



the figure in the carpet

One Civilized Reader Is Worth a Thousand Boneheads

Theory like Mist on Eyeglasses

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Since last May, the Center for the Humanities has collected about two hundred DVD and VHS movies focusing on jazz and children’s film/animation. I have not had time to view these films, so when the center’s director, Gerald Early, suggested I select a few from a set he recently donated to the collection as subjects for these notes, I was happy to do so. At the beginning of this year, he had “mysteriously” donated a series of Charlie Chan films. I say “mysteriously” because these films are neither about jazz nor children’s studies. I was not familiar with them, but I like murder mysteries and the Chinese-sounding name of the lead character interested me. The first thing that caught my attention, however, was the photo of the actor portraying Charlie Chan. Although the actor was made up to resemble someone of Chinese descent, he was obviously Caucasian.

My first selection, “Charlie Chan in Egypt” (1935), was quite enjoyable, although as an archaeologist I cringed at the treatment of mummies and artifacts used as props in the story. For a modern

movie viewer, however, the film has more problematic elements, especially the buffoonish role of an African American (played by Lincoln Perry, a.k.a., Stepin Fetchit—for review of his biography see *Belles Lettres*, September/December 2005, p. 14) and some condescending attitudes toward the Chinese character of Charlie Chan (played by the Swedish actor Warner Oland). Still, I enjoyed the film and also liked the other three in the set, as well as the later (1944) but less well produced “The Chinese Cat” (starring Sidney Toler as Chan). Considering there were forty-four Charlie Chan movies made from 1931 to 1949 (actually, there were three others from 1925 to 1929, each with a different actor who played Chan), I wondered why I had not seen one of them on television previously.

A quick Google search explained why I had not seen any of the Charlie Chan films on television. Fox, the company that owns the TV rights to the best Chan films, seldom shows them and will not license them to anyone else, although they were released on DVD in 2006. This situation arose in 2003 when Fox was planning a Charlie Chan

“Chilling and Entertaining”
– *New York-World Telegram*

Honolulu detective Charlie Chan (Warner Oland) battles the forces of evil- both earthly and supernatural- in this 1935 film set in the land of pharaohs.



In one of the most complex and fascinating films of the Charlie Chan series, The famous detective is hired when an archeologist disappears during the excavation of ancient art treasures in Egypt. Chan must sort out the stories of the archeology team, deal with the crazed son of the missing scientist, find out why priceless objects are turning up in the hands of private collectors, and battle a raft of seemingly supernatural events. The cast includes an appearance by Rita Hayworth (under an early stage name of Rita Cansino) as a slinky native housemaid.

*-Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment 2006.
Original film date 1935.*

movie marathon. It was decided to cancel the marathon and to “censor” the films when the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) claimed that the fictional Chinese detective was portrayed as a racially offensive stereotype. The Fox Movie Channel responded that the films were produced at a time

editor's notes

visit our blog site at <http://cenhum.artsci.wustl.edu/publications/blog.html>



when “racial sensitivities” were different from those of today, and are now offensive (but obviously not offensive enough to keep Fox from making money on them via the DVD release). Although they were

as historic documents they must be judged by whether they portray the progressive or regressive elements in their surroundings

later shown, the program featured a panel of Asian Americans who proceeded to address the racial stereotypes, the casting of non-Asians in Asiatic roles, and race relations in general. In other words, the decision to cancel them and then later to show them encased in a critical introductory and follow-up discussion combined business and identity politics with a nod to political correctness. With all that baggage, it is a small wonder they are seldom shown.

Just as some people look at life through rose-colored glasses, I suppose if you looked through a certain predetermined set of ethnic lenses, you could find fault with the characterization of Chan. Although I am Chinese and a U.S. citizen, I do not wear the same set of theoretical “glasses” that led to the complaints against the movies. In fact, I found Chan’s role and his aphorisms enjoyable, especially one of his lines from “Charlie Chan in Egypt”: “Theory like mist on eyeglasses—obscure facts.” That sums up the critical tempest over Chan’s character. Although Detective Chan was referring to theories being offered about a particular murder in the film, I think that theories about political correctness often obscure the facts, which may be pointing in a different direction. The important fact here is that when the films first appeared they were a remarkable step forward in the portrayal of Chinese people (and all Asians for that matter).

