Some 6 or 7 years ago when I became interested in attempting to write poetry, a friend pointed me in the direction of The St. Louis Poetry Center, a group founded in 1946, which holds free monthly workshops in the autumn, winter, and spring of each year. At that time, I’d written a handful of pieces I thought might be poems. When I read them to a close relative the response was swift and certain: “I don’t know where you’re coming from, Bobby—but the trains don’t run there anymore.”

At my first visit to a Sunday workshop of the SLPC, I was able to say one of my poems and found a group of people willing to listen and offer sincere suggestions how I might improve its composition and my reading of the piece. The leader of the workshop that afternoon, or “poet-critic,” was Richard Newman, editor of *River Styx* magazine. Since that first visit, the SLPC has become an indispensable component of my writing passage.

The St. Louis Poetry Center’s long tradition of making newcomers feel welcome and providing an outstanding reading and discussion forum for beginners and seasoned poets alike, continues in the coming months.

Poet Michael Heffernan and Poet/Editors Laurence Lieberman (University of Illinois Press) and Christian Wiman (Chicago’s venerable *Poetry* magazine) will be the featured poet-critics at free Sunday Workshops sponsored by The St. Louis Poetry Center, held at 1:30pm at the University City Public Library’s 2nd-floor meeting room during the months of February, March, and April. Specific dates are given below.

Interested attendees are invited to send a poem to the featured poet-critic for possible critique during the afternoon workshops. Details for doing so are available at the SLPC’s website, www.stlouispoetrycenter.org, or by writing the SLPC at 567 North & South Rd., #8, St. Louis, MO 63130.

**Sunday, February 20, 2005,** will feature Michael Heffernan, Professor of English at the University of Arkansas. Mr. Heffernan’s latest volume of poems, his seventh, is *The Night Breeze Off the Ocean,* forthcoming in early 2005. He is the recipient of three grants in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, two Pushcart Prizes, the Iowa Poetry Prize, and the Porter Prize for Literary Excellence. His poems have appeared in *APR, Boulevard, Gettysburg Review, Kenyon Review, Margie, Poetry, TriQuarterly,* and many other reviews.

**On Sunday, March 20, 2005,** the SLPC will host poet-critic Laurence Lieberman. Mr. Lieberman is a Professor of English at the University of Illinois-Champaign and poetry editor of University of Illinois Press, where he founded the poetry series in 1971. He has published thirteen collections of poetry and criticism, most recently,*Hour of the Mango Black Moon,* poems with paintings by Stanley Greaves and others (Peepal Tree Press of Leeds, England, 2004). His poetry has been widely anthologized, recently in *The Body Electric* (*APR/Norton*) and *The Best American Poetry.* His awards include grants from the NEA and the Jerome Shestack Prize from *APR.* Mr. Lieberman received a William Carlos Williams Citation from the Poetry Society of America. New work appears in *APR, Hudson Review, Kenyon Review, Margie, The New Republic,* and elsewhere.


Each Sunday workshop will last from 1:30pm until 3:30pm. Messrs. Heffernan, Lieberman and Wiman have graciously agreed to hold book signings at the conclusion of each of their respective workshops.
Fiction Writer Kathryn Davis to Visit English Department

Fiction writer Kathryn Davis will be visiting Washington University as the Fannie Hurst Professor of Creative Literature in the Department of English. She will read from her books on Thursday, February 17th, at 8 pm and give a talk on the craft of fiction on the following Tuesday, February 22nd, at 8 pm. Both programs are in the Hurst Lounge, Duncker 201 of the main campus.

Kathryn Davis is the author of five novels, including The Girl Who Trod on a Loaf; Hell; and Versailles. She has received a Kafka Prize, the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Of her work, Kellie Wells, assistant professor in the English department and fiction writer on the faculty of The Writing Program at Washington University says: "Kathryn Davis’s fiction defies description. No other writer boldly dares to claim-stake the same fictional territory. No one else writes a sentence like Davis or bores through the world’s deceptive veneer with the gimlet eye that she does. Her voice is one of the most interesting and original in American fiction."

