I first met Ken Burns in Washington D.C. in 1992 at a meeting of consultants for his documentary *Baseball*. There were about twenty people present besides Burns, his scriptwriter Geoff Ward (whom I would get to know well), co-producer Lynn Novick (whom I would also get to know well), and other staffers. The consultants included baseball historian John Thorn, baseball biographer Robert Creamer, baseball biographer and historian Charles Alexander, statistician and writer Bill James, writer Dan Okrent, and other noted baseball specialists.

The only reason I wasn’t thoroughly convinced I was in over my head was because Burns wanted me there. Geoff Ward recommended me to Burns, who seemed supremely confident that I could do what he wanted me to do. What he wanted changed over time: first, just to provide a perspective he hoped would be both useful and different from those of the other consultants; then, to be a talking head for the film; and finally to contribute to the book that accompanied the film. What struck me about Burns was he seemed to know how to use the people around him to get what he wanted. “Used” may seem too pejorative a term; it might be better to say that he understood, after a point, what people had to offer and was able to deploy them in certain ways.

The consultants’ meeting consisted of going over the script page by page (Burns usually had a draft of the narration and some version of many of the interviews at this point) for mistakes, for revisions, for criticism. I found this, at first, to be exceedingly tedious, and I did not think I was especially good at it. (The other consultants were fantastic at this sort of things, much to my envy.) I went through this process with four other Burns films: *Jazz* (I contributed an essay to the book that accompanied this film as well), *Unforgiveable Blackness: the Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (I have always thought this to be a rather uncharacteristic film for Burns), *The War* (the most powerful Burns film), and the upcoming *The Roosevelts* (an amazingly lyrical film about politics). As time went along, I found the process to be less tedious; in fact, when it was combined with seeing the rough cut of the film, it was engaging and stimulating, even if it made for long days since all of these films, except *Unforgiveable Blackness*, were 12 to 18 hours long when broadcast and even longer in their rough cut versions. I don’t think I ever got any better at providing much useful criticism. But Burns, like any good director, knows what he wants from his actors; and I suppose my one-trick pony offering was something that he liked. (I should add that he might not, probably does not, think of me at all as a one-trick pony critic; it is the way I see myself.) He has kept an open invitation for me to consult on virtually any of his films, if I felt I had something to contribute.

I have said repeatedly that what I learned was combined with seeing the rough cut of the film, it was engaging and stimulating, even if it made for long days since all of these films, except *Unforgiveable Blackness*, were 12 to 18 hours long when broadcast and even longer in their rough cut versions. I don’t think I ever got any better at providing much useful criticism. But Burns, like any good director, knows what he wants from his actors; and I suppose my one-trick pony offering was something that he liked. (I should add that he might not, probably does not, think of me at all as a one-trick pony critic; it is the way I see myself.) He has kept an open invitation for me to consult on virtually any of his films, if I felt I had something to contribute.

I have said repeatedly that what I learned
A Tale of Eisenhower

A Review of
Eisenhower 1956: The President’s Year of Crisis—Suez and the Brink of War
By David A. Nichols

Simon and Schuster, 2011, 346 pages including index, notes, and photos

“To [Dwight D. Eisenhower],” David Nichols writes in *Eisenhower 1956*, “nuclear war was not a fantasy but a distinct possibility.” That is, perhaps, one of the major differences between the cold war, or at least the 1950s and 1960s epoch of the cold war, and today’s decentered world. Americans may still see themselves in peril, but most do not think that the world will be wiped out by the Soviet Union and the United States swapping atomic bombs in a war that would truly, if not end, then certainly trump in mass destruction, all wars. Remember that in the mid-1950s, the devastation of World War II was still in the memories of virtually all adults including the first (and, so far, only) use of nuclear bombs. Today many Americans think the United States will not wind up swapping atomic bomb attacks with anyone, even if someone, by stealth, uses a nuclear weapon against us. But during the days of Eisenhower, there was great fear that conflagration anywhere might lead to a major war and possibly the use of atomic bombs. This is why Eisenhower, as Nichols notes, “was skeptical about ‘brushfire’ wars.” The government, Eisenhower proffered, should not commit itself to “little wars at great distances from the United States.” He felt that they could easily become nuclear wars. This is why he was so committed to ending the Korean War when he entered office and did so within seven months of his inauguration.

The Middle East, that is, the conflict between the newly formed state of Israel and her Arab neighbors, was the biggest foreign policy problem Eisenhower faced from Burns was how to surround myself (or try to) with creative, talented people and give them some kind of direction and a mission to achieve something. Burns is one of the three or four people who really taught me a lot about how essential planning and focus are to successful leadership.

On Friday, November 16, at 5pm in Steinberg Auditorium on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis, Ken Burns will become the fourth recipient of the International Humanities Prize, awarded biannually and funded by Dr. David and Mrs. Phyllis Grossman. The previous winners were Orhan Pamuk (2006), Michael Pollan (2008), and Francine Prose (2010). Burns will show clips of and provide commentary for three of his upcoming films: *Dustbowl*, *The Central Park Five*, and a special lost film mini-commentary for his upcoming film *The Dust Bowl*. Burns is one of the three or four people who really taught me a lot about how essential planning and focus are to successful leadership. When the selection committee for the prize selected Burns, I was incredibly happy, not just because I know him and have worked with him, but also because he adds a new dimension to the prize itself, being a filmmaker and not a writer. I like to think of Burns as a sort of poet, in some measure, the filmmaker version of Walt Whitman with his broad American canvas, the sweeping pile-on of images. Call his oeuvre after the filmmaker’s primary obsession: Leaves of Light.

