

BENNINGTON

C O L L E G E

BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS

Liam Rector

Director

Priscilla Hodgkins

Assistant Director

November 10, 1994

Jaime Clarke
4236 North 103rd Avenue #7
Phoenix, AZ 85037

Dear Jaime:

It is my great pleasure to inform you that the Committee on Admissions for the Bennington College Writing Seminars would like to offer you admission to the program for the term beginning in January 1995. The residency period is January 6 to January 16.

Enclosed are two forms which should be completed and returned to the Writing Seminars Office by November 23. To guarantee your placement in the enrollment, send in the five hundred dollar (\$500.) matriculation fee with the forms; it will be held until you graduate or withdraw within approved guidelines. The Financial Responsibility Form should be signed by you and, if applicable, the person responsible for payment of the charges associated with this program (otherwise you are your own sponsor, but the form still needs to be signed and returned). You will receive a bill for the winter/spring term charges under separate cover soon from the Business Office.

We look forward to welcoming you to Bennington in January. Congratulations on your acceptance.

Sincerely,



Liam Rector
Director

LR/ph

MA/MFA PROGRAM IN WRITING AND LITERATURE

THE COURSE OF STUDY

The Bennington Writing Seminars at Bennington College offer a low-residency Master of Arts (M.A.) or Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree in Writing and Literature. This two-year graduate program involves intense 10-day residency periods at Bennington College during January and August of each year. To complete the program, four semesters and five residencies are required. Between residencies, students spend the six-month semesters corresponding directly with faculty who teach as part of the program's core staff. Additional faculty participate as associate staff during the 10-day residency periods, teaching literature from a writer's point of view. The five residencies feature workshops, readings, lectures and discussions of literature, and an ongoing investigation of what constitutes the world of letters.

In keeping with Bennington's progressive tradition, the course of study in the Seminars is structured largely by the student. Students, in concert with the core staff, form their own reading lists, and submit interpretive and original work—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—for critique at regular intervals throughout the semester. The development of individual work is at the heart of the program, as it is at the heart of Bennington College and its other graduate programs in dance, music, and the visual arts.

Students are expected to devote at least 25 hours each week to their writing and reading, and a successfully completed semester's work is granted 16 hours of graduate credit. To receive the M.F.A., each student will create and submit a manuscript of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry at

the end of the program. The M.A. degree will be awarded to those who elect to concentrate on interpretive and critical work. In all cases, students will be expected to explore both arenas and to complete a major independent written project.

During each residency, workshops in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry will be conducted by the core staff. Associate staff will visit to conduct five-day residencies, teaching literature in three lecture/discussion sessions. Whatever the genre in which a student is working, all students are expected to attend the sessions of associate faculty in at least two genres. All faculty will give readings of their work, and associate faculty will comment upon selected student work. Students will also give readings of their work. During the 10-day residency, students will design their course of study for the coming semester—readings and writings—in consultation with the core faculty member with whom the student will be corresponding. Workshops are small—never more than 12 people—and an intimate student/teacher ratio will be maintained throughout the program.

The first two semesters are devoted to original and interpretive work, with a minimum 10-page critical paper, based on one's reading list, to be submitted to the core staff member and the students in one's genre at the end of each semester. The third semester requires that each student complete, in addition to original work, a minimum 20-page critical work, which will then be revised and presented to the faculty and students in a lecture during the fourth residency period.

ADMISSIONS

The Bennington Writing Seminars will begin in January of 1994. The application deadline is October 15, 1993. Students may begin the program during either of the 10-day residency sessions in January or August, and the deadline for admission for the August 1994 residency is May 31, 1994. Students are encouraged to apply as early as they possibly can, as admission is limited.

Students are admitted to the program primarily on the strength of the original manuscript submitted with the application, which will be judged according to its literary merit and its indication of a readiness to study writing and literature on a graduate level. The application should include two manuscript copies.

Although we encourage students to write broadly in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, students will initially be accepted to work in one primary genre. The manuscript submitted should be in the genre in which the student intends to concentrate. Manuscripts cannot be returned.

The application should otherwise provide a two- to three-page essay on how a student intends to use the program to shape the student's work, and what background prepares the student for work in the Seminars. Normally a bachelor's degree is required to gain admission, but this requirement can be waived if the quality of the work submitted warrants such an exception. Students who are applying to the program will often have completed some graduate work or attained graduate degrees in various fields; no credits taken beforehand can be applied to the Bennington Writing Seminars. The low-residency

format has its own internal logic and requirements, and in order to receive a degree a student must have completed the entire course of study.

In addition to the original manuscript and the essay on how a student intends to use the program, in admitting students we will give weight to previous education and life experience. We will look to see that a prospective student has both the ability to work independently, to successfully utilize the low-residency format, and to benefit from direct criticism within the collaborative nature of the residency periods. Our aim is to provide a vortex for the person of letters and to be part of the lifelong continuum within the world of letters.

Transcripts from previous schools attended must also be submitted, along with recommendations from two persons familiar with the student's writing and capacity to function independently and collaboratively.

Semester costs, including room and board during the residency period, are \$4,250. A lesser fee will be charged for the fifth and final residency period of the program. A \$45 nonrefundable application fee is required. This fee cannot be waived. Financial aid is available, in the form of student loans, and these funds must be applied for within the deadlines outlined on the application form. We invite interested applicants to call and discuss matters in detail.

**Graduate Admissions
Bennington College
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-6349**

CORE FACULTY

To teach workshops during the two 10-day residencies in January and August, to correspond with students during the six-month semesters between residencies, to give readings of their work, and to advise students in setting up their course of study.

Fiction

Susan Dodd: Ms. Dodd's novels are *Mamaw* (Viking, 1988) and *No Earthly Notion* (Viking, 1986). She has also published two books of short stories, *Hell-Bent Men and Their Cities* (Viking, 1990) and *Old Wives' Tales* (Iowa, 1984). In 1992 she received a fellowship in fiction from the National Endowment for the Arts, and she has received two Distinguished Teaching Awards from Harvard University. She currently teaches at Harvard, and has taught at Vermont College and the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She has also worked as a speechwriter and as a legislative aide. Her stories, essays, and reviews have been published in *Yankee*, *The New Yorker*, *Redbook*, *Lear's*, *Newsday*, the *Washington Post*, and other periodicals. Ms. Dodd holds an M.F.A. from the low-residency writing program at Vermont College and a B.S. in International Affairs from Georgetown University. She currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and will soon be making her home in Ocracoke, North Carolina, an island which is part of the Outer Banks.

Jill McCorkle: Ms. McCorkle's novels are *Crash Diet* (1992), *Ferris Beach* (1990), *Tending to Virginia* (1987), *The Cheer Leader* (1984), and *July 7th* (1984), all originally published by Algonquin Books, with several books translated into French, Japanese, and Swedish. Her short stories have appeared in *Cosmopolitan*, *The Atlantic*, the *Southern Review*, and other magazines. She took an M.A. from the writing program at Hollins College and a B.A. in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has taught at Tufts, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke Uni-

versity, and is currently teaching at Harvard. She lives in Wayland, Massachusetts.

Poetry

Liam Rector: Mr. Rector is the director of the Bennington Writing Seminars and the Bennington Writing Workshops. His books are *The Sorrow of Architecture* (Dragon Gate, 1984), a book of poems, and *The Day I Was Older: On the Poetry of Donald Hall* (Story Line, 1989), which he edited. He has received Guggenheim and NEA fellowships in poetry. Mr. Rector contributes a regular column on the First Amendment to the *Harvard Review*, and his poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in the *Paris Review*, *American Poetry Review*, the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, and other periodicals. He has taught at Emerson College, Old Dominion University, Goucher College, George Mason University, and the Phillips Academy at Andover, and has administered literary programs at Associated Writing Programs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Academy of American Poets. He holds an M.A. from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins and an M.A. in public administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Stephen Sandy: Mr. Sandy is the author of six collections of poems, including *Thanksgiving Over the Water* (Knopf, 1992), *Man in the Open Air* (Knopf, 1988), *Riding to Greylock* (Knopf, 1983), and *Roofs* (Houghton Mifflin, 1971). He has taught at Harvard, Brown, the University of Tokyo, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and the University of Rhode Island, and currently teaches at Bennington College. He has received fellowships in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and was a Fulbright Lecturer in Japan. He holds a Ph.D. from Harvard and took a B.A. at Yale. Mr. Sandy lives in North Bennington, Vermont.

Nonfiction

David Lehman: Mr. Lehman's books of nonfiction are *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (Simon and Schuster, 1991), *The Line Forms Here* (University of Michigan, 1992), and *The Perfect Murder: A Study in Detection* (Macmillan, 1989). His books of poems are *Operation Memory* (Princeton, 1990) and *An Alternative to Speech* (Princeton, 1986). He has edited *Ecstatic Occasions, Expedient Forms* (Macmillan, 1987), *James Merrill: Essays in Criticism* (Cornell, 1983), and *Beyond Amazement: New Essays on John Ashbery* (Cornell, 1980). His poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *Gettysburg Review*, *Grand Street*, and other magazines, and he has received fellowships in poetry from the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Lila Wallace Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He has taught at Hamilton College, Ithaca College, and Wells College, and has lectured in India and Japan. Mr. Lehman has served as a literary editor and writer for *Newsweek* and is currently the series editor of *The Best American Poetry* (Macmillan). He holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University, a B.A. and M.A. from Cambridge University, and a B.A. from Columbia University. He currently lives in upstate New York.

ASSOCIATE FACULTY

To conduct lectures and discussions of literature for five-day residencies which take place within the 10-day residencies at Bennington College, to give readings of their work, and to consult with students about student writing. (This list denotes those who will be doing residencies over the first two years of the Bennington Writing Seminars.)

Fiction

Charles Johnson: Mr. Johnson has written four books of fiction: *Faith and the Good Thing* (Viking, 1974), *Oxherding Tale* (Indiana, 1982), *The*

Sorcerer's Apprentice (Atheneum, 1986), and *Middle Passage* (Atheneum, 1990), which won the 1990 National Book Award in fiction. He has also published two collections of drawings, *Black Humor* (Johnson Publishing, 1970) and *Half Past Nation Time* (Aware Press, 1972), and a critical book, *Being and Race: Black Writing Since 1970* (Indiana, 1988). He currently teaches philosophy and literature at the University of Washington and lives in Seattle.

Margot Livesey: Ms. Livesey's novels are *Homework* (Viking, 1990) and *Learning by Heart* (Penguin Canada, 1986); with Lynn Klamkin, she edited *Writing About Literature: An Anthology for Reading and Writing* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986). She has received a fellowship in fiction from the National Endowment for the Arts and fellowships in fiction from Canada, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. Ms. Livesey has taught in the Bennington Writing Workshops, Williams College, Warren Wilson, Carnegie-Mellon, Tufts, the University of Washington, and is currently a visiting writer at the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She holds a B.A. from the University of York, England. Ms. Livesey currently makes her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Bret Lott: Mr. Lott's books include the novels *Jewel* (Pocket Books, 1991), *The Man Who Owned Vermont* (Viking, 1987), and *A Stranger's House* (Viking, 1988), and the story collection *A Dream of Old Leaves* (Viking, 1989). Forthcoming books are the novel *Reed's Beach* (Pocket Books, 1993); a story collection, *The Difference Between Men and Women* (Pocket Books, 1994); and an essay collection, *Fathers, Sons, and Brothers* (Pocket Books, 1994). Mr. Lott's stories have appeared in the *Yale Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Antioch Review*, and other magazines. He reviews regularly for the *New York Times Book Review*. Mr. Lott holds an M.F.A. from the writing program at the University of Massachusetts, and a B.A. from California State University at Long Beach. He teaches at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina.

Sue Miller: Ms. Miller's novels are *The Good Mother* (Harper & Row, 1986), *Family Pictures* (Harper-Collins, 1991), and *For Love* (HarperCollins, 1993). Her work has been translated worldwide. She has also published a book of short stories, *Inventing the Abbots* (Harper & Row, 1987). Ms. Miller has reviewed for the *New York Times Book Review*. She has been a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College and a Guggenheim Fellow. Ms. Miller has taught at M.I.T., Emerson, Harvard, Tufts, and Boston University, and holds a B.A. from Harvard and master's degrees from Harvard, Wesleyan, and Boston University. She lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Poetry

Lucie Brock-Broido: Ms. Brock-Broido's books of poems are *A Hunger* (Knopf, 1988) and the forthcoming *The Master Letters* (Knopf, 1994). Her poems have appeared widely in periodicals including *Harper's*, *Ploughshares*, the *New York Times*, the *Kenyon Review*, and the *Paris Review*. She has received fellowships in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Arts Council, and has received three awards for distinguished teaching at Harvard University, where she now teaches. She has also taught at M.I.T., Tufts, and Wheaton College, and next fall she will be teaching at Columbia University. She took an M.F.A. from Columbia University, and holds M.A. and B.A. degrees from Johns Hopkins University. Ms. Brock-Broido lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Donald Hall: Mr. Hall writes poems, essays, short stories, memoirs, plays, biographies, textbooks, and children's books, and has worked as an anthologist and an editor. He has published 13 books of poetry, including *The Museum of Clear Ideas* (Ticknor & Fields, 1993), *The One Day* (Ticknor & Fields, 1988), *The Happy Man* (Random, 1986), and *Kicking the Leaves* (Harper & Row, 1978). His books of prose include *String Too Short to Be Saved* (Viking, 1961), *Dock Ellis in the Country of Baseball* (Coward McCann, 1976), *Seasons at Eagle Pond*

(Ticknor & Fields, 1987), *Poetry and Ambition* (Michigan, 1988), and many others. His children's book, *Ox Cart Man* (Viking, 1979), won the Caldecott Award for 1980. He has been awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry for *The One Day*, and he has received Guggenheim fellowships, the Lamont Prize, and numerous other awards for his work. He currently serves as the representative for literature on the National Council on the Arts, and he makes his home in Danbury, New Hampshire.

Jane Kenyon: Ms. Kenyon, a poet and translator, has published three books of poems: *From Room to Room* (Alicejames Press), *The Boat of Quiet Hours* (Graywolf, 1976), *Let Evening Come* (Graywolf, 1989), and the forthcoming *Constance* (Graywolf, 1993). She translated *Twenty Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (Alley Press). She has received Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts fellowships in poetry, and she too lives in Danbury, New Hampshire.

Nonfiction

Sven Birkerts: Mr. Birkerts' books of essays are *American Energies: Essays on Fiction* (Morrow, 1992), *The Electric Life: Essays on Modern Poetry* (Morrow, 1989), and *An Artificial Wilderness: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* (Morrow, 1987). He now edits, with Donald Hall, the textbook *Writing Well* (Harper), and he edited *The Longwood Introduction to Fiction* (Allyn & Bacon, 1992). Mr. Birkerts publishes essays and reviews regularly in the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Threepenny Review*, *Pequod*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Mirabella*, and elsewhere, and he is a contributing editor to the *Boston Review* and *Agni*. In 1985 he was awarded the Citation for Excellence in Reviewing from the National Book Critics Circle, and he was recently awarded a fellowship in writing from the Lila Wallace Foundation. Mr. Birkerts holds a B.A. in English from the University of Michigan and lives in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Edward Hoagland: Mr. Hoagland's books of nonfiction include *Balancing Acts* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), *Heart's Desire* (Simon & Schuster, 1991), *The Edward Hoagland Reader* (Random House, 1979), *Red Wolves and Black Bears* (Random House, 1976), *Notes from the Century Before: A Journal from British Columbia* (Random House, 1982), *African Calliope: A Journey to the Sudan* (Random House, 1979), and many others. His works of fiction include *The Final Fate of the Alligators* (Capra, 1992), *Seven Rivers West* (Simon & Schuster, 1986), and *City Tales* (Capra, 1986). He publishes pieces often in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Antaeus*, the *New York Times*, *Harper's*, and other periodicals. He has received Guggenheim fellowships, the Brandeis University Citation in Literature, the Prix de Rome from the Academy of Arts and Letters, and an NEA fellowship. Mr. Hoagland currently teaches at Bennington College and has taught at Sarah Lawrence, Columbia, Brown, the New School for Social Research, the University of California at Davis, and elsewhere. He lives in Barton, Vermont.

Katha Pollitt: Poet and essayist, Ms. Pollitt has published a book of poems, *Antarctic Traveller* (Knopf, 1992), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is an associate editor for the *Nation* and her work appears often in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine* "Her" column, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Whiting Foundation, and has taught at Princeton, Barnard, the Poetry Center of the 92nd St. Y, and the New School for Social Research. In 1992 she won the National Magazine Award. Ms. Pollitt took an M.F.A. from the writing program at Columbia University.

VISITING WRITERS

Visiting writers will also be giving readings of their work as part of the 10-day residencies. Those who are already slated to give readings are Anne Bernays, Rita Dove, Justin Kaplan, Kathleen Norris, Fred Viebahn, and Tom Wicker. Others will be announced. We will also have visits from selected editors and publishers, and we plan to conduct a symposium on Bennington's literary history and the future of literature at Bennington, featuring writers who have taught and studied at Bennington.