The character of Charlie Chan comes from the novels written by Earl Derr Biggers. In 1924, while on vacation in Hawaii, Biggers heard stories about a real-life Chinese detective, Chang Apana, who was based in Honolulu. From those tales he created the character

of Inspector Charlie Chan of the Honolulu Police Department. Bigger’s Chan, a skilled and professional police officer, stood in stark contrast to Sax Rohmer’s villainous Fu Manchu, a series of novels and movies that began with the publication of *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* in 1913. The description of Fu Manchu as “the yellow peril incarnate in one man” symbolized a common perception of Chinese in America at the time the Chan character was introduced. The Yellow Peril was a common theme in fiction of the time, a derogatory color metaphor that originated in the late nineteenth century when many Chinese laborers immigrated to the United States. Many U.S. citizens thought these East Asian immigrants threatened their wages and standards of living, as well as western culture in general. That image underwrote the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which reduced Chinese immigration from 30,000 per year to just 105 (U.S. immigration laws remained discriminatory toward Asians until 1965). In fact, lynching of Asian immigrants by vigilante groups was common in the early 1900s, paralleling the activities of the Ku Klux Klan and related groups in the south.

The Fu Manchu character made his American film debut in 1929, in “The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu.” Oddly enough, Warner Oland also played the Chinese lead in this movie, and again in 1930’s “The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu” and 1931’s “Daughter of the Dragon.” So the fact is that the introduction of the Charlie Chan character, the first Chinese character who is not a villain or in a subservient social role, is in reality a positive development. In fact, in his best films, Charlie Chan is the kind of person we would all like to be: dignified, brave, wise, calm, observant, humble, polite, generous, and exceedingly patient. Although we must note that many of the social values we see in these old films have changed, as historic documents they must be judged by whether they portray the progressive or regressive elements in their surroundings. This requires an understanding of their social context, but it is disingenuous to judge them by today’s standards. Nor are

today’s standards always so enlightened. Even recent movies—like the 2007 retelling of the Battle of Thermopylae, where the Spartans are embodiments of ancient Greek ideals, with perfectly sculpted physiques, while the Persians are monsters—contain offensive characterizations. Given our current political relationships with those of Persian descent, one has to ask which side of the progressive/regressive divide *300* falls when viewed critically.

One remaining mystery here is why Charlie Chan was portrayed by a white man. On one level, it is probably the case that this is part and parcel of the “star system” that dominated the film-making industry at the time (the same system that cast Yul Brenner as the King of Siam). Even for B movies such as these, the studios needed known actors to draw audiences. In the later films, all of Chan’s numerous sons are portrayed by actors of Chinese descent. As for the lead role, perhaps there was no actor of Chinese ancestry as capable as Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, or Roland Winters. In any case, the Charlie Chan character in all these movies is both Chinese and heroic.



Jian Leng
Associate Director
The Center for the Humanities

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Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King

By Foster Hirsch

Knopf, 2007, 573 pages with photos, bibliography, filmography, and index

A good actor is still a good actor, even if he has given a bad performance recently. And a good director remains a good director, even after making several unsuccessful pictures.

—Otto Preminger, *Preminger: An Autobiography* (1977)

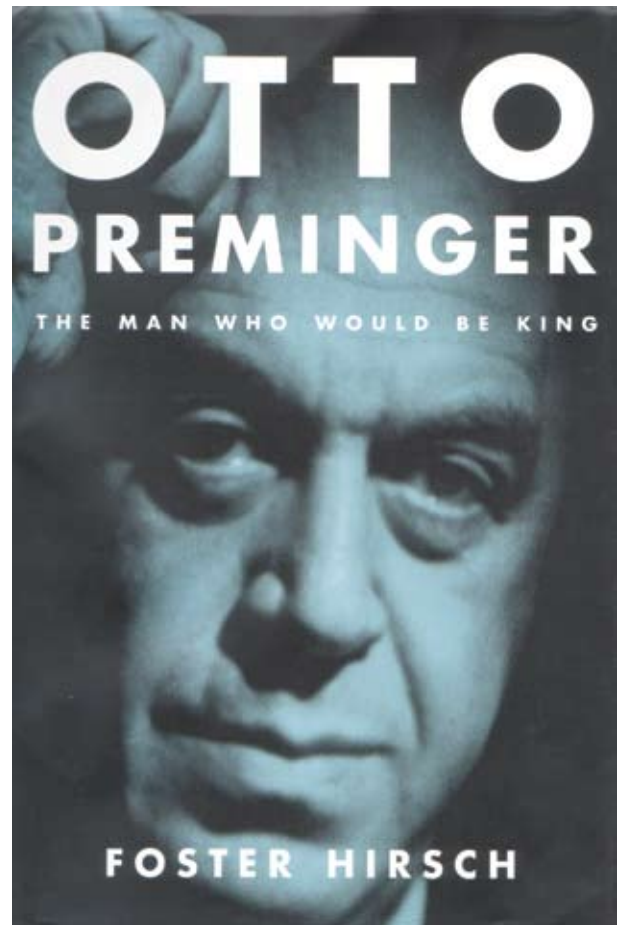
In 1964, Otto Preminger (1905–86) was at the height of his power as a filmmaker, as he was at the height of his reputation, both critically and commercially, after having made the controversial Gershwin Brothers/Dubose Heyward folk opera, *Porgy and Bess* (1959); the highly acclaimed court drama *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959); the extremely popular epic *Exodus* (1960); the well-wrought political drama about the U.S. Senate, *Advise and Consent* (1962), the first film to have a scene in a gay bar (1962); and *The Cardinal*, about the machinations of the Catholic Church (1963). The expectation was that even better films were to come.

