

The New Children Studies Minor Kicks Off With a Presentation by Anita Silvey

It would be hard to find a more authoritative voice than Anita Silvey.

- Publishers Weekly



The Center for the Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis is proud to announce that the well-regarded author of *100 Best Books for Children*, Anita Silvey, will visit our campus on **November 9th at 4:00pm**. Professor Gerald Early will also use this occasion to announce the Center's Children Studies Minor. The event will take place in **Old McMillan Café** (Room 115), Old McMillan Hall, on the WU Hilltop campus.

Anita Silvey's presentation, entitled "100 Best Books for Children: Our Greatest Children's Books and the Stories Behind Them," is an illustrated lecture and discussion on some of the best books for children (1908-2000). This presentation stems

from her research on these books and points toward some idea of future research possibilities for those studying children's literature in an academic program.

Anita Silvey, one of the nation's leading experts on children's literature, estimates that she has read 125,000 children's books, starting from childhood and continuing through her years as a reviewer and editor of *The Horn Book Magazine* and publisher of children's books for Houghton Mifflin. She is the editor of *The Essential Guide to Children's Books and Their Creators*. Silvey's lifelong conviction that only the best is good enough for the young forms the cornerstone of all her work. A professor, reviewer, writer, and well-known children's book advocate, Silvey lectures throughout the United States and Canada and has appeared frequently on radio and television in her efforts to promote the best books available for our children.

Please RSVP by calling the Center for the Humanities at 314-935-5576, since seating is very limited. This event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

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Financial assistance for this project
has been provided by the Missouri
Arts Council, a state agency, and the
Regional Arts Commission.

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November 2005 Vol. 4, No. 3

Published by The Center for the Humanities
at Washington University

The Library

When I first came to America, I took graduate courses at Harvard University. I was so occupied with language difficulties and the other rites of passage immigrant scholars undergo that I had no time to consider what was happening to American under-graduates there. Years after leaving Harvard, I read that one initiatory task for a Harvard undergraduate was to have sex in the vast and complex stack system of Widener Library. Although I spent a considerable amount of time reading in Harvard libraries, particularly the Tozzer in the Peabody Museum, I never came across anyone involved in this activity. I did, however, encounter people who experienced another kind of obvious pleasure in the stacks: chance discovery of an obscure book that changed the course of their research. I know it is not the most efficient way to conduct research, but I often roamed the stacks reading from books adjacent to the one I needed. Chance discoveries of relevant volumes provided a distinct thrill, perhaps not so intense as that experienced by the Harvard undergraduates referred to above, but certainly longer lasting.

What started me thinking about the sensual nature of books and libraries was a remark by Vartan Gregorian. "I loved the

smell of textbooks, and for me, from childhood, the library occupied a major role in my life." It might seem natural that a man who loved the smell of textbooks would end up working in a large library. But in his autobiography, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (2003), the road Vartan Gregorian traveled is anything but straightforward. His childhood was one of poverty and deprivation in the Armenian quarter of Tabriz, Iran. His mother died when he was seven years old and shortly after that, his father left to fight in World War Two, so young Vartan was raised by his grandmother. From the age of eleven until he left Tabriz, he was a part-time page at the local library. This position did not pay a wage, but it did give him access to new worlds through the works available in translation in the stacks. When his father returned and remarried, household relations became strained, so at age fifteen Vartan left home with \$50 in his pocket to study at the College Armenien in Beirut. Although various opportunities opened for him, he decided to attend Stanford University, earning a bachelor's degree in history in 1958. In 1964 he completed a Ph.D. at Stanford, then taught history at San Francisco State, UCLA, and the University of Pennsylvania where he became the first dean of the

faculty of Arts and Sciences.

A career reading and writing scholarly books might have been enough for most of us, but not for Vartan Gregorian, who began a campaign to defend books. From 1981 to 1989, he returned to the world of the library at a time when libraries were endangered. Gregorian took on the roles of president and CEO of the New York Public Library, then a network of four research libraries and eighty-three circulating libraries. Cuts in public funds during the seventies usually struck hard at libraries. Libraries had no political clout and no constituency except scholars, children, and ordinary citizens who liked to read. Politicians took it for granted that libraries were not important and that their budgets could be slashed. Schools lost funding for new acquisitions, sometimes losing libraries entirely. Hours of service at public libraries were cut and librarians were laid off. Branch libraries were closed or had their hours drastically reduced. Gregorian started with the premise that support for libraries was "not negotiable." For eight years, he reminded New Yorkers (and readers of his autobiography) that they were dealing with an institution that was as old as civilization: "From the clay tablets of Babylon to the computers of a modern library stretch more than



Dr. Jian Leng

editor's notes

Continued...

five thousand years of man's and woman's insatiable desire to establish written immortality and to insure the continuity of culture and civilization, to share their memories, their wisdom, their strivings, their fantasies, their longings, and their experiences with mankind and with future generations" (page 283). But moral arguments about the abstract value of libraries were insufficient to secure funding for even the most basic costs of maintaining a library. The stacks of the central New York library, for example, contained eighty-eight miles of bookshelves that had not been dusted for seventy-five years. The cost of cleaning them was \$1 million. Through what he calls "a confluence of forces," Gregorian succeeded in rescuing the New York City Public Library and reestablishing its central educational, civic, and cultural preeminence in New York. Along the way he changed the national attitude toward public libraries and raised \$400 million to restore their status throughout the country.