BENNINGTON COLLEGE WRITING SEMINARS

The Course of Study

The Bennington Writing Seminars at Bennington College offer a low-residency Master of Arts (M.A.) or Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree in Writing and Literature. This two-year graduate program involves intense 10-day residency periods at Bennington College during January and June of each year. To complete the program, four semesters and five residencies are required. Between residencies, students spend the six-month semesters corresponding directly with faculty who teach as part of the program's core staff. Additional faculty participate as associate staff during the 10-day residency periods, teaching literature from a writer's point of view. The five residencies feature workshops, readings, lectures and discussions of literature, and an ongoing investigation of what constitutes the world of letters.

In keeping with Bennington's progressive tradition, the course of study in the Seminars is structured by the student. Students, in concert with the core staff, form their own reading lists, and submit interpretive and original work—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—for critique at regular intervals throughout the semester. The tutorial development of individual work is at the heart of the program, as it is at the heart of Bennington College and its other graduate programs in dance, music, and the visual arts.

Students are expected to devote at least 25 hours each week to their writing and reading, and a successfully completed semester's work is granted 16 hours of graduate credit. To receive the M.F.A., each student will create and submit a manuscript of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry at the end of the program. The M.A. degree will be awarded to those who elect to concentrate on interpretive and critical work. In all cases, students will be expected to explore both arenas and to complete a major independent written project.

During each residency, workshops in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry will be conducted by the core staff. Associate staff will visit to conduct five-day residencies, teaching literature in three lecture/discussion sessions. In whichever genre a student is working, all are expected to attend at least three of the associate faculty lecture/discussions.

All faculty will give readings of their work. Students may also give readings of their work. During the 10-day residency, students will design their courses of study for the coming semester—readings and writings—in consultation with the core faculty member with whom the student will be corresponding.

All faculty will give readings of their work, and associate faculty will consult informally with students about student reading lists. Students will also give readings

of their work. Workshops are small—never more than 12 people—and an intimate student/teacher ratio will be maintained throughout the program.

The first two semesters are devoted to original and interpretive work, with a minimum 10-page critical paper, based on one's reading list, to be submitted to the core staff member and to the students in one's genre at the end of each semester. The third semester requires that each student complete, in addition to original work, a minimum 20-page critical work, which will then be revised and presented to the faculty and students in a lecture during the fourth residency period.

During the course of the program each student concentrates on the genre in which his/her application was accepted. However, since the Writing Seminars look to encourage writing as a broad person of letters, students are allowed to spend one semester outside the area of their focus, with the permission of the corresponding teacher. Many of our writers write between the genre distinctions of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, and ample opportunity to study all three genres is constituted in the core and associate faculty.

No writing program—nor government, for that matter—can call great writing into being. The Writing Seminars offer to aid those who have heard the call and are working to answer it. The emphasis at the Writing Seminars will not be towards training nor credentializing those who wish to teach, though our M.F.A. degree will be regarded as an “appropriate terminal degree in the arts” for those who might someday look to teach on the college level. Our emphasis will remain on the merits of the work at hand, augmented by becoming able to participate and contribute to the larger world of letters.

Students must be in residence each day of the January and June residencies, arriving the day before the residency and leaving no sooner than the day after.

Admissions

The Bennington Writing Seminars began in January of 1994. Students may begin the program during either of the 10-day residency sessions in January or June. Admission is limited and competitive.

Students are admitted to the program primarily on the strength of the original manuscript submitted with the application, which will be judged according to its literary merit and its indication of a readiness to study writing and literature on a graduate level. The application should include three manuscript copies.

Although we encourage students to write broadly in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, students will initially be accepted to work in one primary genre. The manuscript submitted should be in the genre in which the student intends to concentrate. Manuscripts cannot be returned.

The applicant should otherwise provide a two- to three-page essay on how the student intends to use the program to shape the student's work, and what background prepares the student for work in the Seminars. Normally a bachelor's degree is required to gain admission, but this requirement can be waived if the quality of the work submitted warrants such an exception. Students who are applying to the program will often have completed some graduate work or attained graduate degrees in various fields; no credits taken beforehand can be applied to the Bennington Writing Seminars. The low-residency format has its own internal logic and requirements, and in order to receive a degree a student must have completed the entire course of study.

In addition to the original manuscript and the essay, in admitting students we will give weight to previous education and life experience. We will look to see that a prospective student has the ability to work independently, to successfully utilize the low-residency format, and to benefit from direct criticism within the collaborative nature of the residency periods. Our aim is to provide a vortex for the person of letters and to be part of the lifelong continuum within the world of letters.

Transcripts from previous schools attended must also be submitted, along with recommendations from three people familiar with the student's writing and capacity to function independently and collaboratively.

A \$45 nonrefundable application fee is required. This fee cannot be waived. Financial aid is available in the form of student loans. These funds must be applied for within the deadlines outlined on the application form. We invite interested applicants to call and discuss matters in detail. Refunds in the program are scheduled in accordance with the Bennington Business Office. Ask for details.

**Writing Programs Office
Bennington College
Bennington, VT 05201
Tel: 802-442-5401, ext. 160
Fax: 802-442-6164**

CORE FACULTY

Core faculty teach workshops during the two 10-day residencies in January and June, correspond with students during the six-month semesters between residencies, give readings of their work, and advise students in setting up their course of study.

FICTION

Douglas Bauer: Mr. Bauer's novels are *The Very Air* (Morrow, 1993) and *Dexterity* (Simon and Schuster, 1989), which was also published in Germany and England. He has written a book of nonfiction, *Prairie City, Iowa* (G.P. Putnam's, 1979). Mr. Bauer has received a fellowship in fiction from the NEA and received awards in teaching at the Harvard-Danforth Center. He has published essays and criticism in *The Atlantic*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and elsewhere. He holds a Doctor of Arts from the State University of New York at Albany and a B.A. in journalism from Drake University. He has taught at Drake, Harvard, the University of New Mexico, Ohio State University, and elsewhere. He has worked as an editor, and lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Susan Dodd: Ms. Dodd's novels are *Mamaw* (Viking, 1988) and *No Earthly Notion* (Viking, 1986). She has also published two books of short stories, *Hell-Bent Men and Their Cities* (Viking, 1990) and *Old Wives' Tales* (Iowa, 1984). In 1992 she received a fellowship in fiction from the NEA, and she has received two Distinguished Teaching Awards from Harvard University. She has taught at Harvard, Vermont College, and the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She has also worked as a speechwriter and as a legislative aide. Her stories, essays, and reviews have been published in *Yankee*, *The New Yorker*, *Redbook*, *Lear's*, *Newsday*, the *Washington Post*, and other periodicals. Ms. Dodd holds an M.F.A. from the low-residency writing program at Vermont College and a B.S. in International Affairs from Georgetown University. She makes her home in Ocracoke, North Carolina, an island which is part of the Outer Banks.

Maria Flook: Ms. Flook's first novel *Family Night* (Pantheon, 1993), received a PEN/Ernest Hemingway Foundation Special Citation. Her new novel *Open Water*, is forthcoming in January of 1995 from Pantheon, who will thereafter publish a collection of her stories, *Human Shores*. A limited edition of short stories, *Dancing with My Sister Jane*, appeared from Ampersand Press in 1987. She has also published two books of poems, *Sea Room* (Wesleyan University Press, 1990) and *Reckless Wedding* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982), which received the Great Lakes College Association new writer's award. Her work has

appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New Criterion*, *Michigan Quaterly*, *Ploughshares*, and other magazines. Her other awards include a Pushcart Prize, a fellowship from the NEA, and a North Carolina Writers Award. Ms. Flook received an M.F.A. from the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa and a B.A. from Roger Williams College. She has taught at Warren Wilson College, the University of North Carolina/Asheville, Rhode Island College, and Roger Williams College. She lives in Truro, Massachusetts.

Lynn Freed: Ms. Freed's novels are *Heart Change* (New American Library, 1982, and Chivers Press, England, 1984), *Home Ground* (Summit Books, 1986, and Penguin Books, England, 1988), and *The Bungalow* (Poseidon Press, 1988). Her short stories, articles, and essays have appeared in *Harper's*, *ZYZZYVA*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Mirabella*, and elsewhere, and her reviews have appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle Review*, the *Washington Post Book World*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the NEA and the Guggenheim Foundation. Ms. Freed has taught at the Bennington Summer Writing Workshops, City College of San Francisco, and elsewhere, and is a consulting editor to *Mirabella*. She holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University, where she was a University Wit Fellow, and a B.A. from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. She lives in Sonoma, California.

Amy Hempel: Ms. Hempel has published two collections of stories, *Reasons to Live* (Knopf, 1985) and *At the Gates of the Kingdom* (Knopf, 1990). Both books appeared in French, Spanish, and Italian editions, and individual stories have been published in twelve languages. Her stories have been anthologized in *Best American Short Stories*, the *Pushcart Prize*, and *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*; her stories have appeared in magazines and quarterlies such as *Harper's*, *Mother Jones*, *Grand Street*, the *Yale Review*, and elsewhere. Her nonfiction has appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Esquire*, *Vogue*, *Interview*, *Elle*, and other outlets. She has taught at New York University and conducted residencies at Sewanee, Breadloaf, Ropewalk, the New York State Summer Writers's Institute, and elsewhere. She holds a B.A. in journalism from California State University, San Jose. Ms. Hempel once worked as an editor for *Vanity Fair*, and she currently lives in New York.

Jill McCorkle: Ms. McCorkle's has published four novels: *Ferris Beach* (1990), *Tending to Virginia* (1987), *The Cheer Leader* (1984), and *July 7th* (1984), and a short story collection, *Crash Diet* (1992), all originally published by Algonquin Books, with several books translated into Japanese, French, and Swedish. Her short stories have appeared in *Cosmopolitan*, *The Atlantic*, the *Southern Review*, and other magazines. She took an M.A. from the writing program at Hollins College and a B.A. in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has taught at Tufts, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, and she currently teaches at Harvard University. Ms. McCorkle lives in Wayland, Massachusetts.

Reginald McKnight: Mr. McKnight has published two books of short stories, *The Kind of Light That Shines on Texas* (Little, Brown, 1992) and *Moustapha's Eclipse* (University of Pittsburgh, 1988); and a novel, *I Get on the Bus* (Little, Brown, 1990), which was also published in a French edition. In 1994 he published a book of nonfiction, *African American Wisdom* (New World Library). His stories and reviews have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *Calaloo*, *Leviathan*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and elsewhere. He has taught at Carnegie Mellon University, Washington University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Colorado College. In 1990 he received the O. Henry award, and he has been the recipient of a fellowship in fiction from the NEA. Mr. McKnight is fiction editor for *African American Review*, and an advisory editor to *Callaloo*. He holds an A.A. from Pikes Peak Community College, a B.A. from Colorado College, an M.A. from the University of Denver, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from Colorado College. He teaches in the writing program at the University of Maryland, and divides his time between Maryland and Pittsburgh.

Bob Shacochis: Mr. Shacochis's first novel, *Swimming in the Volcano* (Scribners), was nominated in 1994 for the National Book Award. His short story collections are *Easy in the Islands* (Crown, 1985), which won the National Book Award, and *The Next New World* (Crown, 1989). In 1994 he also published *Domesticity* (Scribners), a collection of his food columns from *Gentlemen's Quarterly*. Mr. Shacochis has worked in the Peace Corps; has taught at the University of Iowa; has written as a free-lance journalist for *Rolling Stone*, *Vogue*, *Esquire*, and many others; and is a contributing editor to *Harper's*. He took an M.F.A. from the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa and an M.A. and B.A. from the University of Missouri. He makes his home in Tallahassee, Florida, and he travels extensively. Mr. Shacochis also teaches nonfiction.

POETRY

David Lehman: Mr. Lehman's books of poems are *Operation Memory* (Princeton, 1990) and *An Alternative to Speech* (Princeton, 1986). He has edited *Ecstatic Occasions*, *Expedient Forms* (Macmillan, 1987), *James Merrill: Essays in Criticism* (Cornell, 1983), and *Beyond Amazement: New Essays on John Ashbery* (Cornell, 1980). His books of nonfiction are *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (Simon and Schuster, 1991), *The Line Forms Here* (University of Michigan, 1992), *The Big Question* (Michigan, 1995), and *The Perfect Murder: A Study in Detection* (Macmillan, 1989). He is editor of the University of Michigan Press's *Poets on Poetry* and *Under Discussion* series. His poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *Gettysburg Review*, *Grand Street*, and other magazines, and he has received fellowships in poetry from the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Lila Wallace Foundation, and the Guggenheim

Foundation. He has taught at Hamilton College, the New School, and Columbia, and has lectured in India and Japan. Mr. Lehman has served as a literary editor and writer for *Newsweek* and is the series editor of *The Best American Poetry* (Scribners). He holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University, a B.A. and M.A. from Cambridge University, and a B.A. from Columbia University. He lives in New York and is currently writing a book about the New York school of poets.

Liam Rector: Mr. Rector is the director of the Bennington Writing Seminars and the Bennington Summer Writing Workshops. His books are *American Prodigal* (Story Line Press, 1994) and *The Sorrow of Architecture* (Dragon Gate, 1984), books of poems; and *The Day I Was Older: On the Poetry of Donald Hall* (Story Line, 1989), which he edited. He has received Guggenheim and NEA fellowships in poetry. Mr. Rector is the poetry editor of *Harvard Magazine*. His poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in the *Paris Review*, *American Poetry Review*, the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *Harvard Review*, and other periodicals. He has taught at Emerson College, Old Dominion University, Goucher College, George Mason University, and the Phillips Academy at Andover, and has administered literary programs at Associated Writing Programs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Academy of American Poets. He holds an M.A. from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins and an M.P.A. in public administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Stephen Sandy: Mr. Sandy is the author of six collections of poems, including *Thanksgiving Over the Water* (Knopf, 1992); *Man in the Open Air* (Knopf, 1988); *Riding to Greylock* (Knopf, 1983); and *Roofs* (Houghton Mifflin, 1971). His poems, essays, reviews, and translations have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, the *Yale Review*, *Grand Street*, the *New Republic*, *Salmagundi*, and elsewhere. His translation of Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus* will be included in *Complete Roman Drama*, published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1994. Mr. Sandy has taught at Harvard, Brown, the University of Tokyo, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, the University of Rhode Island, and he now teaches at Bennington College. He has received fellowships in poetry from the NEA, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and was a Fulbright Lecturer in Japan. He holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from Harvard and took a B.A. at Yale. Mr. Sandy lives in North Bennington, Vermont.

NONFICTION

Sven Birkerts: In 1994 Faber & Faber published *The Gutenberg Elegies*, a book about the fate of reading in our electronic culture. Other books of essays by Mr. Birkerts are *American Energies: Essays on Fiction* (Morrow, 1992); *The Electric Life: Essays on Modern Poetry* (Morrow, 1989); and *An Artificial Wilderness: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* (Morrow, 1987). He edits, with Donald Hall, the textbook *Writing Well* (Harper), and he edited *The Longwood Introduction to Fiction* (Allyn & Bacon, 1992), and *The Evolving Canon* (Allyn & Bacon, 1993). Mr. Birkerts publishes essays and reviews regularly in the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Threepenny Review*, *Pequod*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Mirabella*, and elsewhere, and he is a contributing editor to the *Boston Review* and *Agni*. He is a 1994 Guggenheim Fellow and also recently received a Lila Wallace Foundation fellowship in writing. In 1985 he was awarded the Citation for Excellence in Reviewing from the National Book Critics Circle. Mr. Birkerts holds a B.A. in English from the University of Michigan. He has taught at Harvard and Emerson Colleges, and lives in Arlington, Massachusetts.

RECENT ASSOCIATE FACULTY

Associate Faculty conduct lectures and discussions of literature for five-day residencies which take place within the ten-day residencies at Bennington College.

Fiction Writers

Margot Livesey: Ms. Livesey's novels are *Homework* (Viking, 1990) and *Learning by Heart* (Penguin Canada, 1986). She has received a fellowship in fiction from the NEA and fellowships in fiction from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Canada. Ms. Livesey has taught in the Bennington Writing Workshops, Williams College, Warren Wilson, Carnegie Mellon, Tufts, the University of Washington, and at the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She holds a B.A. from the University of York, England and currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Bret Lott: Mr. Lott's books include the novels *Reed's Beach* (Pocket Books, 1994); *Jewel* (Pocket Books, 1991); *The Man Who Owned Vermont* (Viking, 1987); and *A Stranger's House* (Viking, 1988); and the story collections *The Difference Between Men and Women* (Pocket Books, 1994), and *A Dream of Old Leaves* (Viking, 1989). Mr. Lott's stories have appeared in the *Yale Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Antioch Review*, and other magazines. He

reviews regularly for the *New York Times Book Review*. Mr. Lott holds an M.F.A. from the writing program at the University of Massachusetts, and a B.A. from California State University at Long Beach. He teaches at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina.