But between 1964 and 1968, things changed drastically. He directed *In Harm's Way* (1965), a film about the U.S. Navy after the bombing of Pearl Harbor that starred Patricia Neal, John Wayne, and Kirk Douglas; *Bunny Lake Is Missing* (1965), a mystery about a kidnapped child, starring Carol Lynley, Keir Dullea, and Laurence Olivier; *Hurry Sundown* (1967), based on a huge (1,000-plus pages) potboiler novel about segregation and race in the south after World War II that starred Michael Caine, Jane Fonda, and Robert Hooks; and *Skidoo* (1968), an offbeat film about a hitman forced by his Mafia chieftain to make one last hit but who recants his profession after taking LSD and experiencing a vision of peace. This movie starred Jackie Gleason, Groucho Marx, and Carol Channing. *Skidoo* (considered by many the worst film Preminger ever made although it now enjoys a cult following), *Hurry Sundown*, and *Bunny Lake Is Missing* were savaged by the

critics and were commercial flops. *In Harm's Way*, whose climatic naval battle sequence was so crude and ineptly designed as a special effect (looking like the toy miniatures one sees in Japanese Godzilla movies) that star Kirk Douglas publicly proclaimed he was embarrassed by it, received mixed reviews and did moderate box office. Indeed, *In Harm's Way* was the last film that Preminger was to make until the very end of his filmmaking career that would receive even middling reviews, and it was the last that was to make any money.

To put the decline of Preminger in perspective, compare his output between 1964 and 1968 with that of some of his peer directors: Norman Jewison directed gambling classic *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965) with Steve McQueen; the well-regarded cold war comedy *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!* (1966); the Academy Award-winning *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), with Sidney Poitier as a northern cop working with southern white racist sheriff Rod Steiger; and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), the first-rate caper film with Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway.

Or take John Frankenheimer, who directed *Seven Days in May* (1964), with Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster about an attempted military coup in the United States; *The Train* (1964), starring Burt Lancaster as a French train engineer who stops the Nazis from shipping out to Germany a cache of stolen art; *Seconds* (1966), probably Rock Hudson's finest performance as an old man who is rejuvenated with tragic results; *Grand Prix* (1966), with James Garner and Eva Marie Saint in a film about Formula One auto racing; and *The Fixer* (1968), a fine dramatization of Bernard Malamud's novel about Jewish life in czarist



Otto Preminger Films, Inc.
Jacket Design by Carol Carlson

Russia starring Dirk Bogarde and Alan Bates.

Or take Stanley Kubrick, who made only two films between 1964 and 1968: *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), starring George C. Scott, Peter Sellers, and Sterling Hayden in probably the most brilliant black comedy about the cold war ever made; and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), starring Gary Lockwood and Keir Dullea, a science fiction film that has attained nearly mythic status in the history of cinema. Clearly, compared with some of the leading auteurs of his era, the filmmakers with whom he would have wanted to be compared, Preminger did not measure up well. By the middle 1960s, he was not putting out films that were nearly as good or as successful commercially or as well-remembered or that have withstood the test of time. And the films that followed in Preminger's oeuvre only got worse. It is no wonder that

skeptics questioned whether Preminger was ever a good filmmaker and whether he deserved a reputation of being one of the world's important auteurs.

During his heyday from the 1950s through the 1960s, Otto Preminger was arguably the most famous independent filmmaker in the western world, functioning as producer, director, talent discoverer, and ballyhoo artist. He promoted himself relentlessly, sometimes shamelessly, always with a certain sense of humor but never without Barnum-like excess. His were not merely movies but rather cultural events deserving of extensive media coverage. His 1960 film about the creation of Israel, *Exodus*, a three-hour-plus blockbuster made during the height of the Cinemascope epic period, was booked at only the most exclusive first-run downtown theaters, playing twice a day on a reserved seat basis. As an eight-year-old, I thought *Exodus* and *Ben-Hur* (1959), which also was released in the same restricted way, playing in the most posh movie houses, were the two most important films ever released in the history of cinema. Indeed, I thought *Exodus* was more important because I knew who directed it, while I had no idea who directed *Ben-Hur*. When I was eight years old, I knew the names of many movie stars but only two filmmakers: Alfred Hitchcock and Otto Preminger.

