

St. Louis Literary Calendar



Events in May

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

Monday, May 1

SLCL Cliff Cave Branch welcomes local mystery author **Shirley Kennett** signing *Time of Death*, 5430 Telegraph Rd, 7pm, 487-6003.

LBB presents poet **Carl Phillips** reading and signing *Riding Westward*, 399 N. Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

Tuesday, May 2

The Saint Louis Art Museum presents a lecture by author of the bestselling *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*, **Ross King**, auditorium, One Fine Arts Dr., 7pm, 721-0072.

Wednesday, May 3

SCCCL McClay Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *In Sunlight in a Beautiful Garden*, 2760 McClay Rd, St. Charles, 7pm and again at 2pm on the 10th, 636-441-7577.

SLCL hosts **Book Lovers' Delight: NoveList**, Mid-County Branch, 7821 Maryland Ave., 2pm, 721-3008.

SLCL HQ Branch & LBB presents **Bob Kuban** discussing his autobiography *My Side of the Bandstand*, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 7pm, 994-3300.

The Borders **Sunset Hills Book Club** meets to discuss *Out*, 10990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 7pm, 909-0300.

Thursday, May 4

The **Mystery Lovers' Book Club** discusses *A Certain Justice*, SLCL HQ Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 10am, 994-3300.

SLCL Jamestown Bluffs Branch hosts the **Trail Blazers Book Club**, who will discuss *The Da Vinci Code*, 4153 N. Hwy 67, Florissant, 10am, 741-6800.

Book Journeys discusses *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* and *The Hiding Place*, SLCL Indian Hills Branch, 8400 Delpont Dr., 2pm, 994-3300.

LBB presents author of *Oh, The Glory of it All*, **Sean Wilsey**, 399 N. Euclid, 7pm, 367-6731.

Borders Fairview Heights welcomes author **Nancy Pickard** signing her newest suspense book, *Virgin of the Small Plains*, 6601 N. Illinois, Fairview Heights, IL, 7pm, 618-397-6097.

SLCL Grand Glaize Branch hosts a **Writers' Workshop**, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., Manchester, 7pm, 636-225-6454.

LBB & SLPL presents **Geneva Holiday** reading and signing her new novel *Fever*, Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

The **St. Louis Storytelling Festival** makes a stop at Borders Creve Coeur, 11745 Olive Blvd., 7pm, 432-3575, and also at Borders Mid Rivers, 1320 Mid Rivers Mall Dr., 7pm, 636-278-5000.

Friday, May 5

WU Center for the Humanities presents the **2nd Annual Children's Film Symposium** keynote address by author of *Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960*, **Nicholas Sammond**, 3pm, location TBA, 935-5576.

WU Center for the Humanities presents a free showing of *Duma* preceded by an introduction by film critic **Stephanie Zackarek** at Ronnie's 20 Cine at S. Lindbergh & Baptist Church Rd., 7pm, 935-5576 for reservations.

Saturday, May 6

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators presents "**Telling the Truth, Getting the Story: An Interactive Nonfiction Workshop**," Kirkwood United Methodist Church, 201 West Adams, Room 201, 9am to 4pm, for registration and fees contact 831-4114.

The Mystery Lover's Book Club meets at the SLPL Carondelet Branch to discuss *Dear Miss Demeanor*, 6800 Michigan Ave, 10-11:30am, 752-9224.

St. Louis Writers Guild presents a **Poetry Workshop** led by Ruth Miriam-Garnett, B&N Crestwood, 9618 Watson Rd, \$5 for non-members, 10 am, 821-3823.

WU Center for the Humanities presents a free showing of *Saving Shiloh*, followed by a panel discussion about the making of the film with participation by director **Sandy Tung** and producer **Carl Borack**, Room 100 of Brown Hall on the Hilltop Campus, 1pm, 935-5576.

Borders Creve Coeur presents author of *Full Court: The Untold Stories of the St. Louis Hawks*, **Greg Marecek**, 11745 Olive Blvd., 2pm, 432-3575.

Sunday, May 7

Borders Brentwood presents a book-signing by **Lisa Tucker**, author of *Once Upon a Day*, 1519 S. Brentwood Blvd., 2pm, 918-8189.

Monday, May 8

The River Styx Annual Literary Feast featuring fiction writer **Lee K. Abbot** & poet **Marjorie Stelmach**, Duff's Restaurant, 392 N Euclid, 6:30pm, 533-4541.

LBB & SLCL presents **Mike Leonard** reading and signing *Ride of Our Lives: Roadside Lessons of an American Family*, HQ Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 7pm, 367-6731.