Sue Miller: Ms. Miller's novels are *For Love* (HarperCollins, 1993); *Family Pictures* (Harper-Collins, 1991); and *The Good Mother* (Harper & Row, 1986). Her work has been translated worldwide. She has also published a book of short stories, *Inventing the Abbots* (Harper & Row, 1987). Ms. Miller has reviewed for the *New York Times Book Review*. She has been a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College and a Guggenheim Fellow. Ms. Miller has taught at M.I.T., Emerson, Harvard, Tufts, and Boston University, and holds a B.A. from Harvard and master's degrees from Harvard, Wesleyan, and Boston University. She lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Poets

Lucie Brock-Broido: Ms. Brock-Broido's books of poems are *A Hunger* (Knopf, 1988) and the forthcoming *The Master Letters* (Knopf, 1995). Her poems have appeared widely in periodicals including *Harper's*, *Ploughshares*, the *New York Times*, the *Kenyon Review*, and the *Paris Review*. She has received fellowships in poetry from the NEA and the Massachusetts Arts Council, and has received three awards for distinguished teaching at Harvard. She has also taught at M.I.T., Tufts, and Wheaton College, and currently teaches in the writing program at Columbia University. Ms. Brock-Broido took an M.F.A. from Columbia University, and holds M.A. and B.A. degrees from Johns Hopkins University. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Donald Hall: Mr. Hall writes poems, essays, short stories, memoirs, plays, biographies, textbooks, and children's books, and has worked as an anthologist and an editor. He has published 13 books of poetry, including *The Museum of Clear Ideas* (Ticknor & Fields, 1993); *The One Day* (Ticknor & Fields, 1988); *The Happy Man* (Random, 1986); and *Kicking the Leaves* (Harper & Row, 1978). His books of prose include *String Too Short to Be Saved* (Viking, 1961); *Dock Ellis in the Country of Baseball* (Coward McCann, 1976); *Seasons at Eagle Pond* (Ticknor & Fields, 1987); *Poetry and Ambition* (Michigan, 1988); *Life Work* (Beacon, 1994), which was nominated for the National Book Award, and many others. His children's book, *Ox Cart Man* (Viking, 1979), won the Caldecott Award for 1980. He has been awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry for *The One Day*, and he has received Guggenheim fellowships, the Lamont Prize, and numerous other awards for his work. He currently serves as the representative for literature on the National Council on the Arts, and he makes his home in Danbury, New Hampshire.

Jane Kenyon: Ms. Kenyon, a poet and translator, has published four books of poems: *From Room to Room* (Alicejames Press); *The Boat of Quiet Hours* (Graywolf, 1976); *Let Evening Come* (Graywolf, 1989); and *Constance* (Graywolf, 1993). She translated *Twenty Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (Alley Press). She has received Guggenheim and NEA fellowships in poetry, and she too lives in Danbury, New Hampshire.

E. Ethelbert Miller: In 1994 Mr. Miller published *First Light: Selected and New Poems* (Black Classic Press) and *In Search of Color Everywhere* (Stewart Tabori and Chang), an anthology he edited. His previous books of poems include *Migrant Worker*, *Season of Hunger/Cry of Rain*, *Women Surviving Massacres and Men*, and *Where Are the Love Poems for Dictators?* Mr. Miller is poetry editor for *African American Review*, senior editor of *Washington Review*, and has served on the boards of PEN, AWP, and the PEN/Faulkner Award. He is the director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University, has taught at the University of Nevada, is the founder and director of the Ascension Reading Series, and he hosted a radio program on poetry on WDCU-FM in Washington, where he lives.

Robert Pinsky: Mr. Pinsky has published four books of poetry, *The Want Bone* (Ecco, 1990); *History of My Heart* (Ecco, 1984); *An Explanation of America* (Princeton, 1980); and *Sadness and Happiness* (Princeton, 1975). He has also published books of essays and criticism, *Poetry and the World* (Ecco, 1988); *The Situation of Poetry* (Princeton, 1977); and *Landor's Poetry* (University of Chicago, 1968). With Robert Hass, he translated *The Separate Notebooks: Poems of Czesław Miłosz* (Ecco, 1984). Mr. Pinsky has received NEA, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Guggenheim fellowships, and has taught at the University of Chicago, Wellesley College, Harvard, the University of California at Berkeley, and presently teaches at Boston University. From 1979 to 1986 he was poetry editor of the *New Republic*.

Nonfiction Writers

Edward Hoagland: Mr. Hoagland's books of nonfiction include *Balancing Acts* (Simon & Schuster, 1992); *Heart's Desire* (Simon & Schuster, 1991); *The Edward Hoagland Reader* (Random House, 1979); *Red Wolves and Black Bears* (Random House, 1976); *Notes from the Century Before: A Journal from British Columbia* (Random House, 1982); *African Calliope: A Journey to the Sudan* (Random House, 1979); and many others. His works of fiction include *The Final Fate of the Alligators* (Capra, 1992); *Seven Rivers West* (Simon & Schuster, 1986); and *City Tales* (Capra, 1986). He publishes pieces often in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Antaeus*, the *New York Times*, *Harper's*, and other periodicals. He has received Guggenheim fellowships, the Brandeis University Citation in Literature, the Prix de

Rome from the Academy of Arts and Letters, and an NEA fellowship. Mr. Hoagland currently teaches at Bennington College and has taught at Sarah Lawrence, Columbia, Brown, the New School for Social Research, the University of California at Davis, and elsewhere. He lives in Barton, Vermont.

Katha Pollitt: Poet and essayist, Ms. Pollitt has published a book of poems, *Antarctic Traveller* (Knopf, 1992), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award, and she is the author of the upcoming book, *Subject to Debate: Essays on Women and Feminism*. She is an associate editor for the *Nation* and her work appears often in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine* "Her" column, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEA, and the Whiting Foundation, and has taught at Princeton, Barnard, the Poetry Center of the 92nd St. Y, and the New School for Social Research. In 1992 she won the National Magazine Award. Ms. Pollitt took an M.F.A. from the writing program at Columbia University and currently lives in New York.

Publishing Module

Not for the sake of agenting or publishing student work, but to better understand the publishing industry—the conduit for the communion between writer and reader—the Writing Seminars will regularly conduct lectures and panels addressing specific issues in the publishing world, gatherings to be organized and chaired by Tree Swenson.

Tree Swenson: Ms. Swenson has worked in publishing since 1973. She co-founded Copper Canyon Press and was publisher there for 20 years. She long worked as art director for Graywolf Press and is a member of the board of directors of Associated Writing Programs, where she served as president of the board from 1993-1994. She currently works as a literary consultant and designer.

Visiting Readers

Visiting writers will also be giving readings of their work as part of the 10-day residencies. Those who gave readings in the first two residencies were Deborah Digges, Rebecca Godwin, Richard Howard, Jamaica Kincaid, and Galway Kinnell.

BENNINGTON

C O L L E G E

BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS

Liam Rector
Director

Priscilla Hodgkins
Assistant Director

November 23, 1994

Greetings:

This is the first of many letters you will receive from me over the next two years. Your questions and concerns are always invited. Call or write or fax your messages to me. The office hours are Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST.

You have already received the description of the associate faculty (Sue Miller, Katha Pollitt, Bruce Duffy and Robert Creeley) seminars including the suggested reading list. The core faculty for the January to June 1995 semester:

Fiction: Doug Bauer, Maria Flook, Amy Hempel, Jill McCorkle, Reg McKnight, and Bob Shacochis.

Nonfiction: Sven Birkerts and one new faculty member to be announced soon.

Poetry: David Lehman, Liam Rector, Stephen Sandy, and Anne Winters.

Susan Dodd is taking the semester off and will return in June.

If you are in Poetry or Fiction, you are invited to give me your preferences for faculty: list three in order, with number one going to your top choice. Matches are made wherever possible; in the event of a conflict, students with seniority are given first choice. As incoming students you may not get your first choice. Rarely do we have to go to students' third choice.

Those in Nonfiction will be notified when the new faculty member comes on board.

Most workshops will be composed of two teachers and ten students. We mail out copies of workshop manuscripts early in December. Mail to me your workshop material (in your genre) no later than Wednesday, December 7. Do not exceed 25 pages of prose or 12 poems. We will copy, collate and mail back to you all the other student workshop material. You may use new material, a work in progress, or the writing sample from your application. Use what you want to have others read and discuss.

Domestic details about the residency: accommodations, meals, weather, etc. are included with this letter. Make your travel plans to arrive on the afternoon of Friday, January 6 and depart on the morning of Monday, January 17. Let me know your arrival time if you want to use the casual car/limo pool from Albany air and train terminals. Students share rides and split the cost (about \$50 for the limo).

Remember to call me if you have any questions. I look forward to seeing you on Friday, January 6. Don't forget your warm wooley mittens.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Hodgkins

ASSOCIATE FACULTY LECTURE/DISCUSSIONS
JANUARY 1995 RESIDENCY

Sue Miller: First Five Days

Sue Miller's novels are *For Love*, *Family Pictures*, and *The Good Mother*. She has also published a book of short stories, *Inventing the Abbots*. Her work has been translated worldwide, and Leonard Nimoy directed a film of *The Good Mother*, which featured Diane Keaton and Liam Neeson. Ms. Miller was a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College and has received a Guggenheim fellowship. She has taught at Harvard, M.I.T., Emerson College, Tufts, and Boston University. She holds a B.A. and M.A. from Harvard, and master's degrees from Wesleyan and Boston University. She lives in Boston.

Lecture/Discussion:

My lectures will be speculations about meaning and intention in writing, working from the notion that the no-doubt benighted writer *has* intention for his work, means to mean something. I'd like to offer some ideas, for instance, on whether how you write determines what you can mean or even intend to mean, or the reverse. Or both. I'd like to talk about how writers work when ambiguity is their intention--how that might affect the organization, the structure of their work. I'd like to speculate about whether certain kinds of meaning are "worthier" than others--whether meaning, intent, can be a measure of art.

I'm wondering too about the writing process itself: whether you can write differently when you "know" what you mean (or intend to mean) from when you "let the story tell itself" or the equivalent.

I'll look in particular (I think) at "Gooseberries" and "The Student" by Chekhov; at "White Dump" and probably "The Progress of Love" and "Fits" by Alice Munro; certainly "Revelation" by O'Connor, and probably "A Good Man is Hard to Find" or "Everything That Rises Must Converge"; but I hope you will read more, as much of these collections as you have time for.

Books:

The Progress of Love: Stories by Alice Munro (Penguin)

The Complete Stories by Flannery O'Connor (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)

Anton Chekhov's Short Stories, edited by Ralph Matlaw (Norton Critical Edition)

I think I may also look at a story or two from the Babel and Carver collections you've worked with previously.

Katha Pollitt: First Five Days

Katha Pollitt is an essayist and poet. In 1994 she published *Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Woman and Feminism*. Her book of poems, *Antarctic Traveler*, was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1983. She is an associate editor for *The Nation* and her work appears often in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *The New Republic*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Whiting Foundation, and the NEA. She has taught at Princeton, Barnard, the New School for Social Research, and the 92nd Street Y. In 1992 she received the National Magazine Award. Ms. Pollitt took an M.F.A. from the writing program at Columbia University, and she currently lives in New York.

Lecture/Discussion:

What is nonfiction? A catch-all category that encompasses everything from a movie review to *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, nonfiction raises interesting questions about how and whether, reality can be truthfully represented in words. We will discuss some of the ways in which nonfiction is, and is not, like fiction, with particular attention to: opening sentences and paragraphs, making arguments, and the all-important but sometimes elusive Having Something to Say. Also we will take up the question of the audience: for whom does one write what? We will devote some time to engaged, activist journalism and the concept of Objectivity. Finally, we will take up the question, which many writers find particularly troublesome, of the competing claims of literary truthfulness and completeness versus real-life obligations to others.

Books:

Illness as Metaphor, by Susan Sontag (Anchor/Doubleday)

Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism, by Katha Pollitt (Knopf)
and one more to be announced.

Robert Creeley: Second Five Days

Robert Creeley has over the last forty years published many books of poems, including *Echoes*, *Windows*, *Collected Poems, 1945-1975*, *Mirrors*, *Later*, *A Day Book*, and *For Love*. His books of prose include *Collected Prose*, *The Gold Diggers*, and *The Island*, and his books of criticism include *Tales Out of School: Selected Interviews*, *Collected Essays*, and *Was That a Real Poem and Other Essays*. He has edited selections of Walt Whitman, Robert Burns, Charles Olson, and others. Educated at Harvard and at Black Mountain College, Mr. Creeley currently is the director of the Poetics Program at SUNY, Buffalo. He has also taught at the University of British Columbia, and at Black Mountain College. from 1989 to 1991 he was the state poet of New York, and he has received Guggenheim and NEA fellowships for his work. He is an editorial advisor to *Formations*, *American Book Review*, and *Sagetrieb*. He makes his home in Buffalo.

Lecture/Discussion:

The poet Basil Bunting's way of qualifying my concerns here is found in his phrase: '...and the sun rises on an acknowledged land.'

Briggflats

However a writer thinks to propose the world, of necessity he or she begins with the one complexly in mind; the habits, the experience, the time and place that have been its specific materials. Coleridge spoke of "a willing suspension of disbelief" as being requisite in our reading, else we fail to enter that place the writer had hoped to make for us. Several writers have made worlds for me, so to speak, and it is three of their company I'd like to think about in three various talks: 1) Hart Crane; 2) Charles Olson; 3) Robert Duncan. For each the proposition of the world is a primary undertaking, employing all his art and resources. We can come to no end here--all such worlds are worlds without end--but we can realize what demand a writer characteristically admits, and what proves then its consequence for us all.

Books:

Collected Poems of Charles Olson, edited by Robert Creeley (University of California)
Selected Poems of Robert Duncan (New Directions)
Selected Poems of Hart Crane (Anchor Doubleday)

Bruce Duffy: Second Five Days

Bruce Duffy's first novel, *The World as I Found It* is a fictionalized life of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which spans some seventy years of modern European and philosophical history. The book has been published in Dutch and French, and with a Spanish edition forthcoming. It was cited by *Journal of Literary Biography* as one of the best books of 1987 and by Anthony Burgess as one of the best books published in Britain in 1988. A four-part adaptation of the book is in preparation for BBC television. Mr. Duffy has received a Guggenheim fellowship, a Whiting Award, a Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest Award, and the National Magazine Award. He is just completing a second novel, *Memory of Our Lives Returning*. He received a B.A. in English and philosophy from the University of Maryland, and he currently lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Lecture/Discussion:

"I destroy, I destroy, I destroy," wrote philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in his journals. How to change lives from novel to novel. How to demolish one's own ideas, style and world in an attempt to create something utterly different?

Lecture 1: My first novel, *The World as I Found It* (a very fictional book based on the life of Ludwig Wittgenstein) came by accident--as an idea for a collage that mixed collage

elements with prose poems. Ignorance was a definite problem. For instance, it might have helped if I'd spoken German. Or if I'd ever been to Europe...

Lecture 2: *Memory of Our Lives Returning*, my second novel, examines death, memory and childhood. Like a dreaded anniversary, the book came when I was planning to write another novel. This time I had intimate acquaintance with the subject--my mother died when I was eleven. The problem was to purge my style and whole approach of any whiff of memoir or nostalgia; to make the familiar foreign, to freely mix adult and child language, to build with child materials, and to not flinch at what children know about pain, adult delusions and so-called foundations of knowledge.

Lecture 3: If somebody had offered me a ticket to Vienna while writing my first novel I wouldn't have taken it. In researching my third novel--a book that will look at the hidden life between the races--I'm taking the opposite approach: I've been talking to the young and old in several African-American communities here in Washington, D.C. Ignorance is again a problem. Color, too. What W.E.B. Dubois said about the Negro's doubleness might well apply to the Writer: "One feels his twoness...two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals..."

Books:

The World as I Found It, by Bruce Duffy (Ticknor and Fields or Penguin)
Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters, translated by Wallace Fowlie (University of Chicago) Read: "A Season in Hell" and "The Illuminations." Also "Au Caberet-Vert," "Seven-Year-Old Poets," "The Seekers of Lice," "Vowels," and "Memory."
The Education of Henry Adams, introduction by D.W. Brogan (American Heritage Library). A dynamo of a book mixing the personal with the historical, the philosophical with the scientific, the American with the European, and the clapping of the Nineteenth century with the vortex of the Twentieth. Pay close attention to the chapter, "A Law of Acceleration," and at the end of the book.

There will be handouts, including sections of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and others.

Creative Writing Seminars
Winter Residency 1995

Arrival time: Preferred: between 12 noon and 5:00 PM, Friday, January 6, 1995.

Travel The nearest airport and train station is in Albany. We will try to coordinate a car-pool system with Classic Limousine Service (802-447-1609) so that those arriving within two hours of each other can share the ride to campus. The cost is about \$50 for the trip and if the pooling effort works out, you might be able to split it two or three ways. Alert Priscilla to your travel plans by January 2 if you want to participate in the limo-pool.