Gerald Early
Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters
Professor of English and of African and Afro-American Studies
Director of the Center for the Humanities
during his time as president. It was one of
the places he most feared would erupt into
World War III and nuclear war. (Other
presidents would have the same assessment
of that region of the world.) Eisenhower
tried to be a neutral player, evenhanded in
dealing with both the Jews and the Arabs.
In part, this was because of oil: the Arabs
sat atop a great deal of it at a time when
the western world—both Europe and the
United States—was turning increasingly
to oil for most of its energy needs. For
instance, even before World War II, Brit-
ain was rapidly moving away from coal to
power its navy and to heat British homes.
After the war, oil was an even bigger
source of energy for Britain. Eisenhower
also felt that being neutral was the best
way to broker a deal between the two par-
ties. He felt that the United States had to
favor no one in order to be trusted by all
the belligerents. Moreover, despite the fact
that he, like all subsequent presidents, was
pressured by many American Jews to favor
Israel, Eisenhower could afford to be a bit
more detached because Jews overwhel-
ingly voted for Democrats. Eisenhower
was an anti-rightwing Republican.

What made the situation particularly
difficult for Eisenhower was: 1) wound-
ed Arab pride as a result of five Arab
nations losing the 1948 Arab-Israeli war
and thus revealing their considerable mili-
tary weaknesses; 2) the vestiges of Euro-
pean colonialism in the region which af-
ected how Britain and France, both still
trying to claim some portion of their col-
onial prestige and advantage, reacted to
anti-colonial movements; 3) the unten-
able or at least disadvantageous military
and geographical position of Israel which
made preventive war with its Arab neigh-
bors always a distinct possibility; and 4)
the rise of Arab nationalism, particularly
with the ascendancy of the charismatic
young army officer Gamal Abdel Nasser as
the head of Egypt in a 1952 revolution.
For the west, despite the fact that it had no oil,
Egypt was the most important, the most
influential, of all Arab states. Nasser cer-
tainly felt that way, as he became the lead-
ing voice for Pan-Arabism and something
of a threat to how western states saw the
balance of power in the region.

Before 1956, Nasser was to express support
for the Algerian revolt against the French,
recognize communist China, toy with the
idea of having the Soviet Union finance
the Aswan High Dam, witness the signing
of the 1954 treaty ending the British oc-
cupation of Egypt, and generally give the
impression that, like India, Egypt was part
of some kind of “non-aligned” movement.
This threat crystallized when, in July 1956,
Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, largely
in response to the United States’ refusal to
finance the Aswan High Dam project, af-
ter having given some fair indication that
it would. The canal was the lifeline for the
transportation of oil to the west as well
as something of a monument to western
engineering and ingenuity when it was
opened in 1869. In order to recover eco-
nomically from World War II, Britain par-
ticularly needed cheap, Middle Eastern,
especially Iraqi, oil.

Nasser’s act precipitated the Suez Canal
War in the fall of 1956, led by Israel, Brit-
ain, and France. The United States opposed
the war and, stunningly, broke with its al-
lies—Britain and France—over it. Eisen-
hower opposed the war because he did
not think world opinion would support
it. (This was something that Nasser was
deeply grateful for and deeply impressed
by—that the United States would not
support its allies in this effort because it felt
the war was unwarranted. Nasser, despite
the fact that Egypt was defeated militarily
in this war, would emerge a hero because
the war was meant to drive him from pow-
er and he not only survived but retained
control of the canal and recovered territo-
ry he had lost in the Sinai to Israel.) Eisen-
hower 1956 tells the entire story of this
war, from lead-up to aftermath, against the
backdrop of Eisenhower’s foreign policy-
making and his own particular fortunes at
the time as both a political leader and as a
person.

Nineteen fifty-six was a complicated year
for Eisenhower. He had suffered a serious
heart attack in 1955; many thought, includ-
ing his brother, Milton, that he should not
run for re-election in 1956 for health rea-
sons. This was further exacerbated when
Eisenhower required intestinal surgery in
the spring of 1956. He was already, at 66
years of age, the oldest man to be presi-
dent. These illnesses affected Eisenhower
deeper: not only the question of should he
run again but what was the whole purpose
of his being president, what did he wish to
accomplish, what did it all mean.

Would the United States have financed
the Aswan High Dam had Eisenhower
been in good health in 1955 and 1956,
since John Foster Dulles, his Secretary of
State, seemed more opposed to Nasser
than Eisenhower and perhaps steered
ike away from the project? If the United
States had financed the dam (unlikely, as
Congress opposed funding it), would the
Suez Canal War have been completely
avoided because Nasser would likely not
have nationalized the canal? Nichols’s
Eisenhower 1956 can be read as the for-
eign policy complement to his earlier
work A Matter of Justice: Eisenhower and
the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolu-
tion (2007). Both are essential reading to
understand the Eisenhower presidency
and Eisenhower the man.
Of Local Interest

Rachel Gold Defends Us All

A Review of
A Handful of Gold: Three Rachel Gold Short Stories
By Michael A. Kahn

If you own a Kindle, for $0.99 you can purchase these stories. That’s a real bargain as these are deliciously entertaining tales about Rachel Gold, St. Louis’s own determined and clever Jewish lawyer with, as one of her adversaries put it, “sexy legs.” As the author describes her, she is “a lawyer’s lawyer,” the kind any distressed client dreams of having: dedicated, amazingly smart, and morally infallible—that is, if she takes your case, you are clearly on the right side of whatever principle is at stake.