LBB & SLPL presents **Jacquelyn Mitchard** reading and signing *Cage of Stars*, Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

Tuesday, May 9

The Grand Glaize Book Discussion Group meets at the SLPL Grand Glaize Branch to talk about *Bel Canto*, 1010 Meramec Station Rd., Manchester, 2pm, 636-225-6454.

SCCCL Kisker Road Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *Fat Ollie's Book*, 1000 Kisker Rd, St. Charles, 7pm, 636-447-7323.

St. Louis Writers Guild hosts **Open Mic Night** in Kirkwood, for location and to register in advance see website at: www.stlwritersguild.org.

The SLCL Department of Friends & LBB welcomes author of *Assumed Dead*, **Eleanor Sullivan**, HQ Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 7pm, 994-3300 ext. 309.

SLCL HQ Branch hosts a **Book Discussion Group** about *Sister of My Heart*, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 7pm & again at 2pm on the 11th, 994-3300.

As the Page Turns meets to discuss *The Laments*, SLCL Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 7pm, 638-2210.

WU Foreign Literature Group discusses *The Silent Angel*, LL of West Campus Bldg, 7425 Forsyth, 7:30pm, 727-6118.

Wednesday, May 10

SLCL hosts **Book Lovers' Delight: What Do I Read Next?** Mid-County Branch, 7821 Maryland Ave., 2pm, 721-3008.

SLCL Daniel Boone Branch hosts **Boone's Bookies**, who will be discussing *The Secret Life of Bees*, 300 Clarkson Rd., Ellisville, 2pm & again at 7pm, 636-227-9630.

Bookies Book Discussion Group discusses *The Last Days of Dogtown*, SLCL Oak Bend Branch, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 2pm, 822-0051.

SLCL Friends Department & LBB sponsor **Susan McBride**, who will be discussing her new novel *The Lone Star Lonely Hearts Club*, HQ Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., 7pm, 994-3300.

Thursday, May 11

The **Murder of the Month Club** discusses *Body in the Bookcase*, SLCL Indian Hills Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 3:30pm, 428-5424.

SLPL Carpenter Branch hosts the **Contemporary Issues Book Discussion Group**, who will talk about *In Defense of Globalization*, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 7pm, 772-6586.

Nikki Turner will discuss and sign *Riding Dirty on I-95* at Borders Fairview Heights, 6601 N. Illinois, 7pm, 618-397-6097.

Friday, May 12

Great Expectations discusses *Aunt Dimity Beats the Devil*, SLCL Rock Road Branch, 10267 St. Charles Rock Rd., St. Ann, 10am, 429-5116.

Loosely Identified women's poetry workshop readers **Rachelle Hosty & Robbie Mosinger**, U City Library, 6:30pm, 727-3150.

Saturday, May 13

SLCL Indian Hills Branch hosts the bi-monthly **Write Along Writers' Workshop**, 8400 Delport Dr., 11am, again on the 27th, 428-5424.

Big Sleep Books presents a book signing by author of *Assumed Dead*, **Eleanor Sullivan**, 239 N. Euclid Ave., 1pm, 361-6100.

Olivia Lahs Gonzales discusses and signs *Josephine Baker: Image and Icon*, Borders Sunset Hills, 10990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 2pm, 909-0300.

The SLCL Mid-County Branch hosts a **Writing Workshop** for amateur writers, 7821 Maryland Ave., 2pm, 721-3008.

Borders Ballwin presents **Bob Kuban** signing and discussing his autobiography *My Side of the Bandstand*, 15355 A Manchester Rd., 2pm, 636-230-2992.

Monday, May 15

Borders Creve Coeur presents **James Redfield** signing *The Celestine Prophecy* and *The Tenth Insight*, 11745 Olive Blvd., 2pm, 432-3575.

LBB presents **Scott Simon** reading and signing *Pretty Birds*, 399 N. Euclid Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

¡Leamos! Let's Read! Spanish Book Discussion Group talks about *Cruzando La Frontera*, SLPL Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 7pm, 772-6586.

Tuesday, May 16

SLPL Kingshighway Branch hosts a **Book Discussion** over *Gilead*, 2260 S. Vandeventer Ave., 6:30pm, 771-5450.

LBB & SLPL presents **Kevin Henkes** signing his new children's book *Lilly's Big Day*, Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Rd, 7pm, 367-6731.

Wednesday, May 17

SLPL presents **Ed Wolfram** discussing and signing his book *It's Never Too Late*, Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 10am, 352-2900.