The St. Louis Poetry Center. I hope, in the coming months, we will welcome many new members: young, old, in-between, and from all walks of life—further enhancing the broad diversity of distinctive voices already present.

Robert Nazarene is a poet and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SLPC’s Board. He is founding editor of Margie/The American Journal of Poetry.
One enjoyable aspect of living in the American ‘melting pot’ of ethnicity is that people recognize and, if time and opportunity allow, celebrate everyone’s holidays. Although life is already quite hectic, I would vote to recognize even more holidays. Unfortunately, since becoming a citizen and being able to vote I have not found anything resembling this idea on the ballot. I suppose a logical objection to a growing number of holidays might be expense, and many of them celebrate similar concepts. Although the rationales behind many of our diverse holidays overlap, there are still advantages to celebrating more of them.

Multiple celebrations of the New Year are a good example. Last Friday evening, I held a bubbling beverage and watched the lighted ball atop a building in Times Square drop down to usher in the year 2005. The Times Square celebration stems from a calendar worked out in the 1580s at the order of Pope Gregory XIII. But, 2005, or, alternatively, the Chinese lunar year 4703, will arrive again with the Chinese New Year celebrated on February 9. Thus, one advantage of celebrating both New Year observances is that, separated by a little over a month, the two New Years give me a chance to test drive my resolutions and see which are likely to last (and which to drop quietly). Although the Chinese adopted the Western calendar in 1911, the lunar calendar is still used for festive occasions, so if I were in China I would have even more time to eat, drink, and fine-tune my resolutions, because New Year festivities traditionally start on the first day of the lunar month and continue until the fifteenth, when the moon is brightest.

Another advantage of celebrating both New Year observations is the opportunity to revisit the ways humans have tried to understand and describe the world around them with the stories and myths that have grown up around the holiday. The Chinese Lunar Year is the longest chronological record in history, dating from 2637 BC, when the Emperor Huang Ti introduced the first cycle of the zodiac. The Chinese zodiac has twelve signs, referred to as the twelve Earthly Branches. These were used to keep track of time and to record events. Unlike the Western linear concept of time as a straight line from the past through the present to the future, the traditional Chinese concept of time is cyclical. This means that after these twelve Earthly Branches came to be designated by animals, every twelve years the same animal name or ‘sign’ reappears. Because most people were illiterate when this system arose, it was a practical solution to describing and using the passage of time. Any event would be associated with the animal sign reigning during its occurrence, and a child would simply have to remember under what sign she or he was born.

Folk tales developed around this system. According to one legend, Buddha summoned all the animals to a New Year’s celebration where he was to designate the first twelve animals arriving to be the signs of the twelve year cycle. When the cat heard the news, he let his friend the rat know about it and they decided to go together. When the time came, however, the rat did not wake the cat who slept through the morning. This is why there is no year of the cat and why cats hate rats. The rat knew that a small animal like himself would not be able to compete with the others, so he begged the ox to let...
him ride on his head. The ox agreed and they went together. But just as they were about to arrive the rat jumped off the ox’s head and crossed the finish line first. This is why the year of the rat is the first in the cycle of years, and the year of the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig follow according to their arrival orders. Chinese folk stories maintain that one’s personality profile can be predicted from the animal presiding during one’s birth time, and known as the ‘animal that hides in your heart.’ If you have visited Chinese restaurants you have probably seen these animal signs and discovered the profile for your birth year found on the paper mats beneath your plate. The year 2005 is the Year of the Rooster. People born under this sign ‘tend to hide their conservative natures via a display of aggression and self-confidence, however they are very dignified.’ Rooster traits include loving to be the focus of attention, showing scant regard for others, vigilance, decisiveness, straight-forwardness, and accuracy. Although it is possible to cast a rooster’s actions in the aforementioned terms, other predicted traits are that roosters are ‘excellent with money,’ ‘great purists,’ and ‘have minds that work along scientific lines,’ which is to project strictly human characteristics on the poor bird.