Michael Kahn, a local attorney who has written seven Rachel Gold novels, provides this small digital sampler for those who may want a taste of the character before investing time in reading a novel. But those who are rabid followers of the series will enjoy these stories as well, as tasty tidbits until the next novel comes along. Here are Kahn’s three favorite Gold stories, including one written especially for this collection. And every St. Louisan, even if you are not a mystery fan, should read A Handful of Gold, if only for the local color, for the stories are full of details that make our fair city, its neighborhoods, its restaurants, its court system, come alive in a new way as a “locale.” (I wonder how many people who know Kahn, particularly professional associates, read his Gold stories to see if and how they figure in them. Certainly, Kahn would attract more readers of this sort than some writers might because—since he is moonlighting—his novels and stories may seem a creative avenue or outlet for him to critique, satirize, or glamorize his profession and his hometown.)

The fact that Rachel Gold is Jewish is no throwaway demographic detail. The demographic profile of literature’s crime solvers these days, in our age of identity politics and role models for every psychic fancy and political whim, is indeed quite important for readerships, markets, and the like. If the Catholic Chesterton could have his Father Brown; if African American novelist Chester Himes could have his hard-boiled black cops Coffin Ed Jones and Gravedigger Johnson; if Roger Simon could have his low-grade Marxist, ex-hippie, Jewish detective, Moses Wine; why not Michael Kahn’s upscale gorgeous Jewish lawyer of the Central West End? After all, our demographics today have become a bit like an a la carte menu, which makes reading this sort of literature all the more fun for its unintentional social satire.

The fact that Gold is Jewish figures in some degree in all the stories but is an essential detail in “Bread of Affliction,” unquestionably the best tale here, originally published in 1999 in Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. This is a layered mystery with the quasi-stock elements of a missing will, a misanthropic Jewish Holocaust survivor whose will is being contested, a sympathetic black servant, and a slimy but brilliant adversary whose tremendous knowledge of Jewish tradition becomes his undoing. These conventions are nicely worked here to produce something fresh. The tale turns on understanding, indeed, decoding the rituals of Passover and is wonderfully done, while being informative to “non-Jewish” readers. The story in fact gives a more complex portrait of Jews and their relationship to their customs and practices than might be apparent on its face, particularly considering the characters of Gold, her adversary Myron Dathan, her mother (a significant character in the story), her dead father (also significant), and the dead man, Mendel Sofer, whose will is at the center of all the contention.

The other two stories are good but not quite as rich as “Bread of Affliction.” “Truth in a Plain Brown Wrapper” is an entertaining send-up of St. Louis’s upper crust, as a fashion designer must defend himself against a selfish, nouveau riche matron after accusing her of returning a dress he made after she had worn it. The third story, “Beyond the Grave,” tells of Gold representing a woman in the case of a bloodline trust, whose adversary—the son of her late elderly husband—accuses her of not bearing the husband’s biological child.

A Handful of Gold is highly enjoyable. Kahn provides a lot of technical details about preparing court cases, arguing in court, and investigating cases that enrich the stories with an authentic patina without, in any way, burdening the narrative or boring the reader. In fact, Kahn makes the law seem like a fascinating profession, combining elements of the human comedy with the mundane but profound intricacies of the court system as a flawed but surprisingly effective way for people to work out their disputes. The stories are not cynical, despite portraying several cynical characters. They restore your faith in the system.
Josephine Baker Arrives in Korea

Ji-Eun Lee is Assistant Professor of Korean in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Washington University in St. Louis. Professor Lee was a Faculty Fellow at the Center for the Humanities during Spring 2012. She worked on a book project entitled “Women Pre-scripted: Reading Women’s Issues in Pre-colonial and Colonial Korea,” which is a study of prescriptive reading and writing between the 1890s and 1930s.

The accompanying illustration comes from the story “Modern Sim Ch’ŏng,” featured in the 1935 inaugural issue of Chogyo wang (Morning Light/Light of Korea), a general interest magazine. In this scene, from a comical rendering of the well-known folktale about a filial daughter named Sim Ch’ŏng, Ch’ŏng’s mother has an anomalous dream: instead of typical prophetic signs like a dragon or beautiful flowers experienced by most soon-to-be-pregnant women, Ch’ŏng’s mother sees a half-naked woman arriving on the back of a heron. The woman pays her respect in the most proper way, and introduces herself as Josephine Baker from Paris. Ms. Baker then produces a cure-all medicine for women’s illnesses, a well-known remedy in a “country of colors” like Paris, and wishes Ch’ŏng’s mother pregnancy before disappearing. Upon waking, Ch’ŏng’s mother finds the advertisement featuring Josephine Baker on a piece of newspaper that, as poor people customarily did, had been re-used as wallpaper. Josephine Baker (1906-1975), of course, is a native of St. Louis, a singer, dancer, actress, and political activist with trans-Atlantic fame in the U.S., France, and beyond. By 1935, her fame and her prophecy about a consumerist modern era had reached as far east as Korea, then a colony of Japan. The illustration is thus a snapshot of Korea’s encounter with a modern world, a two-pronged modernity of capitalism and sexuality encroaching from the West. Josephine Baker and modern medicine replace sexuality encroaching from the West. Jose- phine Baker and modern medicine replace

Sinyŏsŏng magazine, 1932

Samsin Grandmother, a mythical figure who, in the traditional belief, assigns babies to couples.