There is a bus station in Bennington (schedules for Bonanza and Vermont Lines are enclosed.) Call the Vermont Transit bus station (802) 442-4808 to check the times and up-to-date information on connections. The ride from Boston takes about 4.5 hours and there are usually two changes along the way.

The nearest train station is in Albany. Call AMTRAK 800-872-7245 for information. Schedule for trains to and from New York are enclosed. Be aware that reservations are required for some trains. The trip from Manhattan takes about three hours and is quite pleasant. The ride from Boston takes about as long as the bus ride. Those who have tried both recommend the bus as it comes directly into Bennington.

Taxi service in Bennington:

C & M:	802-442-5748
Red Top Cab:	802-442-8141
Classic Limo	802-447-1609

Campus Directions Bennington College is located off route 67A, not far from the intersection of routes 7 and 9. There maps enclosed of Bennington County and the College. The staff at the Security Gate are very helpful and will show you where to park and direct you to Commons.

Registration: Upon arrival, please check in with us in the Commons--the big brick building that faces the wide lawn. You will receive an I.D. card, room assignment and key and more information about classes and the campus. We will ask you for a \$20 key/linen deposit which is refundable.

Residence/Meals

All rooms are single and modestly furnished with a bed, dresser, desk, lamp, and chair, plus sheets, pillowcases and two towels. You will share a bath with three or four others. Bring extra towels if you are A) often wet or B) averse to thin, white standard issue towels.

Each house has a large living room and a small kitchen: stove, sink, refrigerator. You are welcomed to bring your own coffee maker.

Meals will be served in our private dining room on the second floor in Commons.

Advise Priscilla now if you have any dietary restrictions or if you have a strong preference for vegetarian food.

There is a pool table and two annoying pinball machines. (Liam thinks they are great!)

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any public/common area in keeping with the smoking laws of the State of Vermont. We know there are several smokers among us and a few caffeine addicts. Let me know what your needs/fears are.

Weather

It's winter here in Vermont. The temperatures are generally 5-10 degrees cooler than Boston/New York City and will likely range in the low 20's to the mid-30's and could go down to 10 degrees at night, although a January thaw could send the thermometer up to 50. Snow falls range from a mere dusting to an accumulation of more than six inches an hour. By the first week in January there is usually some snow on the ground. Last winter the temperature went below 20 below more than once. We hope that won't happen again. No sage native dares to predict weather in Vermont.

Recreation

Bennington College sits on 550 acres of rolling meadows and woods. If you enjoy cross-country skiing, then by all means bring your skis. There is a lovely pond that should be frozen by the first week in January, so do bring your ice skates or borrow a pair. A local store, Up and Downhill (442-8664) rents Nordic equipment. We can't find anyone who rents out ice skates.

There are many excellent down-hill ski areas nearby: Mt. Snow, Stratton, Bromley, Brodie, Jiminy Peak; further away are : Killington, Pico Peak, and Stowe, to name just a few. Prospect Mountain is an excellent Nordic area with over 50 kilometers of groomed trails and is only twenty minutes away.

There is also a pretty decent sledding hill here on campus and a very good one within a 15 minutes drive. If you even think you might want to try it, then bring your snow boots and appropriate clothing.

What to Bring:

* **Type of Clothing:** informal and varied. Bring hats, gloves, mittens, warm wooly socks, boots, or rubbers or heavy shoes and warm outer clothing. If you plan to "play" outside in the snow, then be prepared to dress in layers and put your feet in warm boots. The walk-ways are cleared of snow and if you don't think you will be tempted to go sledding, then you can get by without snow boots.

* **Computers/typewriters.** The College computing center may have limited hours during our residency. If you plan to write while you are here, bring your writing machines with you. If you are flying, check with the airline or travel agent for special packing instructions for your computer. Paper, notebooks, ribbons, etc. will be available for purchase at the College Bookstore on campus. Remember to bring along your surge-protector, cords and adapters, particularly the three-prong to two prong thinga-ma-jig. Most outlets in the dorms are for two-pronged plugs (i.e. not grounded).

Computers may be rented from Computer Rentals of America in Schenectady, N.Y. (518-393-1629). Talk to them about setting it up for you and installing your software (you must bring original disks and a manual).

Typewriter rentals are scarce. Best advice: bring your own or rent a portable in your home town and bring that with you.

* **Sports equipment:** hiking boots, binoculars, Nordic and/or Alpine skis, toboggan, saucer, ice skates, snow board, luge sled.

* **Suggested items:** Desk lamp, camera, film, batteries, sun glasses-- the winter sun is very bright and snow doubles the effect; sun block--the higher the UV blocking factor the better.

Automobiles

You be directed to designated parking areas. If in doubt about a particularly convenient spot, check with the security guard; some areas are restricted. Watch for the "Tow-away" zones. You will get a parking permit and parking lot map at registration. Winter storms can make driving hazardous. Be alert to changes in the weather.

BOOKS

The Crosset Library will be open on weekdays and the final weekend from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The staff is very helpful. See the enclosed "LIBRARY SERVICES" packet for details.

The Bennington College Bookstore will have Seminar course reading list books in stock as well as a good selection of faculty work. If you have trouble finding a book required in a course, call the bookstore (802-442-5401 ext 292) and ask J.C. for some help. If the book is in stock it can be mailed to you via UPS. Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.

etc...

You will have a **mailbox** on campus. There is a U.S. Post Office on campus in the Commons Building. There are regular pick-up and deliveries from UPS and Federal Express. FAX service is available via the post office.

There will be a College **phone** extension in your house through which you can receive calls. The College number is (802) 442-5401. Messages can be left for you there. There is a pay phone in each house.

Most local banks have ATM's with access to major cash withdrawal systems. There is no check-cashing service on campus.

There are two restaurants within walking distance of the campus in North Bennington:

Main Street Cafe Italian cuisine. City prices. Small cafe atmosphere. Favorite with visitors/tourists.

No Baloney Friendly bar. Dining room with meaty menu. Snack-out on nachos and baby-back ribs without leaving your barstool. Preferred by locals.

Also in North Bennington: Powers Market--sells the New York Times, Vermont Maple Syrup and cheddar cheese cut from a big wheel in the back.

Departure time: by Noon, Monday January 17, 1995.

BENNINGTON

C O L L E G E

BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS

Liam Rector
Director

Priscilla Hodgkins
Assistant Director

Sven Birkerts
Student Director

December 12, 1994

TO: WRITING SEMINARS STUDENTS (AND FACULTY)

FROM: Liam Rector *Liam*

Greetings:

And an especial greeting and welcome to our new students coming in for the January residency: five in fiction, four in nonfiction, and five in poetry. Typical of Seminars maniacs, these students bring an enormous amount to the table. Welcome, and we all look forward to working with you—slumped over the seminar table, in the crazed and blazing lecture hall, in the very life of letters, and within the context of the entire symposium (from *sympien*, which means *drinking together*).

Dates for the next two residencies: **January 7th to 16th, June 17th to 26th.**

In preparation for the coming residency, there's lots to read here, so please plan to sit with it for a moment... (Amidst the electronic & fleshy bop-tll-you-drop maelstrom of ever-increasing and over-the-top stress-fests, the real ones Sven keeps writing about...)

Sven and I are working on extended guidelines for the program, and discussing them together will be part of a town meeting for us. You'll have copies of the first draft in your boxes when you arrive in January.

All the farmer's almanacs and the bending bushes of Maine suggest that New England is in for a very cold winter, so bring with you clothes of real warmth. It's been a very mild autumn here, but we're expecting that winter will turn upon us with its customary vengeance. Snow already covers the Bennington town and grounds.

From Seattle Donald Hall reports that Jane Kenyon's bone marrow transplant has taken well, and that her extended treatment is proceeding apace. Tree and I are going to Seattle for Christmas and will be seeing them there. Some very good news: Graywolf Press is slated to publish a selected book of poems by Jane, a volume which will include poems from her three books with Graywolf, her first book with Alicejames Press, and new poems. Don has three new children's books out (excellent for Christmas gifts, with illustrations Suitable

For Framing, etc.) and a new book of essays of his, *Principal Products of Portugal*, will be out soon. I'm hoping that Don and Jane can be back with us as soon as possible.

SOME ANNOUNCEMENTS: We've hired a new poet for the core faculty of the Seminars, and she will be joining us for the January residency. Anne Winters's books are *The Key to the City* (University of Chicago, 1987), a seminal book of poems; and *Poems of Robert Marteau* (Princeton University, 1979), which she translated from the French. Her poems, translations, and prose have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *TriQuarterly*, *Poetry*, *Threepenny Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The New Republic*, *Pequod*, and elsewhere. Anne has received fellowships in poetry from the NEA and the Ingram Merrill Foundation. She has taught at Berkeley, Northwestern University, St. Mary's College, M.I.T., and elsewhere. She took a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley; an M.A. from Columbia University; and a B.A. from New York University. She currently teaches at Bennington College and lives in Bennington. Welcome, Anne; welcome.

Susan Cheever is also scheduled to teach nonfiction as a core faculty member, beginning with the June residency. Susan is the author of one of my all-time favorite memoirs, *Home Before Dark: A Biographical Memoir of John Cheever by His Daughter* (Houghton Mifflin, 1984). A truly unforgettable book. This year she also published *A Woman's Life: The Story of an Ordinary American and Her Extraordinary Generation* (Morrow), a biography that reads like a novel, about a woman whose life represents a kind of composite portrait of baby boomers. Ms. Cheever has also written one other book of nonfiction, *Treetops: A Family Memoir* (Bantam, 1991), and five novels, including *Looking for Work*, *A Handsome Man*, and *Doctors and Women*. She lives in New York, where she writes a column about raising children for *Newsday* and is a contributing editor at *Architectural Digest*. She regularly writes book reviews for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*, and has written for a number of magazines and worked as a reporter. She has been a Guggenheim fellow and a member of the Author's Guild Council. She took a B.A. from Brown University, and has taught at Hunter College, Marymount Manhattan College, and elsewhere. Welcome to Susan as well, and we look forward to her joining us in the Vermont summer.

We'll soon be announcing the new nonfiction faculty member for January.

As you know from receiving her letter, Susan Dodd will be taking a leave of absence from the program for six months. We look forward to her return in June.

In addition to associate faculty lectures, faculty and guest readings, a concert by Celtic Thunder, and a visit from publisher David Godine, at the January residency Lloyd Schwartz will also be conducting a master class on reading literature aloud. Lloyd last year received the Pulitzer Prize for music criticism. He is also the author of two books of poems, *Goodnight, Gracie* (University of Chicago, 1992) and *These People* (Wesleyan University Press, 1981). His poems have appeared in *Paris Review*, the *New York Times*, *Partisan Review*, *Shenandoah*, and elsewhere; and he edited *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art* (University of Michigan Press, 1983). He is the classical music editor at the *Boston Phoenix*, where he also serves as poetry editor. He is a frequent contributor to NPR's *Fresh Air*. Lloyd has taught at Harvard, Queens College,

Northeastern College, and elsewhere, and is currently the co-director of the writing program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He received a Ph.D. and an M.A. from Harvard University, and a B.A. from Queens College.

Twenty students—prose writers & poets—can directly participate in the workshop (we'll sign people up at the residency), and anyone else interested can be there to audience the event. Here's Lloyd's description of the three-hour class:

In the literary world today, writers often reach a wider audience through readings and live performances than through publication. Yet most writers are not trained to read their works aloud. Even well known writers may read mechanically, monotonously, with too little—or too much—expression. In this workshop/master class, students will discuss what makes a good reading and explore a wide range of successful reading styles. The emphasis is on the students's own work. Each participant presents a poem or short prose piece for feedback from the class under the guidance of the instructor (an experienced actor, director, and radio commentator, as well as a poet and a critic). The students "work through" to a livelier, more effective presentation as they deepen their understanding of their own work.

Monique Fowler will be joining us to present a one-woman play on the life of Elizabeth Bishop during Bishop's time in Brazil. Ms. Fowler has performed widely at regional theatres across the United States, and in New York on and off Broadway. Her Shakespeare heroines include Ophelia in *Hamlet* with Richard Thomas, the Queen in *Richard II* opposite Brian Bedford, and other roles from O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and others. Monique's television credits include "American Playhouse," "Another World," and "All My Children." Her introductory note for Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil:

Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil is a memory piece consisting of excerpts from Elizabeth Bishop's poetry, prose, letters, and interviews. It tells the story of Elizabeth Bishop's life in Brazil with Lota de Macedo, her Brazilian companion, from her arrival there in 1951 to her dramatic return to the United States in 1967. The piece is meant to tell a narrative while at the same time fostering an appreciation for the work of one of our century's most beloved literary artists. It takes approximately one hour to perform and will be followed by a brief talkback with the audience.

We're very much lucky that Monique can join us, and Jane Kenyon will be glad, I think, to hear that we're still with Bishop.

David Lehman's much-anticipated coming lecture, as described by the Lehman himself: "I will offer a kind of magical mystery tour of the literature of crime and detection. I will talk about the main genres and subgenres of the literature, dwelling particularly on classic British puzzlers on the one hand and the hardboiled Americans thrillers on the other. I will raise the question of the enduring appeal that detective novels have for literary intellectuals. Not only will I comment on the usual suspects (Poet, Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, et al) but on some high literary works that may

fruitfully explored in this context—works such as *Oedipus Rex* and *The Trial*. Gee, it sounds pretty ambitious. I'd better start writing."

SO, we're going to have a fairly full plate of guests and events. Plan to participate and plan to leave with your hair smoking because your brain is on fire... "If I succeed," said Yeats, "I will drive men (*sic*) mad."

SOME ENCLOSURES: *Publisher's Weekly* has lately been tracking some of the activities of Bennington faculty, including reviews and a piece on distribution. New books by Maria Flook, Terence Winch (who will be doing a poetry reading at the January residency), and my book are reviewed; and Tree Swenson and David Godine weigh-in about getting literary titles into bookstores. It's perhaps Prohibitively Expensive (a euphemism, as we know, for Too Damned Much Money!) to subscribe to *Publisher's Weekly* as an individual, but I very strongly recommend that you make it part of your regular reading habits at your local library or literary center. Our goal through the publishing module in the MFA program is not to agent student work but to acquaint all our graduates with a penetrating understanding of what constitutes literary publishing in our culture. Reading *Publisher's Weekly* regularly goes a long way towards effecting that understanding (and it's also a very interesting gossip rag). For the writer, I think knowing how the communion between writer and reader is enacted cuts down on the preening paranoia, the *jejune* preciousness, the entitled pouts, the banal and uninformed conspiracy theories, and the ultimately wasted time. One still, of course, gets the jitters.

Also a recent review of Stephen Sandy's *Thanksgiving By the Water* in the *NY Times*.

Terry Winch, who also writes for and plays in the band Celtic Thunder, just produced his first CD for the new Museum of the American Indian: *Creation's Journey: Native American Music*, and you might want to check that out. Lots of interesting chants and rants and a fascinating way of bringing off eerie monotone oscillations. I think of some of poetry's origins being in an initial call for rain. We watch movies as we once watched fire, and one can *hear* the fire in this music. We'll try and have copies at the residency, but beforehand the CD can be ordered from Smithsonian-Folkways Recordings/ Center for Folklife and Cultural Studies/ 955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600 / Smithsonian Institution / Washington, D.C. 20506. David Broza will be joining us again for the June residency, and his new CD, *Second Street*, can be purchased at, as they say, the finer record stores.

Wyn Cooper's interlude with fame (from the word *fama*, which means *rumor*) has been extended to 16 minutes, and here's another piece from the *Boston Globe* about what happens when he now buys a new pair of boots (with me again as the, alas, unnamed friend).

Sven just did a splendid interview in a relatively new publication, the *Boston Book Review*, and I enclose a copy. *BBR*, along with *Harvard Review* and a few others, is one of the answers to the current dearth of good new reviewing outlets. Sven and Alex Johnson recently edited an issue of *Agni*, the literary magazine published out of Boston University. The issue is called *Unsettling Narratives: Biography and Memoir*, and features a fine piece by Doug Bauer

about writing his biographical novel, a memoir of W.C. Williams by James Laughlin, and a very interesting interview Sven and Alex Johnson did with nonfiction writer and novelist James Carroll, an interview which touches upon the current blurring between fiction and nonfiction. Tree will be bringing Askold Melnyczuk, the editor of *Agni*, up to talk to us about magazines. In addition to editing *Agni*, Askold is the author of *What Is Told* (Faber & Faber), which last week's *NY Times* cited as one of the most notable books of fiction of 1994. Askold also writes poetry and nonfiction.

David Lehman's lecture on postmodernism from our residency last January has just been printed as the lead piece in the *AWP Chronicle*. All our students receive issues of the *Chronicle*, which is published six times a year. If you're not receiving a copy, please let Cilla know. Receiving the *Chronicle*, along with AWP's job listings (available from the Seminars office), is part of our being a member program of Associated Writing Programs. I'm currently standing for election to the AWP board, and I'm enclosing an election statement so you can see how I'd intend to represent us.