Gregorian became president of Brown University in 1989. In 1997, he was selected to head the large non-profit Carnegie Corporation of New York, with its mantra, "The free library is the cradle of democracy." It is, therefore, altogether appropriate that we have chosen Vartan Gregorian to serve as keynote speaker for The Center for the Humanities' annual celebration of Washington University authors—*Celebrating Our Books*. At a time when the undergraduate library at the University of Texas, Austin, removes a huge collection of books to install a coffee shop, computer terminals, and lounge chairs for students—many of whom come from nearly book-free homes—it is good to have someone remind us that books are not irrelevant and that great public libraries are not optional for the populace of a democratic nation. It is a great pleasure to have someone who knows and loves the smell of books help us celebrate our authors.

Jian Leng
Associate Director
The Center for the Humanities



Events in November

All events are free unless otherwise indicated. Book events are followed by signings. All phone numbers take 314 prefix unless indicated.

Tuesday, November 1

Machacek Book Group meets, SLPL Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan, 10am, 781-2948. **Also Nov 15.**

Joe Pollack discusses his collection of St. Louis restaurant reviews, *Great St. Louis Eats Books*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731. *Please see our online calendar for additional dates & venues.

River Styx presents poet **Richard Newman** and novelist **Richard Burgin**, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 994-3300.

Wednesday, November 2

ELLA Speaker Series presents poet **Tyehimba Jess**, Conference Center, Morris University Center, SIUE, 4pm, 618-650-2060.

Mark Chiemi, Theology professor at Saint Louis University, discusses his memoir, *The Book of Mev*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

WU & SLCL present **Dr. Murray Weidenbaum**, author of *Advising Reagan: Making Economic Policy, 1981-82*, **RSVP required**, Anheuser Busch Hall Auditorium, WU Law School, 7pm. 935-8003 to RSVP; 935-5418 for information.

Thursday, November 3

Mystery Lovers' Book Group meets, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S Lindbergh, 10am, 994-3300.

Moya Cannon reads from her poetry, 331 Social Sciences & Business Bldg., UMSL, 12:30pm, 516-6845.

St. Louis Li

Book Journeys Discussion Group meets, SLCL Indian Trails Branch, 8400 Delport, 2 428-5424.

Rose Marie Kinder discusses her short fiction collection *A Near Perfect Gift*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

SLCL Grand Glaize Branch hosts a writing workshop to critique participants' works in progress, 1010 Meramec Station, 7pm, 2 6454.

WU Writing Program presents **Michelle Martone** speaking on the craft of fiction, Humanities Lounge, Duncker 201, 8pm, 935-7130.

Saturday, November 5

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and **St. Charles Community College** offer the Conference for Authors in Children's Writing & Illustrating, 4601 Mid River Mall Dr, 8:30am, 636-922-8000.

The Center of Creative Arts welcomes **Edward Albee**, 524 Trinity Ave., tickets \$11am, 725-6555.

St. Louis Writers Guild hosts 5+5 Critique Workshop, \$5 for non-members, B&N, 901 Watson, 10am, 821-3823.

Words on Purpose presents readings by Pulitzer laureate **Eugene Redmond**, fiction writer **Michelle Troy**, and poet **Joel Friederich** to help Hurricane Katrina victims, \$4 recommended donation, Soulard Coffee Garden, 910 Geyer, 2pm, 7 0115.

Sunday, November 6

Jo A. Hiestand reads from her mystery *Death of an Ordinary Guy*, Webster Groves Library, 301 E Lockwood, 6pm, 961-3784.

Monday, November 7

John Ivanko and **Lisa Kivirist** discuss their book *Rural Renaissance: Renewing the Quality of Life for the Good Life*, SLPL Central Branch, 101 Olive, 6pm, 539-0385.

John Lutz discusses his new thriller *Fearful Night*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

R. A. Salvatore signs *Promise of the Wolf King*, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 7pm, 862-2948.

WU Asian & Near Eastern Lang. & Lit presents Israeli novelist **Judith Rotem** on *A Footstool Paradise*, McMillan Café, 7:30pm, 935-51

terary Calendar

Tuesday, November 8

Webster University's Pearson House presents poet **Ron Slate** reading from his collection *The Incentive of the Maggot*, 8260 Big Bend, 1:30pm, 968-7170.

SLCL Grand Glaize Book Discussion Group meets, 1010 Meramec Station, 2pm, 225-6454.

Tab Hunter signs his book *Tab Hunter, Confidential: The Making of a Movie Star*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 5pm, 367-6731.