Korea’s modernizing process was among the most condensed in history. In 1876, Korea was forced to open its ports to the outside world through the Kang-hwa Treaty with Japan; by 1945, it had gone through four international wars (the Sino-Japanese, Russo-Japanese, and First and Second World Wars), and 10 percent of its population lived overseas. The colonial capitalist system, fueled by military expansions into broader East and Southeast Asia, was firmly in place, yet this unbalanced and unequal system also triggered the vigorous growth of socialism within Korean society. During this process, Korea’s modernity was often embodied in several different, contradictory images and ideas of a “woman”—woman as a metaphor of the helpless, ignorant Korean people; as a symbol of material culture; and as savior of the nation. For their own socio-political or religious reasons, nationalists, the colonial government, anti-colonial activists, socialists, Christian missionaries and their organizations, and education advocates all drew Korean women out of their inner quarters, literally and figuratively, and into the public arena, urging them to be equal citizens in the march toward a new Korea. Such groups (ab)used Western exemplars including Josephine Baker, Lady Roland of the French Revolution and Joan of Arc, to name just a few, to further their particular agendas.

This call for “women” to enter the public arena became a lightning rod for colliding politics, invention and redefinition, especially regarding gender and a distinction between “new” and “old” classes. The primary medium for calling out women and morphing them into a figure or image was the printed word. Newspapers and magazines, the main sources for my study, provided the arena for diverse discussions on modernity, women, and modern women. In my manuscript, “Women Pre-scripted: Reading Women’s Issues in Pre-colonial and Colonial Korea,” completed during my tenure as a faculty fellow at the Center for the Humanities, I unpack the complex topography and overlays of Korean modernity, and conclude that the Korean New Woman was largely a discursive construction, a set of projected ideals and frustrations that was not empirically based on the situation or aspirations of “real” Korean women. Indeed, a main contribution of those projections was that they provided space to discuss and experiment with an alternative and colonial modernity, a set of activities that went far beyond issues of women. Similarly, discussions on women writers (yoryu chakka) in Korea pigeonholed more than studied actual women writers, many of whom had socialist leanings and displayed little “femininity” in their themes, style, and language. As with anything
approaching reality, women were not a monolith, and each one faced her own task of interpreting and adapting "modern," "Western," and "New" in her everyday life, inside and outside the home. The attempts to write about and for women, and to prescribe values and conduct for women, were met with a strategic and active writing that defied such control. This disparity, I argue, is a potentially rich site for exploring the intricacies of colonial power, including its influences on constructing gender.

As a concept, the New Woman phenomenon reached around the globe, and in Japan, China and Korea it was referenced using the same Chinese characters "新女性." The impulse in Korea appears smaller and more limited in scope than counterparts elsewhere in East Asia. However, both the limits to and identity of the Korean incarnation must be assessed carefully. Colonial Korea (1910-1945) had unique characteristics that distinguish Korea from other colonies. Not only was Korea the only independent country colonized by a non-European empire (Japan), but the depth of penetration by the colonizer far exceeded that of French or British colonies—the basis of most theorizing about colonial mechanisms and identity. In Korea, for example, Japan brought in thousands of Japanese citizens to work in the Governor General’s office (246,000 to rule over 25 million Koreans, compared to under 3000 French bureaucrats in Vietnam). Japan also populated the peninsula abundantly with Japanese settlers, who in 1942 comprised 3% of the entire population. One manifestation of that settlement was that a majority of women in Western clothing walking the streets of downtown Seoul in the 1920-40s were Japanese rather than Korean. Indeed, numerous articles year after year note the limited job prospects for educated young Korean women, and women workers in the government offices, banks, and department stores in Seoul were mostly Japanese. Repeated warnings and criticism against excessive spending on clothing and fashion found in the Korean magazines seem to be preaching to the wrong audience.

For another example of the difficulty in pigeonholing women and women's writing during this moment of conflicted idealisms, consider the writer Ch’oe Ch’ông-hŭi (1906 or 1912 — 1990). In 1942 Ch’oe published the short story “The House of Roses,” featuring a young couple who have adjusted comfortably to a modern lifestyle. Set in the fictional Culture Town, the story showcases an ideal modern marriage based on “free love” (chayu yŏnae 自由戀愛) rather than decisions by families, a marriage characterized by the couple’s romantic and relatively equal relationship. It is as if the decades of argument and struggle over modern marriage—one of the most hotly debated issues among Korean intellectuals during the colonial period—had come to a happy resolution in “The House of Roses.” Taking this message of success even further, the story depicts everyday life as peaceful, as though bliss in marriage leads to stability and strength in society—this despite the cataclysms of war in East and Southeast Asia, which fail to dampen the optimistic mood of the story. The comforts of modern life abound in Culture Town, and prosperity is guaranteed. Two definitions of domestic (“of or relating to the running of a home or to family relations,” and “existing or occurring inside a particular country and in contrast to foreign or international”) are seamlessly combined in Sŏng-rye, the wife in the story. As soon as the war starts, Sŏng-rye lets her maid go. She uses only one room in the house so as to reduce energy spending, and wants to educate her neighbors about the need to conserve, buy national bonds, and willingly participate in air-raid drills. But running her household this way also comes to express the idea of nation when Sŏng-rye calls Japan “our/my nation,” which both renders a country’s ambitions in personal and local terms and defines the family and the individual through their embodiment of the political and military trajectories of...
the country. More pragmatically, Sŏng-rye links local and national by becoming a leader in her own local community, or Patriotic Section (aeguk pan 愛國班), as local community units were called. Sŏng-rye's domestic operation thus supports national and imperial warfare through a blurring of boundaries between public and private, national and colonial, and also between colony and empire: she does not use the conventional word naeji (內地, in-land), which refers to Japan as distinct from the Korean Peninsula and other colonies.1

The writings on women discussed in my book manuscript have family, the domestic, and “home” at their core. Some of them are set at home, some try to define the domestic, and others range in search of home country and its identity. But these very settings beg the question about setting, for “home” is not a place of settlement in any of the discussions on Korean women. Rather, it is an arena where the modern lifestyle and traditional customs clash head on. The arrival of Josephine Baker in a comical piece thus reflects the complexities of modernity in Colonial Korea. Especially when perceived as primarily Western (and not Japanese), modernity was desperately chased (by political leaders) in order to catch up with global changes, or sought (by nationalists) to strengthen Korea so that it could wrench free from the grip of colonialism. For people in rural areas, meanwhile, modernity was something far less organized or coherent, something that had seeped through into their everyday lives, into their homes, onto a scrap of newspaper re-used as wallpaper, even into a strange dream centered on the dazzling exoticism of a woman’s body.