This kind of anthropo-morphism, or projecting human qualities onto non-human entities, is part of early attempts to understand and describe the world. Folk explanations of the world are frequently anthropomorphic, and they range from animistic ascriptions of life and human-like motives to inanimate objects, to the ancient Greeks explaining events around them as the actions and whims of the human-like gods. Such creative mythical structures make sense of the world. These analogical ascriptions of human qualities to natural objects reflect ideas about which human qualities were valued more than others. Besides many of the resulting pronouncements being wrong, generalizing our notions of human traits and projecting them on a large universe of natural phenomena results in a powerful ethnocentrism and parochialism. This perspective is much like the idea a worm has of an apple: that the whole world is an apple.

It is typical of parochialism that its holders do not consider themselves parochial. We seldom realize how parochial we are; we know only how parochial others are in comparison to us. Yet, it is difficult to draw a clear line between parochial and non-parochial anthropomorphisms because no matter how abstract many of our pronouncements about the world may be, they are rooted in our need to understand and describe nature in human terms: linguistically. Human language use projects onto the world around us the limitations of our ability to communicate and describe. Even the concept of time is problematic. We may smile at the thought of a twelve year cycle of animal signs, but many issues remain to be resolved regarding understanding of time: what time actually is; whether time exists when nothing is changing; why time’s arrow points forward and not backward; whether the past and the future are real; whether it is sensible to speak of time flowing; and whether the present is an objective feature of reality or only a product of subjective experience. Even the stresses and strains of Einstein’s theory of relativity are described in terms of an analogy between Einstein’s space and a piece of elastic material such as a plain rubber band. The current ‘string theory’ explanation of the space-time continuum is no better.

The traditional myths and stories concerning holidays of all cultures derive from our species’ imaginative attempts to understand the world around us – and they are a reminder that there will always be new discoveries that will make what we think we know today appear primitive and parochial. Until that day I would rather celebrate the Year of the Rooster than the Year of the String.


Jian Leng
Assistant Director
The Center for the Humanities
St. Louis Literary Calendar

Events in February

St. Charles Rock, St. Ann, 1pm. 429-4845.

Barnes & Special Collections, WU presents Jana Harper discussing “The City as Subject: Urban Books,” Bingko Room, Olin Library, 4pm. 935-5583.


Coca’s Women Center Stage series presents Helen Prejean discussing her new book “The Death of Innocents,” COCA theatre, 324 7th Street, 7pm. 252-1834 x 124.


Saturday, February 5
Author Margaret Durham visits SLPL Central, 1301 Olive, 1am. 221-1280.


Movie Screening: Hitchcock’s Marnie, SLPL Barr Branch, 1701 S. Vandeventer, 3pm. 539-0396.

Monday, February 7
LBB presents Kalisha Buckhanon discussing her book “Upstage,” 399 N. Euclid, 7pm. 367-6731.

Tuesday, February 8
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Good Girl’s Guide to Murder” by Carol Conly, WU, 8pm. 862-6280.


St. Louis Chamber Chorus presents “Poetry in Song: No Man Is an Island,” with settings of John Donne’s poetry, Christ Church Cathedral, 1210 Locust, 3pm. 18/16. 363-458-4343.

Love You Like a Sista book group discusses “Married Men” by Carl Weber, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Shaw Book Group discusses Flippin’ the Script by Aisha Ford B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Wednesday, February 9
St. Louis Publishers’ Association meets, Richmond Hts. Community Center, 8001 Dale, 6:30pm. 5it nonmems. 206-2579.

Thursday, February 10
Sisters in Crime meet, 3pm. 9am. 862-6731.

Friday, February 11

Saturday, February 12
Mystery Lovers Book Club meets, SLPL Central, 3pm. 862-6280.

Monday, February 15

Tuesday, February 16
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Wednesday, February 17
SIUE’s English Language & Literature Association and Speaker Series presents “Walt Wolfram” discussing sociolinguistics and vernacular languages, SIUE Conference Center, 3:30pm. 539-0396.

Thursday, February 18

Friday, February 19

Saturday, February 20
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Sunday, February 21

St. Louis Chamber Chorus presents “Poetry in Song: No Man Is an Island,” with settings of John Donne’s poetry, Christ Church Cathedral, 1210 Locust, 3pm. 18/16. 363-458-4343.