Yet while no one would deny that Preminger was probably the most famous filmmaker of his day, how great

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was he as an artist? Even today, among cineastes, the jury is still out. But clearly Preminger's films, even his good ones, are not nearly as well regarded as those, say, of fellow Austrian Jewish émigré Billy Wilder (1906–2002), director of *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Lost*

Weekend (1945), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), *Ace in the Hole* (1951), *Stalag 17* (1953), which featured Preminger as the Nazi commandant of a POW camp, *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *The Apartment* (1960), *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), and *The Fortune Cookie* (1966). With the possible exception of *Laura* (1944), his great film noir, almost none of Preminger's films have attained the status of the best or even some of the lesser films of Wilder.

According to Preminger's biographer, film scholar Foster Hirsch, author of *Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King*, Preminger's reputation has been damaged, in part, by the fame of his temper, his outbursts on the set, his public belittling of actors and crew members. Some actors—Tom Tyron, Dyan Cannon, and Linda Darnell, for instance—despised him. African American actress Dorothy Dandridge, who starred in two Preminger movies (*Carmen Jones* [1954] and *Porgy and Bess*), barely surviving the experience emotionally, and who was his lover for a time, said, “[Preminger] told me why he was tough on a set, and tough with others, and tough in his dealings. ‘Don't show kindness,’ he said, ‘People will construe that as weakness, and they'll take advantage of you’”. But surely Preminger's nasty attitude toward some of his coworkers should not have seriously affected his standing. He was certainly not the only director who behaved like a son of a bitch. Billy Wilder, for instance, was highly autocratic as well—and a much cruder, less urbane man than Preminger to boot. Preminger, in many respects, treated his actors well, showing concern for their families and providing them with first-class accommodations and gourmet food during location shoots.

Moreover, Preminger was a pathbreaking director: his films *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) successfully challenged the repressive movie censorship board and the Catholic Legion of Decency with their subject matter, as did *Anatomy of a Murder*, where the word “rape” was freely ban-

died about, as well as pair of woman's panties. His two iconic all-black-cast films, *Carmen Jones* and *Porgy and Bess*, are among the best such films ever made, presenting the black characters in a dignified, respectful, yet passionate, even mythic way. Preminger was able to draw an Academy Award-nominated performance from Dandridge in *Carmen Jones* and made her the first dramatic black female star. “*Carmen Jones* was among the few of my pictures that succeeded with both the critics and the public,” Preminger wrote in his autobiography. (*Porgy and Bess*, incidentally, is too important and impressive a film not to be remastered and released on DVD. Its revival has been suppressed: “Opposition of the Gershwin estate ...; fear of militant black reprisals; a mysterious clause in Samuel Goldwyn's [the producer's] will—each has been circulated as an explanation for the film's disappearance,” Hirsch writes.) In 1959, he hired blacklisted scriptwriter Dalton Trumbo to write *Exodus*, publicly acknowledging the fact and giving Trumbo screen credit; this was before Kirk Douglas hired Trumbo to write *Spartacus* (1960). So, Douglas has been erroneously credited with breaking the blacklist when it was actually Preminger who did it. In 1966, he courageously took an integrated cast to a still-strenuously segregated Louisiana to do location shooting for *Hurry Sundown*. In 1969, he hired an inexperienced African American film editor, Harry Howard, who went on to become a highly respected craftsman. And Preminger's other film noirs besides *Laura*—such as *Whirlpool* (1949), *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950), and *Angel Face* (1952)—would easily be considered among the best in that genre. The famous scene in *Fallen Angel* (1945) of a weary Linda Darnell, rubbing her sore feet in a cheap diner after having been dumped on the road by a guy who made false promises, has to be among the most touching and the most sensual photographic presentations of a woman in the history of Hollywood cinema. It is both deeply erotic and tremendously moving. There are at least a handful of such brilliant scenes even in Preminger's worst movies.