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1. This story is exemplary for its pro-Japanese position and its blatant encouragement of Korean men and women to actively engage in the Japanese war effort, so it is no surprise that Ch’oe, a leading woman writer since the 1930s, was soon branded an active collaborator of the Japanese colonial regime.

The Impact of Absence

A Review of *Birds of Paradise*
By Diana Abu-Jaber
W.W. Norton & Company, 2011, 362 pages, with Reading Group Guide

In *Birds of Paradise* the Muir family tries to understand the meaning of what’s missing. “Was it possible to still love someone when she fantasizes about solitude?” Avis Muir wonders towards the beginning of Diana Abu-Jaber’s novel (issued in paperback May 7). Questions of separation, love and absence lie at the heart of this novel about an upper-middle-class family torn asunder when daughter Felice runs away at thirteen.

The book chronicles a few weeks in the Muir family’s lives leading up to Felice’s eighteenth birthday, with each chapter told from a different family member’s perspective. After Felice runs away, the remaining family members (mother Avis, father Brian, and brother Stanley) isolate themselves from one another with work but are starting to find that work alone is not sustaining them.

Avis is a Gallic-style baker but has lost focus and instead becomes interested in her Haitian neighbor and her loud mynah bird. Brian, her husband, is an Ivy-League-educated real estate lawyer but can no longer convince himself that his company is simply building houses, which “is God’s work,” and therefore doesn’t have “a goddamned thing to apologize for.” In part, he feels guilty because he knows his son, Stanley, a socialist-leaning foodie who owns an organic market, disapproves of his work. But Stanley too is struggling. He’s trying to buy his store and needs money, so he’s forced to turn to his parents, who ignored him growing up because of his sister. With another hurricane threatening financial ruin, Stanley wonders if he should just sell out to GNC. Felice is also tired of taking drugs, modeling whenever the mood suits her, going to clubs and hanging out on the beach. She’s trying to do something different, but she’s not sure how and she’s not sure what. As each character gets pushed away from what has worked, the tension rests in whether they’ll reach for each other or just drift further apart.

The narrative was inspired by Abu-Jaber’s own experience. She grew up in New York state with a German-American mother and a Jordanian father, who was so strict that to get away from him she finished high school early and enrolled at SUNY Oswego when she was just 16.
Diana Abu-Jaber first came to national prominence with her book *The Language of Baklava* (2005), a memoir about family and food. She had written two other books that met with modest success, *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2003), and her literary thriller *Origin* (2007) was widely reviewed. She is known for her descriptive powers, which are on full display here. She peppers her prose with intriguing and perfect metaphors like “townhouses uniform as barracks,” or “the rain comes in like an opaque sheet, it’s like peering into a wave,” or lettuce “that was filigreed in blood-red, as if a circulatory system ran through it.”

But her descriptions of a pulsating Miami are the most compelling: Felice and Emerson “head back to the smooth brick boardwalk, cutting between hotels, the white cabanas and silver bellhop carts, past cheap jewelry vendors, soap bubbles spiriting over the walkway, to their right sprinklings of salsa music, oiled bodies on massage tables. Prisms hang in a silvery mist from the hotel fountains. To their left, walls of jasmine and sea grape trees, the beach perimeter plumed and swaying with sawgrass and sea oats…. In the distance, beyond the royal palms, blue umbrellas and awnings flap in the breeze; the sand is already scorching.”

Abu-Jaber captures the heat, vegetation, and the splintered neighborhoods of her adopted hometown, but Cristina Garcia is right when she writes (in a review in the *New York Times*) that “at times, the pile-on of descriptions and metaphors renders the novel’s images hazy, as if they’d been faded by too much sunlight.”

Also there’s a problem with politics in the novel. Though Abu–Jaber isn’t preachy, she brings in so many current events—there’s civil war in Haiti, bullying, real estate over-expansion, the organic food movement, suicide and teen runaways—that sometimes it seems that bits of the narrative are handily contrived to include a current event.

It also strains credulity that the insanely beautiful (as Abu–Jaber oft reminds us) thirteen-year-old Felice would survive so well on the streets without descending into heroin or meth use (she does do other drugs) or prostitution or encountering much physical harm.

But some parts of the plot Abu-Jaber handles cleverly, like using Hurricane Katrina not only to bring about the final denouement but also to serve as a metaphor for what happened. Stanley likens his sister’s running away to “a sort of natural disaster—inescapable, and nobody’s fault.” By the end of the book, Abu-Jaber has woven together the disparate narratives of the four Muirs so well that while the reader understands how permanently and ruinously they hurt one another (especially Felice), the events feel as inevitable as a hurricane, something that swept across their lives because the winds were right. Just as no portrait of Miami would be complete without her destructive winds and rains, “Felice’s departure has become an essential piece of her—the price [Stanley’s] family had to pay for his sister, for having her at all.”

The narrative was inspired by Abu-Jaber’s own experience. She grew up in New York state with a German-American mother and a Jordanian father.

Rosalind Early is assistant editor of *St. Louis Magazine* and Stlmag.com. She is a 2003 graduate of Washington University in St. Louis.