LBB presents **J.E. Robinson** signing *Skip MacAlester*, 399 N. Euclid Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

SCCCL Kathryn Linnemann Branch features a presentation by author of *Surviving Twilight*, **Shane Bernskoetter**, 2323 Elm St, St. Charles, adv. registration required, 7:30pm, 636-723-0232.

SLCL Oak Bend's **Evening Book Group** discusses *Enemy Women*, 842 S. Holmes Ave., 7:30pm, 822-0051.

Thursday, May 18

SCCCL Deer Run Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *The Blue Bottle Club*, 1300 N. Main, O'Fallon, 10am, 636-978-3251.

Borders Historical Book Club meets to discuss *The Amber Room*, Border Sunset Hills, 10990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 1pm, 909-0300.

SCCCL Middendorf-Kredell Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *The Apothecary Rose*, 2750 Hwy K, O'Fallon, 2pm, 636-978-3261.

Book Journeys meets to discuss *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, SLCL Indian Hills Branch, 8400 Delport Dr., 2pm, 428-5424.

St. Louis Writers Guild Lecture Series features **Ron Bechtel** speaking about "The Emerging Opportunities for Authors in Screen Adaptations," B&N Ladue, 8871 Ladue Rd, 7pm, 821-3823.

Saturday, May 20

Borders Fairview Heights presents author of *Full Court: The Untold Stories of the St. Louis Hawks*, **Greg Marecek**, 6601 N. Illinois, 2pm, 618-397-6097.

Ann Parr will discuss and sign her new biography *Gordon Parks: No Excuses*, Borders Creve Coeur, 11745 Olive Blvd., 2pm, 432-3575.

Borders Sunset Hills presents **Shelia Moses** discussing and signing *The Return of Buddy Bush*, 20990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 2pm, 909-0300.

Sunday, May 21

The St. Louis Poetry Center hosts the **Annual Poetry Concert** where contest winners read from their poems, free printed chapbook of poems provided, Regional Arts Commission at 6128 Delmar, 1:30pm, 863-5811.

WU West Library's **Bookmark Society** will be discussing *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, 2-4 pm, WU West Campus Library, Moog Lounge, 481-0730.

The **BookClub** has a discussion on *Collapse*, for time and venue, call 636-451-3232.

Monday, May 22

SCCCL Kathryn Linnemann Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *The Pawprints of History: Dogs and the Course of Human Events*, 2323 Elm St, St. Charles, 7pm, 636-723-0232.

LBB & the St. Louis Science Center welcome **Temple Grandin**, author of *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*, 5050 Oakland Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

Join the **ReadMOre Book Discussion** on *Messages from My Father*, with moderator Kathleen Nigro, SLCL Sachs Branch, Chesterfield, 16400 Burkhardt Pl., 7pm, 636-728-0001.

Tuesday, May 23

SLCL Indian Hills Branch hosts a **Book Discussion Group** about *The Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, 8400 Delport Dr., 6pm, 428-5424.

As the Page Turns meets to discuss *The Kite Runner*, SLCL Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Rd., 7pm, 638-2210.

St. Louis Poetry Center sponsors a Poetry Reading by **Sally Van Doren & Katherine Mitchell** at the Focal Point, 2720 Sutton Blvd, 7:30-9:00pm, 636-225-5423.

Wednesday, May 24

Authors @ Your Library features **Monica Samuels & J.C. Conklin**, co-authors of *Comeback Moms: How to Leave Work, Raise Children, and Jumpstart Your Career Even if You Haven't Had a Job in Years*, SLPL Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton Ave., 7pm, 352-2900.

Thursday, May 25

SLPL Schlafly Branch hosts a **Book Discussion Group** about *Confederacy of Dunces*, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 7pm, 367-4120.

Friday, May 26

Let's Chat: Book Discussion Group meets to talk about *Autumn Bridge*, SLCL Asian Center, 300 Clarkson Rd., Ellisville, 2pm, 636-207-0175.

St. Louis Literary Calendar

Saturday, May 27

Borders Fairview Heights presents **Bob Kuban** signing and discussing his autobiography *My Side of the Bandstand*, 6601 N. Illinois, 2pm, 618-397-6097.

Tuesday, May 30

SCCCL Corporate Parkway Branch **Book Discussion Club** talks about *No Certain Rest: A Novel*, 1200 Corporate Pkwy, Wentzville, 7pm, 636-332-8280.

Authors @ Your Library features **Kage Baker**, author of *The Children of the Company*, SLPL Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid Ave., 7pm, 367-4120.