Love You Like a Sista book group discusses “Married Men” by Carl Weber, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Shaw Book Group discusses Flippin’ the Script by Aisha Ford B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Tuesday, February 22
Romance Writers of America (MO Chapter) presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 8pm. 362-6280.

Wednesday, February 23
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Thursday, February 24

Friday, February 25

Saturday, February 26
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Sunday, February 27

St. Louis Chamber Chorus presents “Poetry in Song: No Man Is an Island,” with settings of John Donne’s poetry, Christ Church Cathedral, 1210 Locust, 3pm. 18/16. 363-458-4343.

Love You Like a Sista book group discusses “Married Men” by Carl Weber, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Shaw Book Group discusses Flippin’ the Script by Aisha Ford B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Tuesday, February 28
Romance Writers of America (MO Chapter) presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 8pm. 362-6280.

Wednesday, February 29
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Thursday, February 30

Friday, March 1

Saturday, March 2
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Sunday, March 3

St. Louis Chamber Chorus presents “Poetry in Song: No Man Is an Island,” with settings of John Donne’s poetry, Christ Church Cathedral, 1210 Locust, 3pm. 18/16. 363-458-4343.

Love You Like a Sista book group discusses “Married Men” by Carl Weber, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Shaw Book Group discusses Flippin’ the Script by Aisha Ford B&N, 8871 Ladue, 4pm. 862-6280.

Tuesday, March 4
Romance Writers of America (MO Chapter) presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 8pm. 362-6280.

Wednesday, March 5
The Assembly Series at WU presents “The Death of Innocents” by Miguel Larios, WU, 11am. 9am. 935-7100.

Thursday, March 6

Friday, March 7

Saturday, February 26 Saturday Writers presents Romance writer Irene Hannon, O’Fallon Civic Park Bldg., 11am-1pm. $5 for non-members. www.saturdaywriters.org.

Monday, February 28 Contemporary Fiction and Non-Fiction Reading Group discusses A Presumption of Death by Jill Paton Walsh & Dorothy L. Sayers, WU’s West Campus Library, 2-4pm. 481-0730.


Monday, January 22 Kevin Young & Mariah, 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am 9am.

Saturday, January 26 The Poetry Reading Program presents on the craft of Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201, Duncker 201.

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Saturday, February 26 For space reasons, we list mainly events for school-age children. For pre-school story times, contact branches of SLPL and SLCL, B&N and Borders bookstores. Registration is required for most library events.

Wednesday, February 2 Folktales from Africa, ages 5-12, SLCL Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant, 3:45pm. 921-7200.

Thursday, February 3 Writer’s Workshop, discuss & critique each other’s poetry, fiction, essays, ages 16+, SLCL Grand Glaize Branch, 1010 Meramec Station, 7pm. 636-225-6454.

Monday, February 7 African-American Read-In, all ages, most SLPL branches. Call branch for times.

Tuesdays, February 8, 15 Young Adult Booktalk, discuss books, write reviews, SLCL Bridgeton Trails branch, 3455 McKeil, 4pm. 291-7570.

Thursday, February 10 Club Read explores African influence around the world, teens, Schlafly Branch Library, 225 N. Euclid, 4-5pm. 367-4120.

Tuesday, February 15 Ridley Pearson reads from his book Peter and the Starcatchers, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 7pm. 362-8280.

Thursday, February 17 Carpenter Teen Book Club discusses Double Dutch by Sharon Draper, grades 6-9, SLPL Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand, 4pm. 772-6586.

Friday, February 18 Teen movie, Holes from the book by Louis Sachar, pizza & prizes, SLCL Tesson Ferry Branch, 9920 Lin Ferry Dv., 7-9:30pm. 843-0560.


Wednesday, February 3 Video & story Arthur Gets Locked in the Library, ages 6+, SLCL Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkehard, 4pm. 636-728-0001.

Friday-Sunday, February 25-27 COCA Family Theatre Series presents Tom Chapin & Friends, COCA, 524 Trinity, 7pm. Also Sun. Dec 12, 1:30 & 3:30pm. All ages. $17. 725-6555.