HQ Book Discussion Group meets, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 994-3300. **Also Nov 10.**

Book Discussion Group meets, SLCL Samuel C. Sachs Branch, 16400 Burkhardt, 7pm, 636-728-0001. **Also Nov 16.**

WU Foreign Literature Group meets, West Campus Bldg, 7425 Forsyth, 7:30pm. 727-6118.

Wednesday, November 9

Bookies Book Discussion Group meets, SLCL Oak Bend Branch, 842 S Holmes, 2pm, 822-0051.

Boone's Bookies meets, SLCL Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson, 2pm and 7pm, 636-227-9630.

Sisters in Crime meets, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S Lindbergh, 6:45pm, 636-938-7163.

Thursday, November 10

Ann Fisher Wirth reads from her poetry, Gallery 210, UMSL, 7pm, 516-6845.

Ethnic American Book Group meets, SLPL Carpenter Branch, 3309 S Grand, 7pm, 772-6586.

U. City Great Books Discussion Group meets, 6800 Washington, 8pm, 994-7914.

WU Writing Program presents **Arthur Sze** reading from his poetry, Hurst Lounge, Duncker 201, 8pm, 935-7130.

Friday, November 11

Rock Road Book Discussion Group meets, SLCL Rock Road Branch, 10267 St. Charles Rock, 10am, 429-5116.

Saturday, November 12

SLCL Indian Trails Branch hosts the **Write Along Writers' Workshop**, 8400 Delport, 11:30am, 428-5424. **Also Nov 26.**

Missouri Association of Playwrights meets for stage readings and critiquing, SLCL Headquarters, 1640 S Lindbergh, 2pm. 994-3300.

Sunday, November 13

The Book Club meets, for time and venue call 636-451-3232.

Monday, November 14

Scott Eden, author of *Touchdown Jesus: Faith & Fandom at Notre Dame*, speaks at LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

Tuesday, November 15

Kingshighway Book Group meets, SLPL Kingshighway Branch, 2260 S Vandeventer, 6:30pm, 771-5450.

ELLA Speaker Series presents rhetorician **Ellen Cushman**, Conference Center, Morris University Center, SIUE, 7pm, 618-650-2060.

Wednesday, November 16

WU Germanic Languages and Literatures & Music Departments present **Yale Strom** reading from his book, *A Wandering Feast: A Journey Through the Jewish Culture of Eastern Europe*, Hurst Lounge, Duncker 201, WU, 4pm, 935-5106.

Central Book Group meets, SLPL Central Branch, 1301 Olive, 4:30pm, 539-0396.

Stephen Hunter discusses his book *American Gunfight: The Plot to Kill Harry Truman—and the Shoot-Out that Stopped It*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

SLCL Mid-County Branch hosts a **Writing Workshop** for amateur writers, 7821 Maryland, 7pm, 721-3008.

Thursday, November 17

SLPL Schlafly Branch holds a discussion on *Sightseeing* by Rattawat Lapcharoensap, 225 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-4120.

LBB presents **Greg Pacini**, author of *Journey Beyond Diagnosis: Support for Illness Survivors and Those Who Love and Care for Them*, 399 N Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

WU Writing Program presents **Arthur Sze** speaking on the craft of poetry, Hurst Lounge, Duncker 201, 8pm, 935-7130.

St. Louis Writers Guild Speakers Series

features poet & novelist **John Irwin**, B&N, 8871 Ladue, 7pm, 821-3823.

Friday, November 18

Anne Rice signs her book *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*, LBB, 399 N Euclid, 6pm, 367-6731.

Saturday, November 19

Missouri Center for the Book presents a Book Celebration with **Eric Brende, Cathi LaMarche, Missouri Smith, Richard Newman, Mary Jo Bang, & Eileen Dreyer** reading from their works, SLPL Schlafly Branch, 225 N Euclid, 10am, 367-4120.

Mystery Lover's Book Club meets, SLPL Carondelet Branch, 6800 Michigan, 10am, 752-9224.

Dr. Howard Bowens discusses his book, *It's Time to End the Game*, SLPL Divoll Branch, 4234 N Grand, 3pm, 534-0313.

Sunday, November 20

St. Louis Poetry Center hosts a poetry workshop, University City Library, 6701 Delmar, 1:30pm, 770-9130.

Monday, November 21

Spanish Book Discussion Group meets, SLPL Carpenter Branch, 3309 S Grand, 7pm, 772-6586.

River Styx presents poet **David Mura** & novelist **John Dalton** reading from their works, Duff's Restaurant, 392 N Euclid, \$5 admission, 7:30pm, 533-4541.

Sunday, November 30

SLPL Barr Branch Book Club meets, 1701 S Jefferson, 5:30pm, 771-7040.

Notices

The Wednesday Club of St. Louis is sponsoring an **original poetry contest**, submissions accepted until **Feb. 1**, for details, go to www.wedclubpoetrycontest.org.

Abbreviations:

B&N: Barnes & Noble; LBB: Left Bank Books; SLCL: St. Louis County Library; SLPL: St. Louis Public Library; WU: Washington University.

Check the online calendar at cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu for more events. To advertise, send event details to lital@artsci.wustl.edu, or call 314-935-5576.