Preminger was born in Wiznitz, Poland, of professional middle class Jewish parents, his father an important lawyer with growing status in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By the time Otto was ten, his father had become an influential public prosecutor in Vienna. Otto was not a very good student. He was fascinated by the theater at an early age and by his late adolescence wanted to be an actor. To satisfy his father, Otto earned a law degree but never practiced the profession. He never succeeded as an actor either, having too limited a range and lacking matinee-idol looks, although he did have a commanding presence. But he found his true calling as a director and an administrator when he began to work for famed theater impresario Max Reinhardt. Otto knew how to run a theater in such a way as to be artistically engaging and commercially successfully. He came to the attention of Hollywood, particularly Twentieth Century-Fox and Darryl Zanuck and his partner Joseph Schenck, who hired him in 1935 to come make films in the United States, even though Preminger had only, to that point, directed one minor film, not very well, and could not speak English. Preminger, always a patriotic American, even before he officially became an American citizen, felt his coming to this country was his second birth.

His American film career was rocky at the start, and Zanuck eventually fired him over a disagreement concerning the filming of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, a film Preminger did not feel qualified to direct. Preminger directed plays in New York with some success and bided his time for a return to Hollywood. He returned when Bill Goetz, replacing Darryl Zanuck, who was on war leave, as head of Twentieth Century-Fox brought him back to direct *Margin for Error* (1943), which Preminger had directed on Broadway. It was during his second term at Twentieth Century-Fox that Preminger found his stride, directing what most consider to be his greatest film, the murder film noir (and secretly gay-coded film), *Laura*, in 1944. (It was at the end of that same year that Preminger discovered that his brief affair

with stripper Gypsy Rose Lee resulted in the birth of their son, Erik, who as an adult tried to make films with his father without much talent or success.) By 1950, Preminger had become semi-autonomous, under contract to work for Fox for six months a year and then free to pursue what he wanted with the rest of his time. *The Moon Is Blue*, a huge box-office hit, was his first film as an independent director and producer. A western called *River of No Return* (1954)—with troubled and troublesome actress Marilyn Monroe, who hated Preminger and to whom he returned the sentiment—was his last work as a studio hireling. He bought out his half-year contract with Fox and became completely independent. For several years he was one of the most bankable and significant filmmakers around.

Preminger married three times and had numerous affairs before, during, and after the first two marriages. His third marriage—in his fifties when, I suppose, he was a bit less sexually rambunctious—produced a boy and a girl, twins. Despite his staunch patriotism and his intense dislike of communism, Preminger was a social and political liberal who voted Democrat.

Foster tells the story of Preminger's life and career very well, quite sympathetically, finding much good in some of the films that may escape the eye of the casual viewer but without sugarcoating the mediocrity. His observation that Preminger's time as a company director was "no hardship—he was not an artistic renegade determined to dismantle the system's codes," that Preminger's creative temperament was "essentially [a] mainstream sensibility" is a very astute reading of the man and his work. Preminger was a passionate assimilationist, in part because he grew up in an assimilated Jewish atmosphere in Austria, which explains his rather relaxed moral stance in



Otto Preminger Films, Inc.
Jacket Design by Carol Carlson

his work, a cosmopolite open to various perspectives, an observer rather than analytical judge. But, of course, Preminger, fully conscious of his Jewishness, more sharply than even his parents who held out hope even in mid-1930s Austria that the anti-Semitism they were experiencing was some passing phase, was always an outsider as well. This sense of being an outsider was probably why he had an interest in blacks and even felt he could identify with them. And it was probably why he liked liberal politics. This is why, as Foster points out, several of his major films in the end are either about institutions—*Advise and Consent* (a legislative body), *The Cardinal* (the Catholic Church), *Exodus* (a nation), *Anatomy of a Murder* (the trial court), *In Harm's Way* (the Navy)—or about the mythology of the marginalized: *Carmen Jones* (black sexuality), *Porgy and Bess* (black communal life), *The Man With the Golden Arm* (the drug addict). Preminger's films were not just aimed at a mainstream audience but were rather an exploration of what constituted the mainstream, its reality, its claims to authority. Perhaps only an assimilated Jew with a somewhat quirky sense of assimilation would want to think about the meaning of the mainstream in quite the way Preminger did. When Preminger did this well he was as brilliant and important filmmaker as any of his peers, flashing genius as if it were a common coin of the realm.





Events in February

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

Saturday, February 2

Susan McBride will sign her new release, *Too Pretty to Die*. 2pm, Borders Brentwood, 1519 S. Brentwood Blvd, 918-8189.

St. Louis Writers Guild will host a workshop featuring *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author **Bobbi Smith**. Her presentation, "Publishing from A to Z," will cover the industry basics for writers who seek to sell their work. Free for SLWG members, \$5 charge for nonmembers. 10am, Barnes & Noble Crestwood, 9618 Watson Road, 821-3823.

Monday, February 4

Join the **Book Bunch**, Grand Glaize's adult evening book club. This month's selection is *Life of Pi* by Martel Yann. Come join a lively discussion about this book and exchange reading suggestions with others. Registration required. 7pm, SLCL-Grand Glaize, Meeting Room 1, 636-225-6454.