Saturday, February 26 Movie matinee, The Indian in the Cupboard, from the book by Lynn Reid Banks, SLCL Cliff Cave Branch, 5430 Telegraph, 2pm. 487-6003.

Gregory S. Carr of Griot Theatre presents Call & Response: A History of Negro Spirituals, SLCL Prairie Commons Branch, 915 Utz Lane, 2pm. 895-1023.

Monday, February 28 Bob the Builder stories, ages 3-6, SLCL Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson, 6:30pm. 636-227-9630.

Notices Lindbergh High School presents the Reeve Lindbergh Book & Poetry Festival, public opening Feb 27, with authors Tracy Campbell Pearson, Rob Raines, Shelley Pearsall, Pam Vaccaro, Dorinda Nicholson, June Rae Wood, 490 S. Lindbergh, 1:30-5pm. 729-2410.

SLCL branch libraries present Opus Ensemble & Blake Travis with Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf. All ages. Call branches for details.

SLCL branch libraries present Papa & Jackie Wright with The Tortoise and the Hare, a puppet show from Aesop’s fable. All ages. Call branches for details.

SLCL presents “Beating the Story Drum,” African folk tales, drumming and dance with Kenya Ajanaku & the Harambee Youth Group, or Janice LaSane Katambwa. All ages. Call branches for details.

SLCL Branches: Cliff Cave, 5430 Telegraph, 487-6003; Daniel Boone, 300 Clarkson 636-227-9630; Florissant Valley, 195 New Florissant, 921-7200; Grand Glaize, 1010 Meramec Station, 636-225-6454; Jamestown Bluffs, 4153 N. Hwy, 67, 741-6800; Mid-City, 7821 Maryland, 721-3008; Oak Bend, 842 S. Holmes, 822-0011; Prairie Commons, 915 Utz Lane, 895-1023; Rock Road, 10267 St. Charles Rock, 492-5116; Sachs, 16400 Burkehard, 636-728-0001; Tesson Ferry, 9920 Lin Ferry Dv., 843-0560; Thornhill, 12863 Willowyck, 878-7730; Weber Road, 4444 Weber, 638-2120.

SLPL presents African & African American storytellers Loretta Washington, Feb 4, 10am, Central, 1301 Olive, 241-2288; Feb 1, 10am, Baden, 8448 Church, 388-2400; Feb 15, 10am, Barr, 1701 S. Jefferson, 771-7040; Feb 2, 10:30am, Cabanne, 1106 Union, 367-0717; Feb 8, 10am, Carondelet, 6800 Michigan, 752-9224; Gladys Cogswell, Feb 7, 3pm, Carpenter, 3309 S. Grand, 772-6586; Feb 10, 7am, Walnut Park, 5760 W. Florissant, 383-1210; Sidime Mamady & Papa & Jackie Wright, Feb 1, 10am, Buder, 4401 Hampton, 352-2900; Feb 23, 10am, Schlafly, 225 N. Euclid, 367-4120.

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For more listings visit cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu.

Abbreviations: B&N: Barnes & Noble; LBB: Left Bank Books; SIUE: Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; UMSL: University of Missouri St. Louis; WU: Washington University.

For more listings visit cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu.
Today is Poetry at Work Day -- to bring attention to the poetry that is already there in the workplace, and the poetry that is being created through work. Those instruction manuals changed my life. These three great poets of Modernism taught me how to be aware of words, ideas, and language. And they taught me more, that poetry inhabits and often permeates the workplace. And it wasn’t only because poetry directly applied to the work I was doing as a speechwriter. Glynn Young lives in St. Louis where he recently retired as the team leader for Online Strategy & Communications for a Fortune 500 company. Glynn writes poetry, short stories and fiction, and he loves to bike. He is the author of Poetry at Work and the Dancing Priest Series. Modernist poetry in English is generally considered to have emerged in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagists. In common with many other modernists, these poets wrote in reaction to the perceived excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and ornate diction. In many respects, their criticism echoes what William Wordsworth wrote in Preface to Lyrical Ballads to instigate the Romantic movement in English poetry over a century earlier.