Wednesday, May 31

LBB presents bestselling author of *Pay It Forward*, **Catherine Ryan Hyde** signing her new novel *Love in the Present Tense*, 399 N. Euclid Ave, 7pm, 367-6731.

Notices

WU Libraries sponsors a **Visual Poetry Exhibition**, Olin Library, Hilltop Campus, April 7-May 30.

Best Poem Contest sponsored by St. Louis Poetry Center with \$2,000 grand prize & publication. For info, visit <http://www.stlouispoetrycenter.org>. **Deadline: May 15, 2006.**

21st-Annual New Letters Awards for Writers

with \$4,500 in prizes & publication. For information, visit <http://www.newletters.org/awards.asp>. **Deadline: May 18, 2006.**

River Styx 2006 International Poetry Contest with a \$1000 first prize & publication in Fall issue. For complete details and submission guidelines, visit <http://www.riverstyx.org/contestguidelines.html>. **Deadline: May 31, 2006.**

The **Deane Wagner Poetry Contest**, sponsored by the St. Louis Writers Guild, is open for submissions. For complete details and submission guidelines, visit <http://www.stlwritersguild.org>. **Deadline: June 17, 2006.**

New Works of Merit Playwriting Contest is now accepting scripts, for guidelines and application form see www.PlaywritingContest.cjb.net. **Deadline: June 30, 2006.**

Abbreviations

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

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

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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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The Center for the Humanities
Campus Box 1071
Old McMillan Hall, Rm S101
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, MO 63130-4899
Phone: (314) 935-5576
email: cenhum@artsci.wustl.edu
<http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu>

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the
figure
in the carpet

May 2006 Vol. 4, No. 9

One Civilized Reader Is Worth a Thousand Boneheads

Published by The Center for the Humanities at Washington University

What We Say About Animals Says A Great Deal About Us

The Center for the Humanities and the Program in Film and Media Studies at Washington University, in conjunction with Cinema St. Louis, will host the Second Annual Children's Film Symposium on Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6. Two children's films will be shown: *Duma*, and *Saving Shiloh*. Both films are about the relationship between children and animals, a common theme in many films marketed for children and in many children's books.

In a nation where consumers spent a record \$6.8 billion on dog and cat accessories last year, these films should be popular. But neither film may experience a wide release because studios are apprehensive about the box-office potential of such movies. For one thing, money spent on pet accessories does not necessarily mean there is an audience for movies about animals. Most of the record spending on dogs and cats is supposed to come from empty-nesters, adults accustomed to heaping attention on their children and now finding themselves with only Fido and Felix left to keep them company. At the other end of the spectrum, in the X-box- and Nintendo-filled world occupied by today's children, the lack of special effects may make films like these hard to sell. In the middle of these two extremes, film studios face questions about the differences between films kids actually want to see and the results from focus groups of parents about what they think their kids should see.

Storytelling is as old as language, and film is a powerful storyteller, employing narrative, visuals, and music to enhance its impact. Films aimed at children face additional scrutiny because they must capture children's vulnerable imagination and interest in the moral issues involved in the story without conveying the perception that the youthful viewers are being manipulated. Animal characters, even animated animal characters, work on an audience at an

almost subconscious level to present emotional truths about living. Of course, as is so often the case, we do not see these animals as they are, but rather we see them as we are, a common distortion featured historically in literature for children, from fairytales to books like Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, Kipling's *Jungle Books*, and Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* to more naturalistic stories like Atkinson's *Greyfriars Bobby*, Sewell's *Black Beauty* or Gipson's *Old Yeller*. (Incidentally, all the novels mentioned here have been made into films for children.)

Growing up in Beijing, I did not have a pet. The only animals I saw as pets were birds in cages that old men would bring outside each morning, or ornamental fish in small glass bowls that some families kept in their living rooms. Moreover, I did not grow up watching films that featured animals as messages of any kind; if they were there they were like the mountains and forests: merely the backdrop for a human story. My first real contact with animals was in Inner Mongolia when I was sent there with other youngsters to be 'reeducated' during the Cultural Revolution.

After an arduous trip, I found myself in the Kerqin grassland where people made their living by farming and pastoralism. Once out of the horse-drawn cart, I saw herdsmen riding horses to capture other wild horses while dogs ran around barking. I also saw herds of sheep moving like white clouds across the endless fields of green grass. I did not have much feeling toward any of these animals in the beginning but that changed after a snow storm one night. I was with a group of other girls, 15 to 18 years old, sitting around the cow dung fire (there is too little wood in the grasslands for wood fires) talking before we went to sleep. It was normal to hear the wind howling as it blew snow across the flat plain in the deep winter, but suddenly, we heard a sad, high-pitched crying mixed with the sound of the



Dr. Jian Leng

editor's notes

Visit our blog site at
<http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu/Blog.html>.

wind. We all ran out to find that these sounds came from a nearby sheepfold. When we walked up to the sheepfold we were surprised to find all the sheep standing in a circle, desperately bleating at the sky. In the center of their circle was a large ewe, lying on the ground bleeding from a difficult labor. I don't know where our strength came from, but we carried her into our room.