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The FIgure In The CarpeT

We are pleased to announce the Center for the Humanities and Washington University Libraries's eleventh annual Faculty Book Celebration, which will be held on Thursday, November 29th, at 5:00 pm in the Women's Building Formal Lounge. Our keynote speaker for this year's event is K. Anthony Appiah of Princeton University. The title of Professor Appiah's talk is "The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen."

Kwame Anthony Appiah is the Laurence S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. He is also the President of the PEN American Center, the internationally acclaimed literary and human rights association. As a scholar of African and African American studies, he established himself as an intellectual with a broad reach. His classic book *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992) and his collaborations with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.—including *The Dictionary of Global Culture* (1997) and *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (1999)—are major works of African struggles for self-determination. His seminal book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2007) is a moral manifesto for a world where identity has become a weapon and where difference has become a cause of pain and suffering. In his latest book, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (2010), Appiah argues that honor and morality are two separate entities, and that social reform stems more from evolving notions of honor than from a true understanding of morality.

Professor Appiah is a 2012 National Humanities Medal winner, and in 2007, *Cosmopolitanism* won the Arthur Ross Book Award, the most significant prize given to a book on international affairs. In 2009, he was featured in the documentary *Examined Life*, and was named one of *Foreign Policy's* top 100 public intellectuals.

All faculty books published in the last three years will be displayed, and two Washington University faculty members will talk about their new books. A book signing and reception will follow the event. Books will be available for purchase courtesy of the Washington University Campus Bookstore.

This event is free and open to the general public. For more information please call (314) 935-5576 or e-mail cenhum@artsci.wustl.edu. Seating is limited. RSVP is encouraged.
October 2012 Literary Calendar

All events are free unless otherwise indicated. Author events are followed by signings. All phone numbers take 314 prefix unless indicated. Check the online calendar at cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu for more events and additional details. To advertise, send event details to ltlcal@artsci.wustl.edu, fax 935-4889, or call 935-5576.

ABBREVIATIONS
STL: St. Louis; B&N: Barnes & Noble; KPL: Kirkwood Public Library; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; SCCCL: St. Charles City County Library; UCPL: University Missouri-St. Louis; WU: Washington University; WGPL: Webster Groves Public Library.

Monday, October 1
You are invited to a reading by John Dalton from his new novel, The Inverted Forest. Free and open to the public with no registration needed. 12:15pm, Room 402 JC Penney Center, UMSL. 516-5698.

The Brentwood Science Fiction Book Club invites you to discuss Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick. No registration is required. Everyone is welcome to attend. 7pm, Brentwood Public Library, 8765 Eulalie Ave., 963-8630, www.brentwood.lib.mo.us.

You are invited to join the book club(s) at Main Street Books. They meet at the store on the first and third Mondays at 7pm. Tonight the book for discussion is The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecka Skloot. New members are always welcome, and members receive a 10% discount on book club books. 7pm, 307 S. Main St., St. Charles, 636-949-0105. Please visit www.mainstreetbooks.net.

Observable Readings presents poets Jericho Brown, from Emory University, and James Allen Hall, from Upstate NY, reading from their work. Their books will be available for purchase. 8pm, Schiafly Bottleworks, 7260 Southwest, $5 suggested donation. stlouispoetrycenter.org/observable.

Tuesday, October 2
Washington University Assembly Series invites you to a lecture on “Liberal Arts: The Higgs Boson of Higher Education” presented by Walter Massey, PhD, president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Massey has made the most of his liberal arts education. It gave him the knowledge and abilities to think, reason, analyze, decide, discern and evaluate, and to use these tools to enjoy a long, fulfilling life and several successful careers. His appreciation of liberal arts makes him the ideal person to deliver the First Annual James E. McLeod Lecture on Higher Education. The 1966 WUSTL alumnus is also a champion for improving minority student education. 4pm, Graham Chapel, Washington University Danforth Campus, 935-4620.

Webster Groves Public Library invites you to discuss American Pastoral by Philip Roth. 6pm, the Library is in its temporary location on 3232 S. Brentwood Blvd., Webster Groves, 314-961-3784.

Wednesday, October 3
Washington University Assembly Series invites you to a lecture on “Becoming a Catalyst for Change” for anyone who doubts the power of story-telling to change the world. Erin Gruvell’s personal story of a teacher transforming a group of students labeled stupid and apathetic into confident, motivated, critical thinkers and socially aware high school graduates will erase that doubt for good. Her students lived in an environment filled of racism, rejection, and no hope for the future. Instinctively, Gruvell understood their need for self-expression, so she asked them to begin writing journal entries about their lives. The class decided to call themselves the Freedom Writers, and, in 1999, their entries became a best-selling book: The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them. Spencer T. & Ann W. Olin Fellows Lecture. 4pm, Graham Chapel, Washington University Danforth Campus, 935-4620.

Thursday, October 4
Author of the bestselling novels Lucia, Lucia and Home to Big Stone Gap, Adriana Trigiani presents the most ambitious novel of her career, The Shoemaker’s Wife, a breathtaking love story that spans two continents, two World Wars, and the quest of two star-crossed lovers to find each other again. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Saturday, October 6
Architrave Press celebrates the release of Edition Three with a reading and party at the Tavern of Fine Arts in the Central West End. Reading promptly at 7pm featuring poets Joe Betz (Bloomington, IN), Niki Nymark (St. Louis, MO) and Mary Stone Dockery (St. Joseph, MO). Free. Come early to enjoy the Tavern’s menu, peruse the art & meet the poets. 7pm, 313 Belt Ave., 367-7549, http://architravepress.com.

