SLPL–Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid, 367-4120.

Abbreviations
STL: St. Louis; B&N: Barnes & Noble; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; SCCCL: St. Charles City County Library; UGPL: University City Public Library; WU: Washington University; WGPL: Webster Groves Public Library. Check the online calendar at cenhum.artscti.wustl.edu for more events and additional details. To advertise, send event details to ltlcal@artscti.wustl.edu or call 935-5576.
Speakers for Faculty Fellows Lecture and Workshop Series. Spring 2009

The Center for the Humanities in Arts & Sciences is pleased to announce its fourth class of faculty fellows and their invited scholars for spring 2009.

Faculty Fellow Lecture

Guinn Batten
Associate Professor of English at Washington University in St. Louis
Tuesday, February 10
4 p.m., Hurst Lounge (Duncker 201)

Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Paul Muldoon, a leading figure in the Ulster Renaissance that emerged during the Irish Troubles in the 1970s, has been celebrated for his ability to combine disturbingly detailed observations of paramilitary and state violence in Northern Ireland with a gift for poetic form so ingenious that it has been called demonic. For more than three decades critics have praised Muldoon for his postmodern panache, his original deployment of what seems to be a decidedly anti-Romantic disingenuousness toward, and disengagement from, the politics of identity. Muldoon’s poetry expresses a postmodern, purposeless delight in language as an end in itself. If his poetry is ethical or political, that is because its playfulness defuses the atavistic voice of the tribe, unified by a time of crisis, through post-national pluralism—a feat augmented by the poet’s mischievous claim to be the “prince” of the “quotidian.”

The poems that will be the basis for Professor Batten’s discussion include Muldoon’s post 9/11, Iraq War sequence “Horse Latitudes,” from which he read at Washington University two years ago; his 1983 poem concerning the H-Block hunger strikes “Gathering Mushrooms”; and “At the Sign of the Black Horse,” a poem (loosely modeled on Yeats’s “A Prayer for My Daughter”) that interweaves narratives of natural disasters, the Holocaust, and the Great Hunger, climaxing with an experience of personal crisis in St. Louis.

Guest Faculty Presentations

Penny Von Eschen, Professor of History and American Culture at the University of Michigan, invited by 2009 Faculty Fellow Andrea Friedman, Associate Professor of History and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis

Penny Von Eschen’s pioneering scholarship on African Americans and Cold War political culture/cultural politics brings together race, empire, and transnationalism in ways that no other scholar approaches. Her work is also a model for joining the methodologies of history and American studies. I’m looking forward to hearing about her new research on the transnational history of Cold War nostalgia, which promises to bring the same nuance and complexity to our understanding of the post–Cold War world.

— Andrea Friedman

Tuesday, February 24
4 p.m., Hurst Lounge (Duncker 201)
Lecture: Cold War Nostalgia: From the International Spy Museum, Washington D.C., to “Stalin World” Theme Park, Lithuania

This lecture will be drawn from a broader project that examines competing narratives about the historical significance of the Cold War by focusing on post-1989 public and material culture exhibited in museums, parks, and memorials in the West as well as in the former Eastern Bloc. Her lecture focuses on the production of nostalgia at the International Spy Museum in Washington D.C., Grutas Park (Stalin World) in Lithuania, and Szoborpark (Statue and Memento Park) in Budapest. In each case she questions the cultural/political work of each site, as well as its explicit interventions in international Cold War discourse, examining official site/museum narratives, local controversies about the sites, and the consumer history promoted in museum and park shops. German critiques of kitsch have long suggested its complicity in fascist and authoritarian regimes. Others have noted the playfulness and multiplicity of interpretations inherent in kitsch. She will extend these questions to the self-parodic Cold War kitsch that has arisen on both sides of the former East–West divide and that is prominently for sale at these sites.

Wednesday, February 25
12 p.m., Graduate Center (Room 300), Danforth University Center
Workshop: Cold War Memory and Representations

The seminar will be based on a pre-circulated paper that extends the lecture on Cold War nostalgia and considers other facets of contested representations of the Cold War.

The events are free and open to the public. Please call the Center at 314-935-5576 for a free parking sticker and to reserve a seat so that we can have an accurate count. Refreshments will be provided.
Blue Note

On January 6, 1939, Alfred Lion entered a studio with boogie-woogie piano masters Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis to preserve on record the music that had gripped him at a concert two weeks earlier. Lion was born in Berlin, Germany, and came to the United States to be closer to the music he had fallen in love with listening to his mother’s recordings. This recording session was the birth of Blue Note Records. Lion was soon joined by his childhood friend and fellow immigrant Francis Wolff, who would moonlight from his job at a photography studio to help get the label off the ground.

Blue Note Records shaped the jazz world, producing now legendary recordings and introducing artists who would have a profound impact on jazz. Blue Note Records is easily the most recognized jazz label in the world. Lion and Wolff were deeply committed to the artists they signed and were able to find and cultivate excellent talent. Among their early recordings in the 1940s were Fats Navarro, Bud Powell, and Tad Dameron. They were among the first to champion the pianist Thelonious Monk, producing recordings for him even in the face of lackluster sales and disdain by critics. The label launched the career of Art Blakey, whose Jazz Messengers would become the de facto finishing school for great jazz talent from Lee Morgan to Wynton Marsalis.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Blue Note produced many of the finest hard-bop recordings with artists like Horace Silver, Lou Donaldson, Clifford Brown, and the legendary Hammond B-3 organist, Jimmy Smith.

Around this same time Blue Note was also introducing a crop of young musicians who would lead the next two decades of jazz music: Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Jackie McLean, Bobby Hutcherson, Freddie Hubbard, and Joe Henderson. And much like their early support of Monk, Lion and Wolff championed avant-garde artists like Andrew Hill and Eric Dolphy. Linking these many artists of various styles was the sound of a Blue Note recording that, thanks to the engineering of Rudy Van Gelder, became the standard for recorded jazz.

It wasn’t just the sound of Blue Note recordings that would define the label but the look. Reid Miles joined the label in the mid 1950s as a designer and produced graphic covers that are instantly recognizable as Blue Note recordings. Francis Wolff took pictures of the musicians during rehearsals and recording sessions. Many of these pictures made their way onto Miles’s record jackets, giving the label its cool ambiance.

Wolff died in 1971 and his death would herald the end of Lion’s involvement with Blue Note. But their legacy with the label lives on.

In celebration of Black History Month and the influence of the Blue Note label and its artists on American culture, Jazz St. Louis (JSL) will commemorate the legacy and 70th anniversary of Blue Note Records with a concert featuring seven current Blue Note artists at the Sheldon Concert Hall on February 22, 2009. JSL will also feature Blue Note artists Terence Blanchard and Pat Martino through its Jazz at the Bistro Series February 4–7 and 18–21, respectively. JSL will hold a discussion with Dr. Gerald Early about the golden age of Blue Note Records at its CD Listening Club at Borders Books on Brentwood Boulevard at 7 p.m. on February 10. On February 11 at 7 p.m., JSL will offer a free concert featuring Reggie Thomas performing the music of Blue Note’s organ and soul years. The concert is at Third Baptist Church and concertgoers are asked to bring a canned good item to restock its food pantry. For more information on any of these events, please call Jazz St. Louis at 314-289-4030 or visit www.jazzstl.org.

Gene Dobbs Bradford is the Executive Director of Jazz at the Bistro. He also serves on the advisory board of the Center for the Humanities.