Robert Pinsky's new translation of Dante's *Inferno* is just out from Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

The AWP annual meeting is from March 9th to 11th, in Pittsburgh. There will be a tribute to August Wilson, a reading by Gerald Stern, a keynote address by actress and NEA chair Jane Alexander, and many panels and ongoing conspiracy sessions. John Lane was there last year, among our students, and you might want to talk to John about going.

AWP stands to be an important part of the action as the National Endowment for the Arts goes through reauthorization as a government agency this spring, and all this promises to be a culture wars extravaganza. It's very possible that a major portion of federal funds to the arts may be rerouted to the states, or that the NEA may be abolished altogether. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting and National Public Radio are also bracing for the worst.

I also enclose a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* about recent goings-ons at the NEA. The recent election put forth, in leadership positions and committee appointments across the board, a full roster of fairly religious-right cultural warriors. The usual suspects—Helms, Thurmond, Gingrich, etc.—plus some other real comers who have been backbenching. Dick Armey (R-TX) will be the new majority leader in the House, and while I was working at the NEA in 1985 he sent in staffers to the Literature Program to troll through fellowship application literature for explicit mentions of sex, "cuss words, and like that."

In a letter to the *New York Times Magazine*, the president of the Bennington board of trustees takes responsibility for the redesign of the undergraduate programs at the college. Yes Virginia, there is a hierarchy—even at progressive schools. Perhaps *especially* at progressive schools. And it goes something like this: the board of trustees, who bear the legal and fiduciary responsibility for the college; the college president, who serves at the pleasure of the trustees; the administration; the faculty, the students, and so on. It's not all a top-down command structure, but it's ridiculous to demonize a president as being where every buck stops. That's Mommy/Daddy CaCa/PooPoo stuff, and has about it the responsibility and financial eco-system logic and wisdom of an

adolescent howling for a raise in his or her allowance long after the train of reality has left the station. Here are also other *Times* pieces about John Barr's work as a poet and Amy Hempel's stint as a judge for the National Book Award in fiction.

Poet Mark Strand has a small role in Louis Malle's new film, *Vanya on 42nd Street*. Jennifer Jason Leigh plays poet and screenwriter Dorothy Parker in Alan Rudolph's new *Dorothy Parker and the Vicious Circle*, and Willem DeFoe plays T.S. Eliot, with Miranda Richardson as Vivienne Eliot in the soon to be released *Tom and Viv*. After their divorce Vivienne Eliot would attend readings that Thomas Stearns gave, waving a placard which said **I Am The Woman He Abandoned**. Another quick hit, before I scamper forward: Faber & Faber, the British publisher where Eliot worked as an editor, is largely being kept financially alive now from the international cash-cow musical residuals from Eliot's book of poems about cats.

Is it just me, or does poetry seem to be making a somewhat larger dent Out There? Sven: Are movies part of the post-Gutenberg shallowing-out? ABC News's person of the week was recently a fellow who, along with Joseph Brodsky, helped place the Joel Connaroe anthology of poetry next to the Gideon Bible in thousands of hotels.

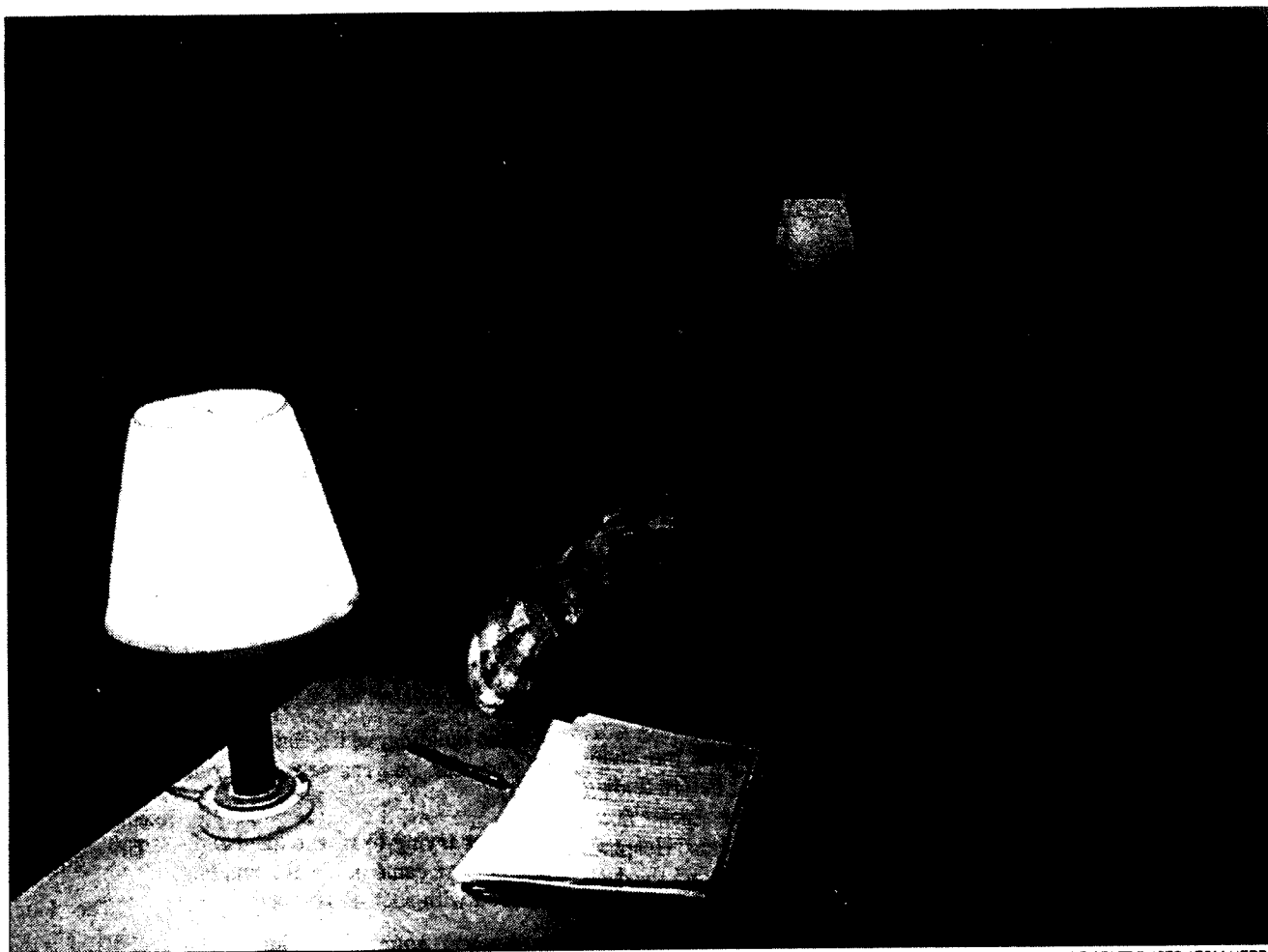
In report of a survey from the Author's Guild, in an article called "Don't Give Up Your Day Job," it was recently reported that the average income from royalties among American writers was around \$4,000 a year.

Any news about the *Bennzine* newsletter, Mark? Thanks to George for putting together the weekly America on-line talks. George will have more information about getting on-line at the upcoming residency. I haven't yet gotten on-line yet (I've instead been reading and rereading Sven's *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*), but I do intend to pay at least a visit. Otherwise I'll keep a distance to assure freedom of expression about saying candid (and therefore brutal) things about me and the faculty. (Just kidding...) But I do think it's best if the on-line sessions are by and for students.

I very much appreciated your mid-semester evaluations of your correspondence and your teachers. As I've said before, we take these evaluations very seriously, on any number of fronts. I hope the instructor comments were likewise useful to you. All evaluations are very much part of the freedom and the responsibility of the program.

We've just finished hiring for the Bennington Summer Writing Workshops. Some very fine writers. We'll be sending you brochures for that program, as they're printed. If you know anyone who might like to be included in our mailing list for that, please let Cilla know.

I'll be seeing you in one of the familiar places. Keep a clean nose... Try and stay out of jail.



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / TOM HERDE

Marlboro College professor Wyn Cooper saw his poem turned into a platinum-selling pop record.

He's having some fun

Sheryl Crow's hit brings celebrity to obscure Vermont poet

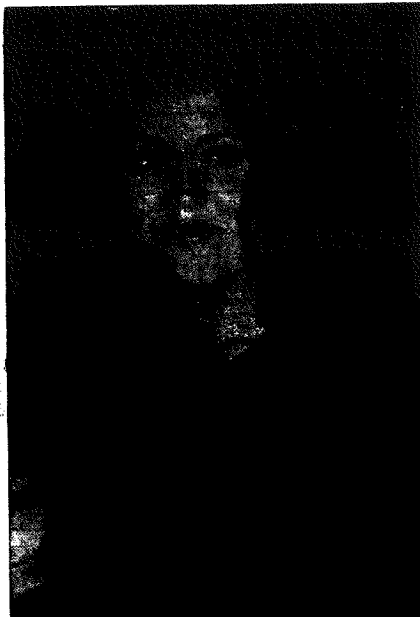
It's been a long stretch between pop sirens for Wyn Cooper. Back in high school, he recruited a classmate to star in his film project. She was, Cooper says, "more than willing to do anything," including wear a bikini and crack eggs on her belly.

Her name: Madonna. But Cooper, her first director, takes no credit for the fame that she and her navel later attained.

Not so for Cooper's latest pop encounter. Singer-songwriter Sheryl Crow picked an obscure poem of his to set to music. Cooper's "Fun" became Crow's "All I Wanna Do," and together the pair went platinum.

No one is more stunned by his role in the song's Top 5 status than Cooper, a visiting professor of literature and writing at tiny Marlboro College in Vermont. After all, just 500 copies of his only poetry book were published, and that was in 1987.

"Nobody ever reads my book; it never happens," Cooper said on a swing through Boston. "I've never even seen it in a bookstore, except at colleges where I'm going to read or where there's some connection, like the bookstore my mother



SHERYL CROW
Poem found in used-book store

goes to."

Fortunately for the 37-year-old Cooper, a copy of his "The Country of Here Below" wound up in a used-book store in Pasadena, Calif., where Crow's producer picked it up. Ten years after a beer with a buddy inspired "Fun," Cooper's poem was poised to find a mainstream audience.

First, though, Crow had to develop something Cooper himself knows a bit about: writer's block. As he tells it, she'd already written the music but was stuck on the lyrics. Desperate, she locked herself in the bathroom with a half-dozen books of poetry, Cooper's among them. The rest was music magic.

"I didn't even know what to do when they called," said Cooper, who nonetheless knew enough to call a writer-friend, who gave him the name of an entertainment lawyer, who got him a decent deal by recording contract standards. "I mean, like I said, I couldn't believe somebody had read my poem."

Now, thanks to incessant radio play, millions have heard it, slightly modified. Crow added a chorus ("All I wanna do is have some fun until the sun comes up over Santa Monica Boulevard") and, all told, five writers were credited. But the song, released in July as the first single off Crow's "Tuesday

COOPER, Page 35

Vermont poet having some fun with Sheryl Crow's hit song

■ COOPER

Continued from Page 31

Night Music Club" album, is largely faithful to "Fun."

That didn't stop Cooper, who takes his poetry seriously, from cringing the first time he heard it. Even now, he isn't overjoyed with the catchy chorus lines that he didn't have a hand in writing. And don't ask him about the music video, which features a preening Crow and no story line, unlike his poem.

"The first time I heard the song, I was like, 'Oh my God, what's going on here,'" said Cooper, who gets a weekly update on the song's popularity from the record company. "When I heard the album, I realized we had a lot of common concerns. That's why her producer said, 'He's one of us' when he gave her my book."

One of them or not, Cooper hardly lives the California lifestyle. A slight man with a fast-receding hairline, he manages to look more academic than hip even in a baggy black blazer over a pre-faded black shirt. His laugh is too exuberant for laid-back L.A.

At Marlboro College, Cooper earns \$25,000 a year for a full course load - half the amount he has earned in songwriting royalties so far. He also gets paid for radio play, which, he says, works out to "more every six weeks than my salary for the year. And it's a lot less work."

Some of Wyn Cooper's 'Fun'

*"All I want is to have a little fun
Before I die," says the man next to me
Out of nowhere, apropos of nothing. He says
His name's William but I'm sure he's Bill
Or Billy, Mac or Buddy; he's plain ugly to me,
And I wonder if he's ever had fun in his life.*

*We are drinking beer at noon on Tuesday,
In a bar that faces a giant car wash.
The good people of the world are washing their cars
On their lunch hours, hosing and scrubbing
As best they can in skirts and suits.
They drive their shiny Datsuns and Buicks
Back to the phone company, the record store,
The genetic engineering lab, but not a single one
Appears to be having fun like Billy and me.*

While the windfall has enabled him to upgrade to a log cabin and buy better boots, Cooper also knows the money may be as ephemeral as most Top 40 tunes.

"The first thing Sheryl said to me in Boston was, 'Did you bring any poems?' Of course, I had a huge envelope with me," said Cooper, who got VIP seats and backstage passes at the three concerts he attended. "Who knows? This may only happen to one American poet once, but at least it happened."

In the two decades between Madonna, who grew up near Cooper in suburban Detroit, and Crow, he majored in English at the University of Utah, which he chose mostly for the skiing. A master's degree from Hollins College in Roanoke, Va., followed, but the PhD got put on hold midway through.

Cooper, who also has taught summers at Bennington College, has been at Marlboro for 2 years. It's the sort of school where no one calls the professors professor. Cooper says there is just one TV on campus, and he doesn't watch it. He also says the students pride themselves on being outside mainstream fashion, which puts the pop

poet in an awkward position.

"Really, I think some of them have less respect for me, because in their minds I sold out," he said. "About a year ago, I ended a reading with 'Fun' and then played the song - this was long before it had been released - and the people in the audience were saying, 'That's enough, turn it off.' They were kind of booing it, like, argh, a pop song."

Cooper says he wants to use his clout to draw attention to where he started and still works, on the written page, with words that unfold like tales. To make his point, he relates a recent experience in a Newbury Street shoe store.

"This beautiful young woman was waiting on me, and my friend said to her, 'You know that song . . . well, he wrote it.' Finally, he convinced her, and her attitude kind of changed toward me. And I realized that wouldn't have happened if I'd just read her a poem. I'd like to think it could."

Journal

FRANK RICH

Will the N.E.A. Be D.O.A.?

At the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington last weekend, the playwright Wendy Wasserstein was struck by the sight of Alan Simpson, the conservative Republican Senator from Wyoming, joining the enthusiastic standing ovation for Pete Seeger, the old-left folk singer who was one of the night's honorees.

It just goes to show that culture can transcend politics. And that Washington's ideological spectrum has shifted so far right since Nov. 8 that Mr. Simpson, who was deposed from his own party's leadership last week for the pure Gingrichite Trent Lott, may now count as a moderate. Could Mr. Simpson possibly be recruited as a leader in the coming battle to save the National Endowment for the Arts?

At this moment the arts need all the unlikely friends they can get. Though even a complete elimination of the N.E.A.'s minuscule budget (\$167 million) would do nothing to offset the \$200 billion in tax relief promised by the "Contract With America" over the next five years, the agency is a major target for Draconian new cuts because of its disproportionate symbolic value to the far right. Bashing the N.E.A., like boosting school prayer, is a high-profile, low-cost way for the Gingrich G.O.P. to distract the faithful while avoiding the hard choices about cutting multibillion-dollar entitlements that might really downsize the budget.

Already Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, rabid cultural watchdog of the religious right, is combing through N.E.A. grants,

The G.O.P. takes aim at the arts.

searching for some new gay recipient whose art can be demonized by Jesse Helms. More genteel right-wingers also play the game. Writing in *The Washington Post*, Charles Krauthammer put abolishing the N.E.A. high on the agenda for the new Congress's first 100 days, as a means of eliminating "welfare check writers for the intellectual classes."

This is a misinformation campaign. Intellectually elite cultural institutions, from the Metropolitan Opera in New York to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, receive less than 1 percent of their yearly budgets from the N.E.A.; they'd hardly feel a cut. The tiny direct grants to individual artists — some of whom must be and inevitably will be as controversial in our day as Walt Whitman was in his — total only 4 percent of the N.E.A. pie.

The biggest victims of a maimed N.E.A., far from being scatological performance artists or the cultural elite, will instead be smaller arts organizations — including, say, the Atlanta Opera and Center for Puppetry Arts, both of which use Endowment funds and perform in Newt Gingrich's own district.

An ax could fall after New Year's. Although the "Contract With America" is imprecise about N.E.A. cuts,

the Speaker-to-be has called for "privatizing" the agency — which is code for defunding it. Other Republicans, invoking the current policy panacea, say the N.E.A.'s function should be turned over to the states — which defeats the whole point.

The value of a Federal arts agency is to set a national standard for excellence, however imperfect, that can be exploited by arts groups in their private fund-raising. As an Oscar sells tickets, so the imprimatur of an N.E.A. grant brings in contributions — so much so that each dollar given by the agency last year was matched by \$11 in local giving.