The Saturday Afternoon Book Club will be discussing The 19th Wife by David Ebershoff. 2pm, the Webster Groves Public Library. The library is in its temporary location on 3232 S. Brentwood Blvd., 961-3784.

Father Dominic, former host of the PBS cooking show Breaking Bread with Father Dominic, presents a new cookbook that goes beyond the basic techniques of bread baking—you’ll find out why yeast behaves the way it does, how to substitute different flours in a recipe, and how to take a simple dough and make it extraordinary for a special occasion. 2pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Monday, October 8
You are invited to a reading by Tullia Hamilton from her new book, Up from Canaan, the story of the remarkable all-black community of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, which was known as the “jewel of the delta.” Free and open to the public with no registration needed. 12:15pm, Room 402 JC Penney Center, UMSL. 516-5698.

You are invited to An Evening with Sarah Vowell. To fans of This American Life radio show, Sarah Vowell, who is an extraordinary storyteller, needs no introduction. From 1996 to 2008, Vowell entertained and enlightened listeners with her unusual, quirky tales. She brings that same beguiling style to her books, essays and columns, revealing an American history that will never be found in standard texts. In her sixth, most recent book, Unfamiliar Fishes, Vowell presents the history of the 50th state, Hawaii. Her two other bestsellers are The Wordy Shipmates, which portrays the New England Puritans like they have never been portrayed, and Assassination Vacation, a strange, but intriguing road trip to sites dedicated to murdered U.S. presidents. American Culture Studies Lecture. 7pm, Graham Chapel, Washington University Danforth Campus, 935-4620.

Tuesday, October 9th
Lindenwood University and Main Street Books present Pamela Meyer, who will share her research in finding her book Lie spotting: Proven Techniques to Detect Deception. This author will discuss three methods of detecting deception using facial recognition, interrogation, and comprehension research. Books are available for purchase from Main Street Books. 7pm, 307 S. Main St., St. Charles, 636-949-0105, www.mainstreetbooks.net.

Wednesday, October 10
St. Louis County Library Foundation presents psychologist and bestselling author Steven Pinker for a discussion of The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined. 7pm, Library Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Thursday, October 11
You are invited to a lecture by Jeremy Rifkin, “The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power is Transforming Energy, the Economy and the World.” According to Rifkin, the world witnessed the end of the modern era in July 2008, when geopolitical and socioeconomic forces sent the cost of oil soaring to $147 a barrel. Eighteen months later, there was a worldwide financial collapse. How the world got to this critical point, and how to take advantage of the opportunities on the horizon, are the basic themes in Rifkin’s latest book, The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power is Transforming Energy, the Economy and the World. Elliot Stein Lecture in Ethics, 12pm, Graham Chapel, Washington University Danforth Campus, 935-4620.

Authors @ Your Library presents Stephen Kantrowitz, who will discuss and sign his book More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1899. This is a major account of the long struggle of Northern activists—both black and white—to establish African Americans as free citizens, from abolitionism through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and its demise. Kantrowitz is the author of Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy, which was a New York Times Notable Book and has won several scholarly awards. Co-sponsored by Left Bank Books. 7pm, SLPL-Schiafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 367-4120.
St. Louis County Library presents an event with the 2012 Read St. Louis Distinguished Literary Achievement Award winner Daniel Woodrell, author of the short fiction collection The Outlaw Album and many other critically acclaimed novels including Winter’s Bone. SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Friday, October 12

St. Louis Poetry Center presents 2nd Friday Notes at Whole Foods Café, Town and Country location. Featuring Poets Jennifer Fandel and John Richards with musical guest Adrienne Burke. Reading is free. Food and drink will be available for purchase. 7pm, 141 and Clayton Rd., http://stlouispoetrycenter.org/

Saturday, October 13

Authors @ Your Library presents Robert Randisi, who will discuss and sign his book It Was a Very Bad Year. In Randisi’s newest novel, 1963 was a very bad year for Frank Sinatra, but the Rat Pack is always ready to give a helping hand. Robert Randisi is an American author of detective and western novels. He is the co-founder of both Mystery Scene magazine and the American Crime Writers League, and the founder of The Private Eye Writers of America. His most recent novels are Fly Me to the Morgue, and I’m a Fool to Kill You, both of which are part of the Rat Pack Mystery series. Books will be for sale courtesy of Left Bank Books. 11am, SLPL-Carondelet Branch, 6800 Michigan Ave., 725-9224.

Main Street Books presents Mark E. Donnelly, who will share his book Rude Awakening. This book examines one’s walk of faith and how the teachings of Jesus Christ should be interpreted. Books are available for purchase from Main Street Books. 1pm, 307 S. Main St., St. Charles, 636-949-0105, www.mainstreetbooks.net.

Combining edgy suspense and the vivid period detail that made The Given Day a smashing success, award-winning, bestselling author Dennis Lehane delivers a masterful new story. Prohibition-era America told through the story of a charismatic young gangster on his rise through the glitz and the violence of the Roaring 20s. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Monday, October 15

Thief—A film screening and discussion by award-winning Julian Higgins, IA-based director who will discuss strategies for young artists seeking to build a career in the arts. Free and open to the public with no registration needed. 12:15pm, Room 402 JC Penney Center, UMSL, 516-5698.

You are invited to join the book club(s) at Main Street Books. They meet at the store on the first and third Mondays at 7pm. Tonight the book for discussion is Clara and Mr. Tiffany by Susan Vreeland. New members are always welcome, and members receive a 10% discount on book club books. 7pm, 307 S. Main St., St. Charles, 636-949-0105. Please visit www.mainstreetbooks.net.