We could not do much more than the other sheep were already doing: – offer sympathy for her suffering. None of us had any knowledge or experience with these things. The veterinary station was far away and it was impossible for us to move her there. But we did what we could; we cleaned her, fed her some milk, and watched over her. She was weeping and so were we. It must have been at least three or four hours later when a tiny blood-covered lamb was born. We wiped the new-born baby with a towel and covered it with our blankets. We thought that it would lie there and nap (by this time we all needed some sleep). But it stood up and wobbled over to its mother to suckle. We named this lamb "Little White" because she was covered with white hair. For as long as I was there "Little White" was the only sheep that could or would come in to our room. She loved us, and, despite the fact that we had only sat there and watched nature unfold, we were proud of our role in her birth, she was ours, she was a part of our youth family. Obviously the herders with whom we lived did not have these same emotions; for them animals were a means to an end: – food. But to us city children dropped into the countryside for some vaguely defined reeducation, "Little White" took on an emotional truth about our lives. She became a member of our community and represented a small victory in our struggle on the grasslands.

I confess that I do not necessarily understand the emotional truth about animals that people keep as pets here in the United States. When I see articles on what the well dressed dog is wearing in New York City (and yes, we're talking outfits coordinated with the owner's clothing, as well as matching jewelry), I wonder what truth is being exposed about our lives. We all know that, in most developed countries, birth rates are well below replacement rates. This is the result of considerable change in the incentives to have children. Children are no longer a social security policy for old age (although with corporations cutting back on retiree health benefits, and the underfunding and loss of traditional retirement benefits, who knows). On top of this, our labor market, with its greater gender equality, makes having children a very expensive prospect for a well-educated woman. The loss of income and a stalled career is the price usually paid for the intensive attention and large amounts of time required to rear a healthy, balanced child. Yet, as the \$6.8 billion spent on pets last year shows, people still need companionship. So, perhaps this money was not spent only by empty-nesters, but also by young adults who will never fill a nest in the first place. A well-dressed dog or cat that never needs an i-pod, a car, or university tuition may be a rational choice for these people. Nevertheless, it says something about our society that we might want to discuss. In any case, I assure you that all the animals in the movies to be shown May 5 and 6 appear *au natural*.

This is our last issue of *The Figure in the Carpet* until September 2006. We wish all our readers a peaceful summer, and look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Jian Leng
Associate Director
The Center for the Humanities

An Exploration of Children's Films and their

Sponsored by the Center for the Humanities
In conjunction with the Film and Media Stu

Keynote Address:

Nicholas Sammond, assistant professor of
Studies at the University of Toronto and au
*Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and
Making of the American Child, 1930-1960*
University Press, 2005)

We are proud to present

FIRST FILM SHOWING

"**Duma,**" (2005) directed by Carroll
Ballard, director of "Fly Away Home" and
"Never Cry Wolf"

Loosely based on the children's book, *How
It Was With Doms* by Xan Hopcraft and
Carol Cawthra Hopcraft, this visually stun-
ning film is about Xan, a white South
African boy, who befriends a baby cheetah
he names Duma. When the cheetah reaches
near-adulthood, Xan follows his late father's
instructions, in opposition to his mother, and
takes Duma to the wild to be set free. On the
way, he meets numerous adventures and
forms an important bond with a black South
African man who is also a runaway. A love-
ly film that is part *The Yearling*, part
Walkabout, and part *The Adventures of Huck*



7 PM at Ronnie's 20
Church Road

Free and Open to the

"Duma" will be intro
Zackarek. A discussi
will follow

r Audiences

at Washington University
Studies Program

Cinema
author of
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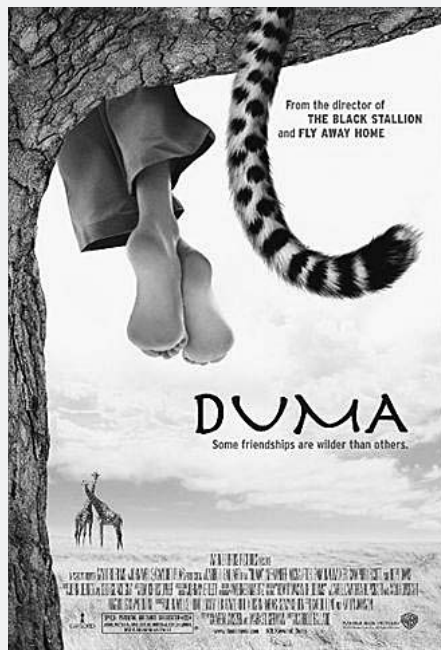


Parental Guidance Suggested: A Brief History of Children in/at the Movies?