Main Street Books invites you to discuss the book *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory. 7pm, Main Street Books, 307 S. Main Street, St. Charles, 636-949-0105.

Tuesday, February 5

St. Louis Public Library invites you to join the **Machacek Book Discussion Group**. 10am, SLPL-Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948

The **Webster Groves Public Library Book Discussion Group** will meet to discuss *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ismael Beah. 6 pm, WGPL, 301 East Lockwood, 961-3784.

Wednesday, February 6

WU Assembly Series presents **Leon Kass** with his lecture titled, "Brave New Biology: The Challenge for Bioethics." 4pm, Graham Chapel, WU Danforth Campus, <http://assemblyseries.wustl.edu/>.

Borders Book Club will meet to discuss *Atone-ment* by Ian McEwan. 7pm, Borders Sunset Hills, 10990 Sunset Hills Plaza, 909-0300.

Make Mine Mystery and **Main Street Books** invite you to join **Leighton Gage** as he discusses and signs his book *Blood of the Wicked*. 7pm, Main Street Books, 307 S. Main Street, St. Charles, 636-949-0105.

Authors @ Your Library presents **Christopher Alan Bracey**, who will discuss and sign *Saviors or Sellouts: The Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism, from Booker T. Washington to Condo-leeza Rice*. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid, 367-4120.

Thursday, February 7

Join **Book Journeys** for a discussion of *Outlander*, a work of historical fiction by Diana Gabaldon. Auditorium. 2pm, SLCL-Indian Trails, 428-5424.

Authors @ Your Library presents **Cecil Brown**, who will discuss and sign his book *Dude, Where's My Black Studies Department?* 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 N. Euclid, 367-4120.

The WU Writing Program Reading Series invites you to join fiction writer **Janet Kauffman** as she reads from her work. 8pm, Hurst Lounge in Duncker Hall, WU Danforth Campus, 935-5190.

Observable Readings presents **Esiaba Irobi** and **Obi Nwakanma**. **Irobi** will discuss his book *Why I Don't Like Philip Larkin*. **Nwakanma** will discuss his books *The Horsemen and Other Poems* and *The Roped Urn*. For more information visit <http://observable.org>. 8pm, Schlafly Bottleworks, 7260 Southwest Ave., 241-2337.

Saturday, February 9

You are invited to join the **Mystery Lover's Book Club** meeting. 10am, SLPL-Carondelet Branch, 6800 Michigan Ave., 752-9224.

Write-Along Writer's Workshop. Bring a sample of your writing and be critiqued by your peers. Writers of all ability and skill levels welcome. 11am, SLCL-Indian Trails, 8400 Delpport, 428-5424.

Sunday, February 10

Authors @ Your Library presents renowned Harvard professor **Henry Louis Gates**. 2pm, SLPL-Central Branch, 1301 Olive Street, 241-2288.

The **BookClub** will have their 385th discussion on *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* by Stephanie Coontz. For time and venue, visit www.klinedinst.com or call 636-451-3232.

Monday, February 11

Lifescapes Winter Session: This month's selection is *Profiles in Courage*, John F. Kennedy's tribute to the integrity of his historical senatorial colleagues, including John Quincy Adams, Sam Houston, and Robert A. Taft. Registration required. 1:30pm, SLCL-Natural Bridge, 7606 Natural Bridge, 382-3116.

Tuesday, February 12

HQ Evening Book Discussion features *One Thousand White Women: The Journal of May Dodd* by Jim Fergus. 7pm, SLCL-Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 994-3300.

As the Page Turns Book Discussion Group will meet to discuss *The Mermaid Chair* by Sue Monk Kidd. Adults. 7pm, Auditorium, SLCL-Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Road, 638-2210.

St. Louis Writers Guild's Open MIC Night. All are welcome. No charge to attend, but please patronize our venue host. Register to read online at www.stlwritersguild.org. 7pm, Wired Coffee, 3860 S. Lindbergh, 821-3823.

St. Louis Jewish Book Festival presents **Michael B. Oren**, CBS News analyst and author of *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present*. Call for tickets and pricing. 7:30pm, 2 Millstone Campus Drive, 442-3299.

Wednesday, February 13

WU Assembly Series presents Iranian-born poet and WU professor **Fatemah Keshavarz**, who will discuss her book *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran*. 11am, Graham Chapel, WU Danforth Campus, <http://assembly-series.wustl.edu/>.

BT Book Discussion Group will be discussing *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* by Lisa See. New members are welcome. 11am, Room 1, SLCL-Bridgeton Trails, 3455 McKelvey Road, 291-7570.