Thriving museums or theaters, meanwhile, generate still more money for their communities — sending audiences into a restaurant down the street, or bringing tourists into hotels, or attracting corporations whose employees don't want to spend every night at home channel-surfing. Yet the economic arguments for the N.E.A. — like sociological arguments about the value of arts in schools or prisons — are secondary to the real issue: What, if anything, does culture mean to the soul of this country?

If the right really deplores the trashy values of Hollywood — and what it calls the counterculture — you'd think it might increase, rather than reduce, N.E.A. seed money to promote a higher culture. But given last week's revelation that Mr. Gingrich is writing a novel featuring a "pouting sex kitten," no American who loves the arts should sit around hoping for a miraculous change of heart. □

SMALL PUBLISHERS

The Name of the Game

Getting books to market is only half of it—the rest is clout

There are more book wholesalers and bookstore outlets in the U.S. than at any point in history. In addition, since the formation of Publishers Group West in 1976, the number of distributors who offer sales representation has multiplied. These developments should mean that the opportunity for independent publishers—both commercial as well as literary presses—to get effective distribution and thus greater sales has never been greater. But is that the case?

It may be something of a cliché, but the reality of the distribution game today is that it is the best of times, and the worst of times. It is the best time if an independent publisher has a strong distribution partner, and it is the worst time if a publisher is without one. "It's like there is a magical dividing line that one steps over when one gets a full scale distribution partner, but below that threshold it is a different world," explains Tree Swenson, co-founder of Copper Canyon Press who is now serving as a lead consultant in a distribution survey being conducted by the Council for Literary Magazines and Presses. Allan Kornblum, publisher of Coffee House Press, has a similar view, saying that the distribution situation is better for houses his size, but harder for smaller companies. "I'm concerned about how the smaller literary presses will grow," he says, noting that while his distributor, Consortium, is now adequately financed, other distributors that had served literary presses, such as Bookslinger, have closed. And while Swenson and Kornblum were speaking specifically about literary presses, the same theme was repeated by those involved with more commercial enterprises as well.

Clout Means Getting Paid

Jed Lyons, president of National Book Network, noted that if an independent house has a good distribution relation-

ship, the prospects for that company are better than ever. Lyons said NBN and other businesses like his offer publishers three things—sales representation, the actual shipping of books and collection. And while all three are necessary for success, the ability to collect money from accounts is the most important. Without the weight of a larger organization behind it, a small publisher has more difficulty than ever getting paid. In other words, joining a distribution organization gives a publisher clout. PGW, for example, will have net sales of about \$80 million in 1994, and will be one of the top vendors at most major chains and wholesalers. Moreover, if it were a publishing company, PGW would be among the largest 15 trade houses, and its size gives it leverage with its accounts.

**BY JIM
MILLIOT**

Clout is more important today than in the past because of the growth of the bookstore chains and the spread of technology. Whereas 10 to 15 years ago, independent publishers would get 70% of their sales from independent bookstores or "non-national accounts," and 30% from national accounts, today that figure is reversed, making it crucial to have access to the major chains and wholesalers. "It's certainly more complicated to do business today than in the 1970s and early '80s," says David Godine, president of his own publishing house, adding that "you can't afford to not be in superstores." Godine is joining NBN at the beginning of the year after several years of trying to act as his own distributor. "It probably was a strategic mistake," Godine concedes. "The amount of time and paperwork involved is overwhelming. We were spending more and more time trying to distribute and less and less time finding manuscripts." He notes that just keeping up with its business with Ingram was a full-time job, and the process became so involved that Godine stopped doing business with the wholesaler for over a year, but as he

says, that was not the answer. "You can't do business today without Ingram."

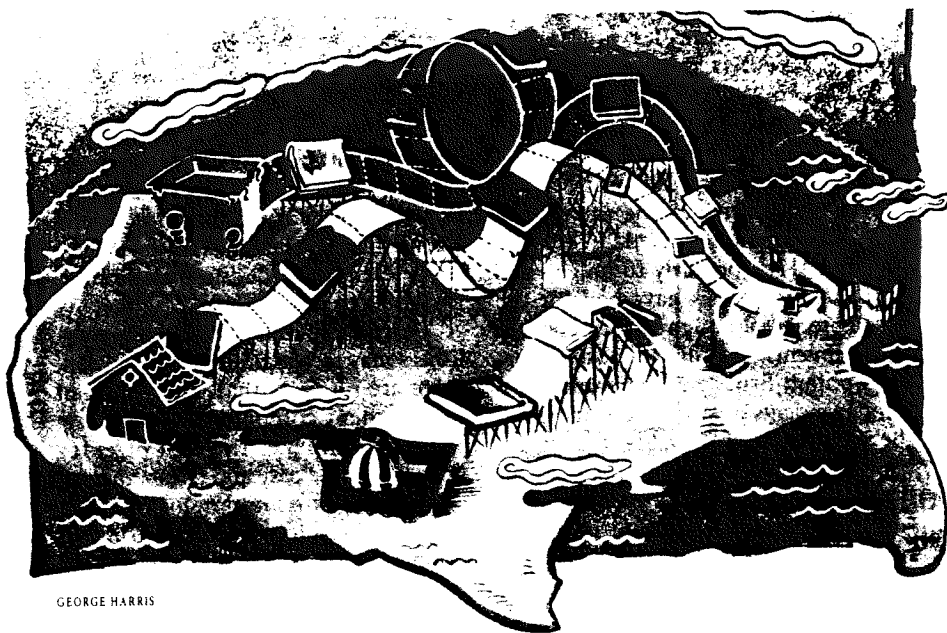
By joining NBN, Godine feels he'll have greater financial security and will be able to do a better job of cash management. "At least now we should know how much money we'll have in the bank," he says.

The Huge Presence of Ingram

Ingram, of course, plays a major role in today's distribution system, and as with the distribution environment in general the growth of Ingram has its positives and its negatives. There is widespread agreement that the emergence of Ingram makes it easier for publishers to get its books distributed into bookstores, particularly the independent bookstores. Ingram also helps in getting reorders to stores quicker. But the size of Ingram also poses some problems, especially for smaller publishers. Ingram is a master at playing the float/returns game. According to several publishers, it is rather routine for Ingram to return inventory after about 90 days and then order the same books the next day. The purpose is to give Ingram an extra 90 days to pay its bills and also to improve its cash flow. The practice, while troubling to all publishers, is especially difficult for independent presses who don't have the cash reserves to draw on, and often count on receiving money, not books, from its accounts.

While demurring on the question of its returns policies, Ingram Book Co. president Lee Synnott acknowledges that it can be difficult for small publishers to join the giant distributor. "It's not particularly easy to start working with us," Synnott says, noting that there is a selection process involved as well as lots of paperwork. "It's not like a publisher comes in and the next day the books are in the warehouse," says Wanda Smith, Ingram's publisher relations manager. Nevertheless, in 1993 Ingram signed up 360 publishers and this year the wholesaler has added 850 through October. Smith said that about 500 of the publishers signed up this year are part of Ingram's order-to-fill

Is Distribution



GEORGE HARRIS

program. Through that program, Ingram adds the publisher's titles to its database, but does not include them in its microfiche or catalogues, and does not keep its titles in stock. The company will fill an order if it is back ordered. If a publisher is able to prove there is sufficient demand for its books, Ingram will move the publisher to its regular distribution service. Smith estimates that about 10% of the publishers in the order-to-fill program have been upgraded.

Ingram began the order-to-fill effort in January in an attempt to be more responsive to small publishers, and Smith noted that prior to creating the program most of the publishers that have been accepted would have otherwise been rejected. Smith said criteria used to judge possible new publishers includes the company's marketing strategy, the quality of book design and evidence of an ongoing publishing program. "We don't want publishers that are here today and gone tomorrow," observes Smith.

Ingram is certainly not the only wholesaler to carry titles from independent publishers and, in fact, many of the smaller, regional wholesalers are important links in a company's publishing program. But as Jan Nathan, executive director for Publishers Market-

ing Association, notes, it is important for independent publishers to realize what the major role of traditional wholesalers is, namely, to ship books. While wholesalers may offer some sales support services, marketing is still the responsibility of the publishers, Nathan stressed.

Demand for Distribution Outstrips Supply

Nathan pointed out that it is not only Ingram that plays the returns game, but all major accounts. Unfortunately for publishers, they cannot try that tactic with printers who demand cash up front. Nathan feels distribution opportunities for independent publishers are about the same as 10 years ago. While the distribution/sales organizations have sprouted up during the decade, they have not increased as fast as the number of small publishers. "There are maybe seven or eight viable distributors, but there are thousands more independent publishers," Nathan observes. The proliferation of presses allows distributors to be highly selective when adding new clients. "Unless you have a unique product or line it is difficult to attract one of the major distributors," Nathan says.

To be sure, distributors such as PGW and NBN are in the process of shaping their lists by upgrading the

quality of publisher they represent, and are not looking to increase the number of publishers. "It's not like we have a publishing matrix we are trying to stick to," says PWG president Charlie Winton. "But when we add a new publisher we are looking for one that will bring value to our list." Even Consortium, which has doubled its volume in the last two years and is looking to expand, is "extremely selective" in the publishers it adds, says president Randall Beek. Consortium's strategy is to "build around a cornerstone publisher" and then add other publishers in a similar category. Such was the case when the distributor signed up Feminist Press and then other small women-issues publishers. While not completely opposed to signing one-book publishers, Beek said Consortium is now concentrating on publishers that publish at least two to four books per season and are committed to promoting their titles.

Distribution Isn't Everything

Failure to promote one's titles effectively is a sure-fire recipe for disaster, yet some publishers ignore the marketing aspect once they get a distributor. According to Nathan, "Too many publishers have the idea that once you get a distributor you don't have to do anything else, that the hard part is over. Well, the truth is the hard part is just beginning. Books need to be marketed." While distributors can get a publisher's book into the bookstore, it is the publisher's responsibility to get the book out of the store, Nathan advises. "I've seen too many publishers get complacent once they place a book in a store, and they aren't prepared for when the book comes back," Nathan says. Noting that his sales through Consortium skyrocketed last year, Coffee House's Kornblum says he "found it interesting that once I became a better publisher, Consortium became a better distributor."

Steve Cary, president of John Muir Publications, echoes Nathan's comments that finding a distributor is only half the battle. With the explosion of publishing companies and the amount of volume coming from the major houses, the fight for shelf space is intense, Cary says. "Even as recently as the mid-1980s, it was easier to get noticed," Cary explains.

SMALL PUBLISHERS

A literary publisher who is fighting for shelf space without the benefit of a larger distribution partner is Bruce McPherson of McPherson & Co., who has been doing his own distribution for several years. He says that "until this year things had been pretty good," but that in order to stay even with 1993 "I've had to pull some rabbits out of my hat." He attributes the slow year to the bad winter weather and light buying from the West Coast. McPherson's distribution system employs the standard elements of independent sales reps, catalogues and direct mail, the latter of which McPherson is increasing. He does his own fulfillment, although McPherson does do a fair amount of business through such wholesalers as Bookpeople and Inland. McPherson does not work with Ingram. Despite the difficult year, McPherson plans to continue to do his own distribution, believing that it keeps him in closer touch with the market.

Are Superstores Helping?

Independent publishers' titles were supposed to gain more exposure with the advent of superstores, and in fact that seems to be happening to a degree.

In particular, the commercial independent publishers have done well by superstores. "Independent publishers are feeding on the growth of superstores," NBN's Lyons maintains, explaining that the superstores are carrying more and more of the types of titles published by independents. "Our fastest growing accounts are Borders, Barnes & Noble and Books-A-Million," Lyons says. Winton of PGW has had a similar experience. "We have an excellent rapport with Borders and Barnes & Noble," he says.

For literary presses, the situation at superstores is more mixed. Tree Swenson thinks its too early to judge what impact superstores have had for the small presses, although her sense is that independents are still the most important outlet. Bruce McPherson agrees: "Independents are our necessary link," he says, although he adds that superstores can provide literary presses with another sales outlet, "as long as they don't knock out the good independents." Kornblum was more bullish on superstores, claiming that the independents' support of literary presses has been a bit overblown. "There are a hundred or so independents that are great, but many others have become timid," he says. While many independents have

cut back on the number of author readings from literary houses, chains are adding them. "Chains seem to think if a reading by a literary author attracts only 10 people, that's okay because it's probably 10 people who have never been in the store," Kornblum says. "Some independents only want large crowds." Like others in the industry, however, Kornblum is eager to retain a viable independent bookstore network. "Without the independents, the chains might not think they need us any more. In addition, there is the question of free speech. I don't think it would be healthy to have six or seven buyers deciding what America should be reading."

Despite the difficulty startup publishers may face in finding distribution, there are no signs that the growth of independent companies is stopping. Technology makes the cost of entry into publishing easy and cheap, but despite some efforts, technology has not made any great leaps in making distribution easier. In fact, in some ways it has made it more difficult for the smallest and newest presses who can't afford computer systems that communicate with the major companies' computer systems. Nevertheless, as the major publishers focus more and more on commercial, bestseller titles, the opportunities for a smaller publisher to discover an important book have increased. And nearly all players in the distribution chain know that the industry will be better served by nurturing new companies. "There are lots of important books being published by smaller presses," Kornblum asserts, although he admits that "far too many people who enter publishing are excited about publishing good works, but ignore the business side." Kornblum, and others, advise publishers that it is critical to have a business plan, to develop an ongoing publishing and marketing program and to produce professional-looking materials before searching for a distributor.

To end on theme of "the best of times, the worst of times," one observer notes that when asked the question if it is easier for authors to get published today he answers, "Yes, but it's harder to get read." The growth of the independent publishing sector assures that there will be opportunities to publish all types of different works, but if publishers want to give their authors as wide an audience as possible they need to don their businessman's hats to fight for a place in the distribution system.



ST. JOHN'S BESTIARY

By William Babula

The Sonoma County Independent: "Memorable characters, sprinkles of unstrained humor, and a fastpaced, twisty plot make for a complex adventure!"

Publishers Weekly says: "Blue movies featuring amateurs in animal masks, a kidnapping, cats rescued from a university lab and four murders draw San Francisco's PI... through a briskly moving plot."

All the Old Lions

by Carol Caverly

Romantic Times' Rave Reviews says: "A very good first outing... Sure to become a favorite among fans of category-style thrillers!"

Gothic Journal: "All the Old Lions is an entertaining excursion into the modern west. The mystery is compelling and fast-paced, and the historical details will keep history lovers happily amused. All the Old Lions will remain in readers' memories long after this book has been read!"



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SVEN BIRKERTS: *Text and Time*

Interview by Harvey Blume

The ultimate point of the ever-expanding electronic web is to bridge once and for all the individual solitude that has heretofore always set the terms of existence. Sven Birkerts, **The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate Of Reading In An Electronic Age**

H: Let me start with Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, complaining about the newfound reliance on the written word, as opposed to speech, as an instrument of instruction. Socrates worries that the increase in literacy is going to result in a net decrease in true intelligence. "As for wisdom," he says, "pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality; they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant."

Some 2,500 years separate you and Socrates. He laments the beginning of text-based culture, you its possible demise. Yet sometimes you seem to share a language of opposition to impending change.

SB: The electronic media can be con-

ceptualized—and has been by Richard Lanham in *The Electronic Word*, for example—as a kind of swerve back to a tradition of rhetoric. That's not how I think about it.

H: You're not so concerned with everything that was lost in the departure from the oral tradition. You're much more impressed with what was gained.

continued on page 30

SB: I am aware, as well, of the loss. It's just that I see the trade-off as worthwhile, not to mention inevitable. Now, inevitability strikes again. We're looking once more at fundamental transformations, and a different set of losses and gains. Nevertheless, I can't simply go with the argument. I can't conclude that because electronic is inevitable electronic is good.

It's a matter of different ways of knowing and inhabiting the world. For a very long time the guiding ambition was toward a certain kind of wisdom rooted not just in language but in written language. Of course, we will never leave language behind. But if we orient ourselves less in terms of the written word, the printed book, and move to a set of supposed equivalencies—the visual image, the electronic screen, the complex and simultaneous transmission of denser webs of data—I think we lose our hold on that tradition. What's at risk, ultimately, is the individual compact with wisdom.

H: Where would our notion of wisdom be without Socrates? And he was choosing speech over text.

SB: I don't claim all wisdom and human possibility are inscribed in the pages of books. I do claim there's a particular meditative relation to experience which is the crown or the flower of subjectivity, of individualism, of whatever we value in developments since the time of the Renaissance, to put a rough period on it. The paradigm of that relation is print, print as a meditative medium rather than a transmission medium, print as a medium in which words are frozen, held so that one can return, linger, immerse oneself in language.

H: This is what you refer to as the reading state.

SB: When we talk about issues of print, media, communication, we are talking about a complex of relations that includes time. The relation to experience that I single out—that I privilege—is the duration relation, duration as Henri Bergson uses the term. I'm talking about slow time.

continued on next page

H: Time when you lose track of time.