River Styx’s newly renamed and relocated reading series, River Styx at the Tavern, continues its 38th season with readings from Guggenheim Fellow George Singleton and poet Janice Harrington.

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Facebook under St. Louis Literary Award. Book signing at 4:30 pm; award presentation and interview at 5:30 pm. Busch Student Center, St. Louis University, 20 N. Grand (valet parking at Busch Center, self-park at Lacledes Garage), 314-977-3100, http://libraries.slu.edu/associates/award.

Thursday, October 25

Daniel Durchholz will be signing copies of his book Rock & Roll Myths: The True Stories Behind the Most Infamous Legends, written with Gary Graff, and Joe Williams will sign copies of Hollywood Myths: The Shocking Truths Behind Film’s Most Incredibly Scandals and Secrets. 7pm at Subterranean Books, 6275 Delmar, 862-6100.

Saturday, October 27

Main Street Books invites you to join Steve Ward as he presents his book, Finding Your Possitives. This inspirational book offers a self-help way to cope with life’s daily challenges and changing events and to have compassion for others doing the same. Books are available for purchase from Main Street Books. 1pm, 307 S. Main St., St. Charles, 636-949-0105, www.mainstreetbooks.net

Monday, October 29

Reading by Cary Lee Thornton Jr. from his book Oath of Office, which chronicles his upbringing as an African-American child in the “Outsouth” and his exciting experiences working for the FBI. Free and open to the public with no registration needed. 12:15pm, Room 402, JC Penney Center, UMSL, 516-5698.

Aron Rodrigue presents a lecture titled “Relections on Sephardic Jewries and the Holocaust.” Groundbreaking research on the Sephardic Jewish experience during the Holocaust has put to rest the widely held notion that Sephardim living in the Balkans and other European lands during the Holocaust were not as badly affected as the Ashkenazim in Eastern Europe. Holocaust Memorial Lecture, 6pm, Umrah Lounge, Washington University Danforth Campus, 935-4620.

Thursday, October 16

In her enchanting new novel, Joanne Harris brings back the characters of her beloved classic Chocolat. When Vianne receives a letter from beyond the grave, she returns to the French village in which eight years ago she opened a chocolate shop and learned the meaning of home. Now her old nemesis, Father Francis, desperately needs her help. Can Vianne work her magic once again? 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Tuesday, October 16

The reading takes place at the Tavern of Fine Arts, located in the DeBaliviere neighborhood at 313 Belt Ave. Admission is $5 at the door, or $4 for seniors, students, and members. 7:30pm, more information about the Tavern can be found at www.tavern-of-fine-arts.com.

Thursday, October 18

Acclaimed author of The Orchid Thief, Susan Orlean discusses and signs her new book on the incredible life and legacy of Hollywood legend Ren Tih Tin. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 994-3300.

Sunday, October 21

St. Louis Poetry Center presents a Sunday Poetry Workshop with poet/critic Jonathan Smith, assistant professor of African American Studies at Saint Louis University and recipient of many awards and journal publications. Free. 1:30-3:30pm, University City Public Library, 6701 Delmar, 2nd floor. Workshop submission must be received by October 13 for participation. Observers are welcome. http://slouispoetrycenter.org/

The BookClub’s 441st discussion will be on the book Collected Fictions by Jorge Luis Borges, translated by Andrew Hurley (1999). For more information about time and venue, email lloydk@klinedinst.com.

Tuesday, October 23

St. Louis Poetry Center presents Poetry at the Point, featuring OUTREACH Poets Marie Cheve-Elliott, Jennifer Fandel, Susan Grigsby, Jane Ellen Ibur, Meru Muaddib, and others, reading from their work. Poets will also share their experience of teaching/reading. $3 suggested donation. Doors open at 7pm., the Focal Point, 2720 Sutton Blvd. in Maplewood, http://slouispoetrycenter.org. 

St. Louis University Libraries presents An Evening with Tony Kushner, who will receive the 45th Annual Literary Award. The award ceremony is free and open to the public and can be found on
Friday, November 16, 2012, 5:00 pm, Steinberg Auditorium

We are pleased to announce the 2012 recipient of Washington University’s International Humanities Medal, documentary filmmaker Ken Burns. The award ceremony, sponsored by the Center for the Humanities at Washington University and the University Libraries, will take place on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis on Friday, November 16, 2012. The medal—awarded biennially and accompanied by a cash prize of $25,000, and generously supported by Dr. David and Phyllis Wilson Grossman—is given to honor a person whose humanistic endeavors in scholarship, journalism, literature, or the arts have made a difference in the world. Past winners include Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk in 2006, journalist Michael Pollan in 2008, and novelist and nonfiction writer Francine Prose in 2010.

Ken Burns has been making documentary films for more than thirty years. Since the Academy Award-nominated Brooklyn Bridge in 1981, Burns has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including The Civil War, Baseball, Jazz, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mark Twain, The War, The National Parks: America’s Best Idea, and, most recently, Prohibition.

A December 2002 poll conducted by Realscreen magazine listed The Civil War as second only to Robert Flaherty’s Nanook of the North as the “most influential documentary of all time,” and named Ken Burns and Robert Flaherty as the “most influential documentary makers” of all time. The late historian Stephen Ambrose said of Burns’s films, “More Americans get their history from Ken Burns than any other source.” Ken Burns’s films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including twelve Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards, and two Oscar nominations, and in September 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Burns was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Projects currently in production include films on the Dust Bowl, the Central Park jogger case, the Vietnam War, and the history of country music.

A book signing and reception will follow the event. Books will be available for purchase courtesy of the Washington University Campus Bookstore. Please contact The Center for the Humanities at cenhum@artsci.wustl.edu or 314-935-5576 for additional information.