Join **Boone's Bookies** for a great discussion of *Blessings* by Anna Quindlen. Refreshments provided. 2pm and 7pm, SLCL-Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Rd., 636-227-9630.

Sisters in Crime presents memoirist and poet **Jason Heisserer**, with a lecture titled "Hero's Journey." Participants might want to view the films *The Wizard of Oz*, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, and/or *The Golden Compass* before the lecture. 7pm, Steinway Piano Gallery, 12033 Dorsett Road, joannaslan@aol.com.

St. Louis Jewish Book Festival presents renowned cardiologist and author of *The South Beach Diet Heart Program*, **Dr. Arthur Agatston**. Call for tickets and pricing. 7:30pm, 2 Millstone Campus Drive, 442-3299.

Thursday, February 14

Take time off after lunch to gather with **NB's Thursday Matinee Book Club** as we discuss one or two selected titles from a wide variety of current and past titles that could have made the best-seller lists if they didn't! Each month's selection is announced at the previous month's meeting. Contact us for the current book selection. 1:30pm, SLCL-Natural Bridge, 7606 Natural Bridge, 382-3116.



HQ Afternoon Book Discussion will feature *Before You Know Kindness* by Christopher A. Bohjalian. 2pm, SLCL–Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 994-3300.

You are invited to a reading by fiction writer and essayist **Erin McGraw**. She is the author of four books of fiction. A new novel, *The Seamstress of Hollywood Boulevard*, will be published by Houghton-Mifflin in 2008. 7pm, Room 450 Lucas Hall, UM-St. Louis, One University Blvd., 516-5590.

St. Louis Public Library invites you to join **Public Contemplation**, a philosophy and religion book discussion group. 7pm, SLPL–Carpenter Branch, 3309 South Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

Saturday, February 16

The **St. Louis Poetry Center** is sponsoring a writing workshop with **Troy Jollimore**, winner of the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry. Registration is limited to 10 persons; the fee is \$50 for SLPC members and \$60 for non-members, which includes lunch. Members have priority until February 8. To reserve a spot, mail a note and check to: SLPC, 567 North & South, #8, St. Louis, MO 63130, or email info@stlouispoetrycenter.org for more information.

Barnes & Noble invite you to “Tea and Empathy.” Enjoy a cup of tea and a discussion guided by Stephanie Bond’s article *Get a Life! Eight Steps to Create Your Own Life List*. 11am, Barnes & Noble Crestwood, 9618 Watson Road, 843-9480.

MAP (Missouri Association of Playwrights) will have readings of ten-minute plays on New Years Resolution(s). The playwrights “love” an audience. 2pm, SLCL–Headquarters Branch, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 994-3300.

A faculty reading and celebration for the tenth anniversary of **UMSL’s MFA Program** will take place. The readers will be **John Dalton, Steve Schreiner, Howard Schwartz, Nanora Sweet, Mary Troy, and Eamonn Wall**. There will be a party with food and cash bar. 7pm, E. Desmond and Mary Ann Lee Theater of the Touhill Performing Arts Center, UMSL, One University Blvd., 516-5590, or visit www.touhill.org.

Sunday, February 17

St. Louis Poetry Center Sunday Workshop with guest poet-critic: **Troy Jollimore**. Guest poet-critics lead the workshop, providing professional critique on a selection of pre-submitted manuscripts. All poems submitted receive written comments, though it’s not necessary to submit a poem in order to attend. For submission instructions, visit www.stlouispoetrycenter.org/workshops/. 1:30pm, Auditorium, UCPL, 6702 Delmar.

Monday, February 18

Main Street Books invites you to join the discussion of *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* by Bill Bryson. 7pm, Main Street Books, 307 S. Main Street, St. Charles, 636-949-0105.

Tuesday, February 19

You are invited to join the discussion of *Book Thief* by Markus Zusak at **Main Street Books**. 9am, Main Street Books, 307 S. Main Street, St. Charles, 636-949-0105.

The **Book Discussion Group** will be reading *The Memory Keeper’s Daughter* by Kim Edwards. 2pm, Auditorium, SLCL–Florissant Valley Branch, 195 New Florissant Rd. S., 921-7200.

Join the **American Journeys Book Discussion Group** on the third Tuesday of each month to discuss diverse American journeys. This month *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck will be discussed. 3pm, SLCL–Headquarters, 1640 S. Lindbergh, 994-3300.

Join the **Bridgeton Trails Book Discussion Group**. We will be discussing *Hannah Coulter* by Wendell Barry. New members are welcome. Adults. 7pm, Room 2. SLCL–Bridgeton Trails, 3455 McKelvey Road, 291-7570.