SB: It's what we turn to art for. More for that, for slow time, than any particular set of messages.

H: Yet you privilege reading over the rest of art. You single out text.

SB: That's my bias.

H: Some people may get there through music, others through the contemplation of visual art. Aren't there a number of avenues to slow time?

SB: I do emphasize those deriving from the printed word. True, you can look at a painting or listen to a quartet and also enter the duration state but it is a self-enclosed duration state.



Sven Birkerts

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Music, for example, is utterly bound to time. The printed word is only bound to time insofar as you choose to make it so. The beauty of print, and what will be lost in a shift away from text, is this recursive element, this meditative link, the fact that one stops, lingers, returns. The pace is set by the need, the desire, not the apparatus. Of course, all the apparatus are equipped with ways to go back. Of course, you can rewind, scroll back but it's already a different activity.

H: You talk about the dual consciousness that arises when you are reading a book that matters to you, and describe cycling back and forth between these centers of consciousness.

SB: The reading state contains a paradox: I get closest to myself when pulled most intensely away from my center. I'm reading a book, lost in the subject matter or narrative at hand. I've put my subjective life on hold yet it remains present as a kind of ground base. As I'm pulled farther and farther away from myself something occurs, which I can't begin to define, that brings me closer to myself.

There's the instant of return, the moment when you look up, shut the book, notice the trees outside the window. You experience subjective consciousness at an intensified pitch. There's simultaneously a condensation of self and its irradiation with the consciousness of the person who generated the language.

Reading, logically, should dilute the self. In fact, the opposite occurs; the self is distilled. To me, it's the single most intensive way of doing it. For example, we're in the oral tradition at the moment. We're sitting here talking. Yet I don't begin to have the sensation of penetrating your consciousness, becoming coextensive with it. When I ingest your words from a page, I am, paradoxically, much closer to you. My sensation is that a deeper sort of communication has transpired.

H: You manage to tell a good deal of your life story in *The Gutenberg Elegies* by way of the history of your reading.

SB: I can do it because I am self-defined as a reader, subject to all sorts of compulsions and manias about books. There are others whose autobiographies may be written far more eloquently in terms of cars they have owned. For reasons discussed in that essay, I fled into books.

H: You describe the process of entry or reentry into a book, the fidgeting around, the sometimes extended process of getting comfortable. Isn't it possible that the difficulty of entering the reading state is more than incidental? Turning tiny text squiggles into vessels of meaning is something we learn to do in grade school. Maybe we should regard it as a rite of passage, an ordeal, painful like all ordeals, which is why we are so inordinately proud of it.

SB: It's all of the above, difficult, painful and worse when, as is happening to me, the eyes deteriorate. Still, life lived without books is simply not enough. It's too diffuse. I can't live without print-based concentrations of meaning. If I have to go through the day wondering about the next feeding, even a day punctuated with good conversation, it's still

enough. I need to feel there's a place in my
that gathers the dispersed rays to a point.
knowledge that somewhere in the day
the rays will be gathered and focused allows
to carry on and informs my highest ambi-
tion, which is to create something that would
be in that way for somebody else.
H: You say that despite all indications
the contrary, we are, as a species, "wired for
meaning."

SB: Yes.

H: But wired for meaning is not the
same as wired for books. And wired for lan-
guage is not the same as wired for the written
word. For example, you write about the '60s
that, "They were about protest, yes, in part
against our government's intervention in
Southeast Asia, but no less against the social
structures that stood in the way of the pursuit
of meaning."

True. On the other hand, we tended to view
reading as vicarious living. There was a lust
for immediacy, anti-literate for the most part,
and yet not anti-meaning.

SB: Growing older and away from the
'60s, the written word and the idea of history
and of past take on a significance they lacked
formerly. You begin to see the weave goes all
the way back and there's no place where the
thread really breaks. The more you understand
about the nature of the weave the more you
understand about where you are sitting.

H: So much of 20th-century culture is
anti-historical, as if there would be a primal,
more energizing kind of experience if only
history would get out of the way.

SB: The anti-historical bent is expressed
in modernism: "History is a nightmare from
which I am trying to awake."

H: Yet you often argue that it's only in
postmodernism that continuity breaks down.

SB: There's a tonal shift. There can't be
a specific moment when the idea of the time
line collapses, but I think modernism lived
with the hope of pushing forward toward the
future. Then, in the immortal words of Joseph
Heller, something happened; we lost the moti-
vation to push forward.

I know a great many artists of one sort or
another, and I detect a chronic low-grade flu
feeling of crisis in the arts. There are little
places to go, but maybe no big place to aim at
anymore. Postmodernism is what you do with
that feeling; you don't cease to create but you
do create differently.

For example, it's one thing to have a mod-
ernist collage and another to have a postmod-
ernist collage, though they may look like the

same sort of thing. The modernist collage is an
explosion of contents directed toward a revo-
lution in meaning. The postmodernist collage
says we have diverse material that can be
arranged in interesting ways. The spirit of ad-
vance is missing.

There's a sense in which you can't argue
against postmodernism. It's like trying to
argue against technology and electronic
media—you can't, they're there. But you need
to articulate attitudes and take stances if only

to keep defining the issue and arguing it
that there may be an issue and an argument—
and so that everything doesn't dissolve into
fizz.

Definition is the challenge now, to have a
sense of definition or contour about anything.
Our crisis, one of our crises, is the crisis of
definition.

H: A good deal of the battle, then, is to
simply indicate there is a battle. In your

words, "Being a curmudgeon is a dirty job, but
somebody has to do it."

SB: There's a running debate in our cul-
ture, at least from romanticism on—back then
it was the industrial revolution, technology in
its mechanistic phase—about values and tech-
nology. Even someone as relatively close to us
as D.H. Lawrence had to strike crazy postures
in reaction to technology.

Now it's as if the war is over. We are so
overwhelmed and infiltrated. The only people
who sometimes still stand against the en-
croachments of technology are those I least
want to identify with, namely cultural conser-
vatives.

H: There are times in *The Gutenberg
Elegies*, when, together with cultural conserv-
atives, it seems you long to reinstate a distinc-
tion between high and low culture.

SB: I adhere to such a distinction in my
own life.

There are things you look at as being of ul-
timate interest and benefit—books you go
back to, people you revere, a private canon.
And there's everything else. I hope this does-
n't make me a conservative across the board,
but I want to preserve the idea of subjective
depth as a human possibility. Serious art as
I've experienced it is bound up not with the
sense of the immediate but with a larger as-
pect, the aspect of eternity.

H: You allude to Walter Benjamin in
The Gutenberg Elegies, particularly his "The
Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Repro-
duction." But I think it's a misreading of that
essay to see Benjamin as only lamenting the
dissolution of the aura that had traditionally

enfolded the work of art. What's fascinating
about Benjamin is that he's looking both
ways. He sees the old pass away and measures
the loss. He sees totally new modes of percep-
tion come into being and is far from con-
demning them.

SB: I think that's absolutely right. Coin-
cidentally, I'm reading a book by Richard
Powers called *Three Farmers on the Way to a
Dance*, a postmodern novel that plays fast and
loose with history and combines essayistic
passages with narrative to arrive at a collage
effect. The author pops a long essay into the
middle of the book on the theme of Benjamin
always having it both ways, and this made me
realize I had been willfully misreading him. I
was predisposed to hear only Benjamin's
lament for the dissolution of aura, not his song
of praise for the reproduction of images.

Benjamin makes his argument in a prose
completely steeped in the mental traditions of
high culture, even as he espouses democrati-
zation. It's the very paradoxes and tensions in
the piece that make it stay alive.

H: As you say, it's hard work to be a
curmudgeon. For example, you apparently had
every intention of disliking the audio-book, but
in the end wound up quite moved by it.

SB: Yes, it's taxing to be a curmudgeon
but I'm acting out of a kind of necessity.

H: And *Three Farmers on the Way to a
Dance* is a kind of book you might have dis-
approved of in the past for embodying a post-
modernist aesthetic.

SB: What allows me to enjoy it is that
Powers himself is so surpassingly intelligent.
It's postmodernism with a wink, which I sup-
pose you could say of all postmodernism: it
winks as it delivers the goods. And the novel
is, in its way, a cultural lament of the kind I re-
spond to very deeply. It looks both ways;
we're back to Walter Benjamin.

In any case, postmodernism may already
be gone even as we speak. And who knows
what's around the next bend? The only thing
for sure is that we are not returning to cultural
hierarchies. Between deconstruction on the
one hand, and multiculturalism on the other,
the canon battle is no longer a battle, it's over.
The notion of books and authors—of a signif-
icant tradition of books and authors—can't
withstand the combined assault.

H: Near the end of *The Gutenberg Ele-
gies* you write: "There is, finally, a tremendous
difference between communication in the in-
strumental sense and communion in the affect-
ive, the soul-oriented, sense." And you
conclude, with regard to the electronic media,
"From deep in the heart I hear the voice that
says, 'Refuse it.'"

You are drawing on religious language
here. Are your objections to electronic media,
at bottom, religious?

SB: You're asking a core question, a
question I would want to be asked.

I have a problem defining myself within
religious terms. I've never, even as a child,
been to a church service. In that sense I'm a
real outsider to religion. But I am haunted by
the spiritual possibilities of consciousness, of
being human. It's what I've always responded
to in art—Wordsworth's image of "trailing
clouds of glory." I feel we come from some-
where and are headed somewhere. Whether
that jives with what science is telling us right
now is almost immaterial.

What is at the core of my lament at the end
of the book is that I see the inevitable move-
ment into electronics and technology—and
not only communications technology—as ul-
timately diffusing, diluting and pulling us away
from the charge of the sacred. It doesn't make
it impossible; it just makes it more difficult.

It carries us farther. It doesn't carry the
mystery farther. To me that's worrisome.

Harvey Blume is a Contributing Editor of the
Boston Book Review. □

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ISBN 0-679-43183-7

Although it deals with pain and dying, this absorbing new novel by Flook (*Reckless Wedding*), with its three bedeviled protagonists, proves full of verve. Deliciously oddball Rennie Hopkins, a wraith with white hair flying, stockpiles a candy store's worth of high-tech painkillers to ease her cancer agony. Soon she's sharing pills and suppositories with her trouble-prone stepson.

Willis Pratt, just discharged from the Navy as psychologically unfit, Willis has arrived home with a broken wrist (which gets excruciatingly rebroken). Then newly divorced Holly Temple, on probation for having set fire to her unfaithful husband's bed, moves in next door, trying to patch together her shattered life. With a natural affinity for one another, Willis and Holly soon become lovers; both hover around Rennie. Meanwhile, Willis and his goofy buddy Fritz engage in bizarre criminal deals (such as delivering rare exotic birds to a "smut king") in order to build up a fund for Rennie to ensure that she can stay in her house by the sea (her smarmy son, Munro, is trying to hustle her into a home for the terminally ill). Setting the novel in Newport, R.I., Flook incorporates the sea as a potent presence, using boating and fishing as significant scene and plot elements to steer her story gracefully and with humor to its satisfying conclusion. *Jan.*

FYI: Flook's first novel, *Family Night* (1993), won a PEN/Hemingway Foundation Special Citation.

BENNINGTON

C O L L E G E

BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS

Liam Rector
Director

Priscilla Hodgkins
Assistant Director

Sven Birkerts
Student Director

December 15, 1994

TO: WRITING SEMINARS STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

FROM: Liam Rector *Liam*

Greetings:

P.S. Writer Verlyn Klinkenborg has been added to the core faculty to teach nonfiction, and he will be joining us at the January residency to begin a six-month appointment. Verlyn is the author of *The Last Fine Time* (Knopf, 1991, Vintage Books, 1991) and *Making Hay* (Nick Lyons Books, 1986, Vintage Books, 1987). He is currently working on a book called *Becoming a Hand: A True Life Among Horses*. His work has appeared in *Audubon*, *California*, *Harper's*, *New York Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Smithsonian*, and elsewhere, and he has reviewed for *The New Republic* and the *New York Times Book Review*. In 1992 Verlyn received a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Award in nonfiction, and he has also received an NEA fellowship. In 1991 *The Last Fine Time* was awarded the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. He currently teaches writing at Harvard University, where he has received the Distinguished Teaching Award. He has taught at Fordham University, St. Olaf College, and has worked at the Pierpont Morgan Library. He holds a Ph.D. from Princeton, a B.A. from Pomona College, and he attended the University of California at Berkeley. Verlyn lives in Housatonic, Massachusetts. He's a sweetheart.

We're very happy to have Verlyn joining us. In January he will be teaching a nonfiction workshop with Sven.

Snow on the ground in Boston. Have a fine holiday, and be seeing you in a moment—

They're in a Position to Mix Metaphors With Business



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

John Barr, soon to be the first businessman to head the Poetry Society of America, in his Manhattan office.

Corporate America has been producing a growing number of serious poets.

By MUKUL PANDYA

JOHAN BARR has worked as an investment banker on Wall Street for some 23 years. A graduate of the Harvard Business School, he managed Morgan Stanley's public utility business until 1990, when he left to start his own firm, Barr Devlin Associates in New York, providing financial advice to gas and electric companies. But in January, the 51-year-old Mr. Barr will take on a position that has seemingly nothing to do with investment banking or utilities: he will become the next president — and the first businessman president — of the Poetry Society of America, the country's oldest poetry association, with 2,500 members.

As a poet who has published two books, with a third on the way, Mr. Barr sees close parallels between his varied enterprises.

"I view both business and poetry as organizing activities that are carried out by the self in response to a chaotic world," he said. "I see myself as someone who wanders around the world turning what I see into money and poetry."

Mr. Barr is not wandering alone. Continuing a tradition whose most famous representatives may be T. S. Eliot, a banker, and Wallace Stevens, an insurance executive, he is one of a growing number of poet-businesspeople. They work in industries ranging from insurance and real estate to consulting and public relations, and they largely aim to make their poetry accessible to an audience that includes their co-workers.

While some of these businesspeople-cum-poets have formidable literary reputations and several books to their names, others are just beginning to emerge from their garrets. Few actually write about their businesses, but most, like Mr. Barr, see no conflict between corporate and poetic endeavors.

Donald Everett Axinn, a real estate devel-

oper on Long Island and published poet, said of his dual pursuits: "Both present challenges and risks. The poem and the office building both require structural form."

And Mr. Barr asserted: "If you make your life's work out of your passion, then there doesn't need to be any difference between business and poetry."

Mr. Barr started writing poetry in the mid-70's, while he was helping establish the Natural Gas Clearing House in Houston, the largest American gas marketing concern of its kind. These days, he is putting together a similar business to market electricity.

But most mornings, he wakes at 3 to put in a few hours on his poems, before the phone starts to ring. At other times, he speaks fragments of ideas into a dictaphone he carries in his briefcase, later working them into his journals. He has published "The War Zone" (Warwick Press, 1989), with poems about the Vietnam War (Mr. Barr is a former Navy officer), and "Natural Wonders" (Warwick, 1991); "The Dial Painters" is due out next year.

Ted Kooser, 55, carries the creative process into his job at Nebraska's Lincoln

fit Life, and asserts that companies fit from hiring poets. "Having effective image skills," he said, "can be powerful corporation."

Mr. Kooser is a vice president at Lincoln Benefit, he writes the insurance company's newsletter, writes advertising copy and oversees the legal compliance work. But Mr. Kooser is also a leading Midwest poet, considered by some critics to be among the best of his generation.

Mr. Kooser has been in insurance for 30 years, but his love of poetry goes back even further. He studied at Iowa State under the poet Karl Shapiro and has produced seven volumes of poetry, starting with "Official Poetry Blank" (University of Nebraska) in 1979. His most recent book, "Weather Central," has just been released by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

"I write poetry that is free of literary illusions. I'd like to reach a broader audience, not exclusively those who read poetry," he said. After he has written a poem, Mr. Kooser said, he often shows it to the secretaries and clerks at his company, rejecting it if it seems unclear.

MR. KOOSER has lived all his life in Iowa and Nebraska and most of his poems are drawn from Midwest experiences. William Cole, a former columnist of the Saturday Review who has edited some 50 anthologies of poetry, said of Mr. Kooser: "He knows more about small-town people" than any other poet I know; he's a truly American poet."

Publishers are beginning to recognize that poetry by business executives might command readers. The University of Illinois Press is publishing "For a Living: The Poetry of Work," edited by Peter Oresick, acting director of the University of Pittsburgh Press, and Nicholas Coles, associate professor of English at Pittsburgh. It has some 180 poems about the office, and the contributors include Mr. Kooser and Dana Gioia, a former vice president at Kraft General Foods who is also a poet, translator and literary critic.

"Despite what people in the arts think, the contemporary business world is full of first-rate artistic talent," said Mr. Gioia, 44. Any, he said, "have made careers in business because of the career uncertainties of the arts world."

Mr. Gioia studied comparative literature at Harvard before getting an M.B.A. from Stanford. In his 15-year stint at Kraft in White Plains, N.Y., he was involved in marketing products like Jell-O. Over the same time, however, he has published two books of poems, "Daily Horoscope" (Graywolf Press, 1986) and "The Gods of Winter" (Graywolf, 1991), on "the same inevitable themes as other poets — love, death, time, the fragility of anything human."