3 PM, Friday, May 5 at McDonnell Hall, Room 162 at Washington University campus.

Reception will follow the presentation. **Free and Open to the Public.** It would be greatly appreciated if you would RSVP so that we might have a rough estimate of the number attending.

the showing of two new children's films not commercially released in St. Louis



kleberry Finn.

Cine at S. Lindbergh and Baptist

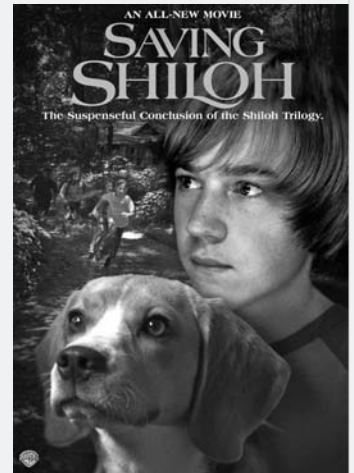
e Public

duced by noted film critic **Stephanie**
on of the film, led by Ms. Zackarek,

SECOND FILM SHOWING

“Saving Shiloh,” (2006), directed by Sandy Tung and produced by Carl Borack

Last in the trilogy based on the novels by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, “Saving Shiloh” continues the story of Shiloh, who, after being mistreated by town out-cast Judd, is saved by young Marty. In this well-wrought film about small town life, Marty tries to reach out to Judd just as Judd, in his clumsy way, tries to reach out as well. Misunderstanding and town prejudice get in the way but Judd ultimately finds redemption as Marty learns a lesson about trust and following one's heart. A touching, well-acted film.



1 PM, Saturday, May 6 at Brown Hall, Room 100 on Washington University campus.

Free and Open to the Public

Following the showing of the film, director **Sandy Tung** and producer **Carl Borack** will participate in a panel discussion about the making of the film.

Jeff Smith, director of Film and Media Studies, will lead the panel discussion following the showing of Saving Shiloh.

Films are suitable for children above the age of six. They contain no graphic violence, no sexual content, no sexual references, no profanity, and no nudity. In *Saving Shiloh*, there is a scene of a man being bitten by a dog and a dog being thrown against a fence. In *Duma*, there are scenes where the hero escapes wild animals in his trek but no one is hurt. There is also a scene where a man's face becomes swollen because he is afflicted with an illness.

For more information, please call the Center for the Humanities at 314-935-5576

Book of the Month

by Gerald Early

Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960

By Nicholas Sammond

Duke University Press, 2005, 472 pages including index and photos

There is an episode of the old television series *The Twilight Zone* that aired on January 24, 1964 entitled "Number Twelve Looks Just Like You," which captured, as a futuristic satire, a good deal of the anxiety surrounding parenting and the totalitarian possibilities inherent in the consumerism of American culture in the '50s and '60s, some of the same concerns that Nicholas Sammond writes about in

his book, *Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960*. The episode tells about a future America, where, at the age of eighteen, people are permitted, required, in fact, to change from their flawed bodies into which they were born to perfect, beautiful ones.

One young woman refuses this transformation on the grounds that she wants to be herself and think for herself, (whatever these clichés mean among the young, the show did not explore). She wants to be different, unique, which means she wants to remain "ugly." (A plain-looking actress played the role.) Her mother frets and her best friend worries about her refusal; both, portrayed as highly superficial, can hardly understand it. We learn during the course of the story that the girl's father underwent the transformation (presumably somewhat later than the age of eighteen) and then committed suicide. We also learn that he read literature, Keats, Shelley, Dostoevsky, and the like, something that is forbidden in this brave, new world.

In the end, the rebellious child is coerced or tricked into the transformation; in trying to escape it, she blunders into the operating room, and finally accepts it, emerging as an exact copy of her best friend. The natural child becomes both artificial and superficial. This tale is

1950s sociologist David Reisman's theory of other-directedness, of the need to belong and to operate in harmony with your surroundings, taken to nearly pathological extremes, as the total erasure of individual identity. And many of the viewers at the time may have recognized this as, Sammond reminds us, Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) was a best-seller in the 1950s.