Mr. Gioia, who lives in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., is now a full-time writer, though he continues to work part-time as a marketing consultant for clients like Citicorp. Mr. Gioia sees the numbers of businesspeople writing poetry as part of a broader renaissance of the art in American culture — including rap — outside the campus.

Mr. Axinn, 65, the chairman of Donald E. Axinn Companies in Jericho, L.I., entered real estate in the late 1960's, going on to

build more than 40 office and industrial buildings in Long Island and New Jersey. His first book of poems, "Flying Down the Wind," was published by Floral Press in 1978, and another, "The Latest Illusion," will be out next June.

"The poems are not about real estate, though you may get that impression from the title" of his newest work, he said with a laugh. He usually writes at 5 or 6 in the

"Restoration"*

*I love to recover the quality
of things in decline.
To scour stone, scale paint from
brick,
to compel, with wire brush,
the flourish wrought by iron.
To refinish wood, solving for
forgotten grain.
To give, by weeding, our stone wall
back its dignity.
To left and right the borders of our
lot,
to square the corners of our keep.*

*I have even dreamed: pushing a
pushcart,
I stop anywhere and start
doing what needs to be done.
The first building takes time:
replacing windows, curing the roof.
I know compromises must be made
and make none, a floor at a time.*

*I work along an interstate
a century after Johnny Appleseed.
A modest people makes me chief.
(They, too, enjoy the hazy shine
of finished work by last light.)
Storm drains relieved, brick walls
relaid,
a heritage of dust and wrappers
is renounced. The square square,*

*trim trim, the town for once
is like an artist's conception of the
town.* JOHN BARR

"Tom Ball's Barn"†

*The loan that built the barn
just wasn't big enough
to buy the paint, so the barn
went bare and fell apart
at the mortgaged end of twelve
nail-popping, splintering winters.
Besides the Januaries,
the barber says it was
five-and-a-half percent,
three dry years, seven wet
and two indifferent,
the banker (dead five years)
and the bank (still open
but deaf, or deaf as it were), and
poor iron in the nails that
were all to blame for the barn's col-
lapse
on everything he owned, thus
leading poor Tom's good health
to diabetes and
the swollen leg that threw him
off the silo, probably
dead (the doctor said)
before he hit that board pile.*

TED KOOSER

*Reprinted by permission of John Barr. †Reprinted by permission of Ted Kooser.

morning, and frequently goes to his farm in Middlebury, Vt., looking out at the Green Mountains as he works on his poems. An avid pilot, Mr. Axinn has also written poems about flying, wildlife and children.

Mr. Axinn said he sees business and poetry as inseparable parts of his life. And one has actually helped the other over time: "I once made a deal with the chairman of a company who came to one of my poetry readings," he said. "He found me interesting. It opened certain doors."

Gerald E. Murray, who has written on death, the relationship between love and fear and the repercussions of memory, is among the few executives who also have written poems about business experiences.

Mr. Murray, 48, recently left his job as executive vice president at the Chicago office of Ruder Finn, a \$28 million corporate

communications company, to start his own firm, the Murray Communications Group. Besides having worked in public relations for 24 years, Mr. Murray has produced five volumes of poetry, the most recent being "Walking the Blind Dog," published in 1992 by the University of Illinois Press.

Mr. Murray's next book, "Oils of Evening," to be published next year by Lake Shore Press, is a 150-page poem about art theft and forgery.

Inspiration sometimes visits Mr. Murray and others unexpectedly during meetings, but Barbara Loots, 48, who writes greeting cards for Hallmark in Kansas, must attend to the muse almost all the time. "I've been with Hallmark for 28 years," she said. "Hallmark has a culture that nourishes me more than an academic culture would."

Ms. Loots, who will publish a volume of poems next year, said the discipline of writing greeting cards has helped her poetry. She sees a difference, however, between the two kinds of writing: "In the greeting cards, I have to say what someone else wants to say. In my poems, I say what I want to say."

While these businesspeople-poets have all had their work published, Basil Rouskas, 50, president of Basil Rouskas Associates, an outplacement firm in Franklin, N.J., just recently worked up the nerve to start sending his poems to publishers. A native of Greece, he began writing political poems nearly 30 years ago, protesting against the military dictatorship there.

"Corporate life represses emotions," he said. "People pretend it is fine to make up business plans, but they don't acknowledge their emotions. This is unhealthy." Mr. Ouskas believes poetry allows him to do just that, which is why he has decided to start publishing his work. He gets his start here, with "Commuters' Sunset," a poem he wrote in 1978:

*As the sun descends behind a hill
The lights of the radio tower start blink-
ing.
In the distance,
a river drains the blood
from the veins of the valley.
And we, again, prepare ourselves
For another day's train ride
From work.*

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1984

Painter-Professor Dissects Creativity

PERSONAL creativity, said Ross Webber, chairman of the management department at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, can be strongly tied to business acumen.

Professor Webber — who spends his creative energies painting — views management skills in terms of a three-tiered pyramid. At the lowest level, he said, are technical and analytical skills, and in the middle, interpersonal skills. But at the highest tier, conceptual skills are crucial.

"These skills are the closest to creativity," Professor Webber said. "Creativity is the ability to see how things from one context fit into another. These abilities are crucial for management. When you look at most poetry, it is an analogy; the best poets see parallels between a butterfly and aspects of human behavior."

A thread that binds some businesspeople who are poets is their escape from corporate life into entrepreneurship. Professor Webber compared that impulse to the tension that painters feel between the ideas in their mind and a blank canvas.

"Entrepreneurs talk in terms of similar tension. But for entrepreneurs, time is their canvas."

Mukul Pandya is managing editor of Central New Jersey Business, a biweekly publication based in New Brunswick, N.J.

Walloping the Winners

In a rare move for the decorous world of American literary prizes, the author Amy Hempel said last week that she was disappointed that William Gaddis had won the National Book Award for fiction for his book "A Frolic of His Own" (Poseidon Press). Ms. Hempel, one of five judges on the award's fiction panel, revealed that she had backed Grace Paley, whose book "Collected Stories" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) was also nominated for the award, only to be voted down by the other panelists.

"I had considered not attending the award ceremony," Ms. Hempel said in an interview from New York. "But a friend pointed out that that only works if you're Marlon Brando. No one was exactly going to notice."

Ms. Hempel's tiny cry of protest was small potatoes compared to what happens in Britain, where there's so much sniping that it's truly a wonder anyone ever enters a literary contest. As surely as November is filled with depressing rain, one judge for every award is bound to declare the applications execrable and literature generally downtrodden, particularly compared to what it used to be. It happened at the Booker Awards earlier this fall, when one of the judges could be heard muttering that no one was writing novels like P. G. Wodehouse anymore.

And it also happened at the recent Whitbread prizes. As he presented the poetry award (to James Fenton, Oxford Professor of Poetry), Auberon Waugh, editor of the Literary Review and one of the judges, announced that most of the 77 entries were "totally abysmal," had "nothing whatever to say" and should never have been printed at all.

And Clare Francis, on the panel for the biography award (which went to Brenda Maddox for her book about the marriage of D. H. and Frieda Lawrence), said that many contemporary biographies cried out for a decent editor. "Few books come in at less than 600 pages," she complained. "Most could have been significantly shorter."

The winners will compete against the winners of three other categories — novel, first novel and children's novel — for the \$31,500 prize, which is to be awarded in January, with all the attendant complaining.

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1994

Letters

BENNINGTON MEANS BUSINESS

Elizabeth Coleman is a president any college would be lucky to have; through her leadership Bennington will achieve the best of its possible futures ("Bennington Means Business," by Mark Edmundson, Oct. 23). But she is not responsible for the redesign of the college. That buck stops on the board room table. It was the board of trustees, responding to its legal and fiduciary responsibility, that conducted the symposium, assessed and developed ideas from every quarter and made the decisions set forth in our report, including the criteria that governed personnel decisions.

JOHN W. BARR
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Bennington College
Bennington, Vt.

BIOGRAPHY AND STATEMENT FOR 1994 AWP BOARD ELECTION

Liam Rector's books of poems are *American Prodigal* and *The Sorrow of Architecture*, and he edited *The Day I Was Older: On the Poetry of Donald Hall*. His poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Kayak*, *The Journal of Arts Management and Law*, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. Rector is the founding director and currently teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Bennington College in Vermont, and has taught graduate courses on censorship and the culture wars at Emerson College in Boston. He is part of creating a new Freedom-to-Write Committee at PEN New England. He has received Guggenheim and NEA fellowships in poetry, and is poetry editor of *Harvard Magazine*. He holds masters degrees from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, and has taught at George Mason University, Old Dominion University, Goucher College, and elsewhere. From 1985 to 1990 he was the executive director of AWP, and he has also worked administering literary programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Academy of American Poets, the National Endowment for the Arts, and elsewhere. In 1989 he was a co-founder of the Coalition of Writers' Organizations (COWO), a coalition which fought for unfettered public funding for the arts.

Statement: Censorship—direct and indirect, dramatic and oblique—is again, by every credible count, on the rise. The culture wars are a real thing, and literature and the arts will continue to serve as antennae and lightning rods. It troubles me that AWP seems to have dropped the ball in its ongoing advocacy of freedom of expression as a high priority for the organization, and that is mainly why I look now to serve on the board. I feel that we as writers, readers, and teachers must, in this important debate, bring the authority of the word to the table and "teach the conflict" from its many sides. Fighting censorship should, in my view, stay solidly on the agenda of AWP.

My past experience with AWP would allow me to contribute to the nuts and the bolts of keeping the organization strong, and the jailhouse lawyering I learned at the Kennedy School should help to reanimate matters and further protect the First Amendment. Coalitions need to be formed, yet it strikes me that aside from AWP and a very few others, too many literary organizations are now being run by networking fools, rather than by substantive men and women (and cats and dogs) of letters.

Writing programs have become decentralized literary centers—vortices for literature—throughout the country, and our job is to build and sustain a lively literary field with a healthy circulatory system—an actual James Wright, under the sun, 'neath the moon, cowchip-strewn bestiary, an animate *field*. Other matters that especially concern me are full-time adjuncts, the role of program directors in AWP, jobs for writers outside of teaching, low-residency programs, content restrictions on government grants, fellowships to writers, and supporting university presses and other presses that publish poetry.

FORECASTS

AMERICAN PRODIGAL

Liam Rector. Story Line, \$19.95 (60p)
ISBN 0-934257-21-3, \$11.95 paper -
22-1

Rector's (*The Sorrow of Architecture*) monologues follow the "motions of living" and "the motion we are" during the late 20th century. His Americans are caught on a "tide" that carries them away from, then toward, home. The first word of verse in the volume is "we," and the last is "Liam," finding the speaker alone. In between, we hear voices of real people, mostly baby boomers, who have left their fields or families, driven as much by economic necessity as ambition. Whether they encounter exhaustion or shopping malls, experience failed marriages, alienating labor, breakdowns, or the MLA job market, some still dream of creating "the nineteenth century town" in "the American city," while others admit, "We're fucked. We know it." A few of Rector's characters do succeed in finding their way home, though the form home takes for these prodigals remains unclear. A latent tribute to Elizabeth Bishop suggests that maintaining the unsettled life (like hers) may be an arrival in itself. Rector's frequent use of ellipses seems strange in such fully drawn, lucid narratives; and single last lines dangling beneath stanzas tend to close the poems' meaning, rather than open them to possibility. Nonetheless, this collection—especially its longer pieces—moves in many ways. (Nov.)

OF THE TIMES

The Pleasures of Craft, Honesty and Intelligence

By MARGO JEFFERSON

Here are three books of poetry, one entirely satisfying, each filled with the pleasures that craft, honesty and a sensuous intelligence bring. You will find yourself happy, in Robert B. Shaw's words, "to feel the air tingle, the way it will, at the right word."

That old Wordsworthian tale about the child being father to the man inspires some of the best poems in "The Post Office Murals Restored" by Mr. Shaw. They are quietly and cleanly made: poems built to old memories with all their complications and consequences. In "A Piece of Rope" a boy pores over his scout handbook, learning to tie knots

in his own private night with careful fingers
teaching the rope its tricks. He
heard his mother
talking on the phone inside the
way
she'd done ever since his father
went away

on the latest trip. "No. How do I
know
where he is this time or when he'll
come back home?
How do I know if he'll come home
at all?" ...
He was fumbling now; his touch
was off.
He quit listening, clamping his
eyes tighter.
Finally when his fingers found the
loop
they needed, and he'd pulled his
two ends snug,
he kept pulling, cinching the docile
cord
brutally to itself. She had hung up
now.

Mr. Shaw stumbles when he wraps
trees, flowers and little things like
bookmarks and bookends in word
games and rhymes. His best poems
come when he looks into his own
heart, then explores how that heart
— a poet's heart — can encompass a
nation. "Last Days in Camden"
reminds us Walt Whitman, the poet who
helped make America audible to it-

self, as he lies dying. And the title
them makes us look and look again
at murals in a New England post
office, resolutely cheerful and patri-
otic; choosing to tell us nothing
about "the dinginess hope leaves



Alfred A. Knopf

Stephen Sandy

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

By Stephen Sandy

83 pages. Knopf. \$11.

THE POST OFFICE MURALS RESTORED

By Robert B. Shaw

80 pages. Copper Beech Press. \$11.

THE GREEN LAKE IS AWAKE

By Joseph Ceravolo

131 pages. Coffee House Press. \$11.95

when it deserts us."

In Stephen Sandy's "Thanksgiving Over the Water," the first sentence begins with the words "I remember" and the last with the words "I watch." His memory fights with the past and demands that it make room for an unsettling present. And what he watches for is the offbeat moment; the disruption at the edge of a peaceful scene; the calm, even the tenderness that can show through death and decay. He is restless, too: it shows in the way he tries out different tones and moves from one meter to the next.

He remembers the young soldiers he was in boot camp with, "bug-eyed recruits who followed orders," and watched in terror as a doctor performed a spinal tap without anesthesia, and "The buried agenda of pain, of power grew manifest." Or the beggar in the subway, "The black air of the tunnel against us."

Under his filthy anorak he wore
A filthy undershirt, each stitch
picked out

In grime; and the flesh was
stained, and dark. Again
He bowed, "God bless you," and
the track below gleamed
With oncoming light.

And he watches. He watches his father, a card shark, eyeing four other players, "each dapper as a dictator." He watches abandoned houses in the countryside, "tawny stone/Climbing the air." He watches his son wrap a dead mole in tissue paper and bury it in a box that had held blank checks.

In half a twilight hour he
Had tried the work of mourning
on;
A death for the heart.

Joseph Ceravolo died in 1988. He was 54 but the poems in "The Green Lake Is Awake," available in a single volume for the first time in 25 years, are the poems of a boy-man. Ceravolo is after what he calls "The passion of different knowing," the knowing that comes through the eyes and the pores; through color, rhythm and sound before it settles into sense. You can see this in his titles ("Red Sun," "White Fish in Reeds," "Drunken Winter"), and when you come to the poem called "In My Crib" you can see that the boy-man is sometimes a baby-man.

He can see with lilting exactness. "The sun is blasting/the green shiny weeds" he writes, and "There is a creek that passes. It's a creek that/

travels and looks like a bone." Who would think that the muscles in a woman's legs move "in slow gulps," but if you've ever watched someone walking, that's exactly right. So is the plant with long thin leaves "like insect's legs," and the plants and grasshoppers that lie beneath snow "breathing little holes./Is it death trying to see and breathe?"

Ceravolo can be insufferably winsome and he can yoke words together in ways that feel so private you get standoffish and irritable. But keep going. Instead of trying to follow him, follow the path his words lead you down. In the end you will feel as if you and the raw data of the world are alone together. Mr. Shaw and Mr. Sandy prefer the cooked to the raw, the peeling, the simmering, the steaming and the basting that turn raw data into meals for the mournful, civilized self.

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

ADOLPH S. OCHS, *Publisher 1896-1935*
ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, *Publisher 1935-1961*
ORVIL E. DRYFOOS, *Publisher 1961-1963*
ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER, *Publisher 1963-1992*

THE NEW YORK TIMES **EDITORIALS/LETTERS** WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1994

Score One for Helms

To the Editor:

Re your Nov. 3 news article on the National Endowment for the Arts: Score one for Senator Jesse Helms and the religious right.

By ending local regranting by the arts agency to individual artists, Jane Alexander, the endowment's chairwoman, continues her predecessor's appeasement policies while conceding ground to those who would censor content in our public financing of the arts.

Ms. Alexander should know that appeasement only emboldens the bullies and that attempting to take one's half out of the middle satisfies no one. As long as the arts agency exists, artists will be financed for work of excellence that sometimes offends people. Will Ms. Alexander stand up for the First Amendment as the endowment's enemies continue their march toward definancing her agency?

LIAM RECTOR

Somerville, Mass., Nov. 3, 1994