Now, there is nothing especially original about this episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Other episodes of *The Twilight Zone* explored some of the same issues and other television shows of the period did as

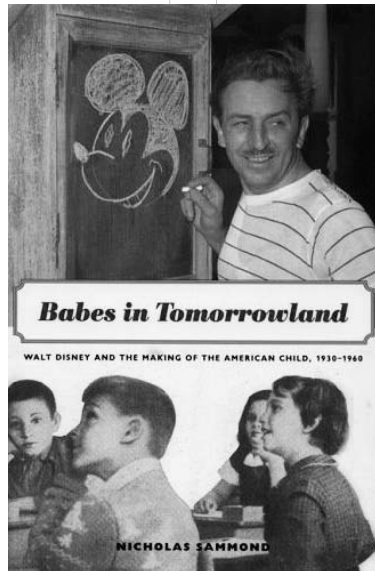
well: a jittery paranoia disguised as thoughtful escapism made on the cheap. (Sammons does not mention it in his book or any other television shows of the period that reflected his themes other than Disney, understandably so.)

What is interesting is not only the preoccupation with conformity, which was clearly considered not only repressive and unnatural but anti-intellectual and anti-imaginative; and the fear of the overall

feminization of American life (although the show featured a male actor, it centered on women who are completely consumed by their looks), a feminization that is both reductive and self-regarding; what is really striking is that the show displays an intense distrust not of science particularly, but of *social science*, of social engineering.¹ As Sammond notes in his book, there may have been a fear of science in the 1950s as evidenced in science fiction films.² But there "operated an equally powerful fascination with science and technology. . ." On the other hand, no one knew what to make of the promises of social science in the 1950s and many felt, both ordinary citizens and some social scientists themselves, that theories of social engineering were simply ways for expertise to exert influence and power or ways to keep existing power relations in place by rationalizing them and the institutions through which they operated, even if in

the name of benevolence. Social science seemed more of a trap between the desired and the real than even science itself, and far more seductive for the educated middle class as it was far more readable and accessible than the technical jargon of science. (Sammond makes the point that social scientists like Margaret Mead were going out of their way to write for the general public in order to make their books and theories more useful and influential.) None of the dialogue in "Number Twelve Looks Just Like You" has anything to do with science and everything to do with social science: why it is good or not good to be like everyone else? How should one fit in and why? Who or what is the individual? How do parents and peers help the adolescent make social adjustments? The show was all about the meaning of the demarcation between nature and culture, a fixation built on a set of enigmas that arose with the construction of 20th century childhood in the industrialized world, a fixation that is the major subject of the people Sammond writes about in his book.

It would be an oversimplification to say that the major obsession of 20th century bourgeois parenting has been how to make one's child like everyone else while also making the child different, to make the child a conformist and an individual in the same instance. But yet something close to this anxious desire has driven modern American parenting. It may explain why Walt Disney became such a popular and powerful filmmaker: his films celebrated both conformity and individuality, responded to bourgeois anxieties by affirming bourgeois values, while particularly validating the bourgeois family in its function of perserving its political, social, and aesthetic vision. Disney not only understood white suburban culture, he helped to create it. This is, in part, Sammond's argument in *Babes in Tomorrowland*: the marriage between bourgeois parenting and bourgeois social science, the result of the revolution in economic and social relations of the 19th century that transformed the child from worker and contributor to the family's economy to the child as an object of cultivation and a target for consumption. Childhood was now a period of life that transcended the mere biological, that was not only differ-



ent from adulthood but somehow spiritually and psychologically better than adulthood and something that a child, by moral right, *deserved* to have. It was virtually a crime to deny a child its “childhood” and even more for parents not to use the early formative years correctly to guide the child to healthy adulthood. As a result of this change, a network of institutions and a welter of academic and popular expertise (from social science about children to magazines for parents and children) sprang up around the child, to explain its nature, to provide for its well-being, protect it from harm, to educate it, to entertain it, to advise parents how to interpret and guide their child’s behavior. All of this, as Sammond suggests, created as much anxiety about children as it alleviated. This change helped to make Disney possible as much as Disney helped to make bourgeois parenting and bourgeois social science, at least aspects of it, possible. Disney became something of a bourgeois propagandist for the well-being of the white, middle class, suburban child. This is my basic understanding of Sammond’s book.

Sammond’s book is not, in any way, a biography of Walt Disney. Further, it is not a history of Disney’s company, although it does look at how the company developed its ideas, made its films, and marketed them. But it does not do this in the detailed, comprehensive way a book devoted to that subject would. Indeed, readers with little or no prior knowledge of Disney’s life, or of the history of his company, will probably find this book a bit disappointing and a bit of challenge to read. It is not an introductory text, although it can certainly be read by a non-specialist. It is highly scholarly with lengthy footnotes but not impenetrable, by any means. It is a readable book, as long as one knows exactly what the subject is that he or she seeks or knows exactly what sort of book this is. Sammond wishes to accomplish several things here: to explain the historical and sociological construction of arguments about the harmful and beneficial effects of media on children which started in earnest with the growing popularity of movies in the early part of the 20th century; to explain the construction of the “generic” or normal child “against which parents judge their efforts in raising their real children.” This “generic” child was largely the cre-

ation of bourgeois social science and, according to Sammond, inscribed the white, Protestant, middle class child (the offspring of the social science researchers themselves) as the normal child that transcended race, gender, geography, and class, although it was obviously a product of all of them. To accomplish this examination, Sammond juxtaposes the development of social and popular literature about children and child rearing and social theories about citizenship against the development of Walt Disney, both the company (the animated films, the nature films, the television program, and the theme park) and the man and as the icon of the company. Disney helps to construct the “generic child” as he forged entertainment for it. In short, this book is both an intellectual history and an exploration of popular culture, an ambitious mix but a thoroughly useful one in this instance.

The research here is prodigious. Sammond has read virtually every popular parenting magazine during the time period he examines (and many from early periods) as well as enormous quantities of social science theory and “national character” studies by some of the most important American academics of the 20th century. He has also seen every movie—feature film and short—Disney has ever made as well as all of Disney’s press material. His ability to explain, describe, and interpret his research is very good, as he tracks the changes in child-rearing practices from the managerial model before World War II to the so-called permissive model after the war. This is, by and large, an impressive book, very useful to students of child studies or cinema studies, although I think it could have been a little shorter as there are moments of repetition.

There are two things I would have liked to have seen here: some discussion of the impact of the Korean War on education and childhood. It was during this war that Americans became alarmed that some American prisoners of war could not only denounce their country in propaganda broadcasts made by the North Koreans and the Chinese (“brainwashing” was the new word), but that, when challenged, they could not intellectually defend democratic capitalism against Marxism. This generated a debate about child-rearing and educa-

tion in America as a result. Second, I wonder how convinced Americans were before World War II that the strict, managerial model of child-rearing, the dominant model of the time, was correct. Marjorie Rawlings’s famous 1938 novel, *The Yearling*, a standard in children’s and adolescent literature, clearly favors the child-rearing practices of the permissive father over the stern, bitter mother. I think some examination of child-rearing practices as dramatized in some of the most popular children’s literature of the period as well as a broader look at the depiction of children and adolescents in film (Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, the Dead End Kids, and black children like Sunshine Sammy) would have enriched the book. Of course, Sammond wanted to avoid some of the ground covered by Steven Watts in *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (1997). But some brief consideration of children in film and children’s literature would have deepened the book’s major arguments. In any case, his book nicely complements Watts’s, making Disney alive in a fresh way for students of American culture.

Babes in Tomorrowland is an excellent, energetic study that will quickly emerge as an important, even indispensable, book in the growing field of interdisciplinary children studies.

¹ The major reform movement to emerge from the 1950s was the civil rights movement or the break-up of state sponsored racial segregation. Its leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., had a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology and his books clearly give evidence of the influence of social science in relation to theories about race, assimilation, and the national acceptance of out-group members. The *Brown* decision of 1954 that made school segregation unconstitutional was based on social science theory as well. African Americans, since the days of Edward Wilmot Blyden and W. E. B. Du Bois, believed that social science would be the mechanism that would end racism by revealing the structural basis of inequality, the institutional construction of inequality, by, in effect, “de-naturalizing” race and by “de-naturalizing” inequality. Naturalizing inequality is the goal of all hegemonic aspirations. Of course, the white, bourgeois reaction to the civil rights movement was greatly conditioned by race but some of the reaction probably stemmed from the general sense of ambivalence that a good deal of the middle class felt about social science. It nearly goes without saying that the most naturalized instance of inequality is the relationship between adults and children.

² Since, in most science fiction films of the 1950s, the monsters are destroyed by military weapons, which are the result of science (the Atomic Bomb was the most discussed scientific discovery of the age), or by some scientific technique, the public can hardly be said to be completely or even strongly anti-science.