The **Tuesday Night Writer’s Critique Group** will meet to read and critique each other’s work. All writers are welcome. For more info, contact Susan at 3w6k-gd64@dea.spamcon.org. 7pm, Barnes & Noble Crestwood, 9618 Watson Road.

St. Louis Writers Guild presents **Loud Mouth Open MIC Night**. This live performance reading event is for writers and guests who are 21+. No charge to attend, but please patronize our venue host. Register to read at www.stlwritersguild.org. (NOTE: New date for Loud Mouth has moved up one week for 2008). 8pm, The Mack, (21+) 4615 Macklind Avenue, 821-3823.

St. Louis Public Library invites you to join the **Machacek Book Discussion Group**. 10am, SLPL–Machacek Branch, 6424 Scanlan Ave., 781-2948

Join the **SLPL Book Discussion Group** while they discuss *Dirt Music* by Tim Winton. 6:45pm, SLPL–Kingshighway Branch, 2260 South Vandeventer, 771-5450.

Wednesday, February 20

The **Book Discussion Group** will be reading *Daughter of Fortune* by Isabel Allende. 7:30pm, SLCL–Florissant Valley Branch, 9195 New Florissant Rd. S., 921-7200.

Thursday, February 21

Novelist and short-story writer **Elizabeth McCracken**, author of *Niagara Falls All Over Again*, will read from her work. 1:30pm, Pearson House, Webster University, 8260 Big Bend, 968-7170.

Join **Book Journeys** for a discussion of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Self-made, self-invented millionaire Jay Gatsby embodies some of his country’s most abiding obsessions: money, ambition, greed, and the promise of new beginnings. 2pm, SLCL–Indian Trails, 8400 Delpert, 428-5424.

Friday, February 22

Let’s Chat Book Discussion Group will enjoy a heart-stopping thriller as an ancient language professor assists the U.S. military to find an Incan idol before terrorists can use it to create a frightening new weapon in *The Temple* by Matt Reilly. 2pm, SLCL–Daniel Boone Branch, 300 Clarkson Road, 636-227-9630.

Saturday, February 23

Bring a sample of your writing and be critiqued by your peers at the **Write-Along Writer’s Workshop**. Writers of all ability and skill levels welcome. 11am, SLCL–Indian Trails, 8400 Delpert, 428-5424.

You are invited to join the **Book Discussion Group** to discuss *The Cloud Atlas* by Liam Callanan. SLPL–Buder Branch, 4401 Hampton, 352-2900.

Authors @ Your Library presents **Robert Bradley**, who will discuss his book *Stories about the Black Experience*. Books will be available for purchase. SLPL–Julia Davis Branch, 4415 Natural Bridge Ave., 383-3021.

Monday, February 25

The **Thornbirds** will discuss *Salem Falls* by Jodi Picoult. 2pm, SLCL–Thornhill, 12863 Willowycyck Dr., 878-7730.

¡Leamos! Book Discussion Group will discuss *El Carterode Neruda* by Antonio Skarmeta (Chile). SLPL–Carpenter Branch, 3309 S. Grand Blvd., 772-6586.

Tuesday, February 26

As the Page Turns Book Discussion Club will meet and discuss Tonya Bolden’s *And Not Be Afraid to Dare*. 7pm, SLCL–Weber Road Branch, 4444 Weber Road, 638-2210.

The **St. Louis Poetry Center** presents Poetry @ the Point, featuring **Deborah Mashibini** and **JoyCe Blue**. Call Dean for more info, 636-225-5423. Doors open at 7pm, reading starts at 7:30pm. The Focal Point, 2720 Sutton in Maplewood, one block east of Big Bend and Manchester, next door to the Maya Café.

Wednesday, February 27

Join the **Central Book Discussion Group** as they discuss *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather. SLPL–Central Branch, 1301 Olive, 539-0396.



Thursday, February 28

The **WU Writing Program Reading Series** invites you to join poet **Michael Palmer** as he reads from his work. 8pm, Hurst Lounge in Duncker Hall, WU Danforth Campus, 935-5190.

You are welcome to join the **Schlafly Book Discussion Group**. This month's selection is *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* by Alice Walker. 7pm, SLPL-Schlafly Branch, 225 North Euclid, 367-4120.

Notices

St. Louis Writers Guild announces **Wired Art Contest**. Seeking submissions of poems, essays, or short stories (up to 500 words) inspired by artwork created by **Art World Association** and on display now through February 26 at Wired Coffee, 3860 S. Lindbergh, in Sunset Hills. For guidelines and required entry form, visit www.stl-writersguild.org.

The annual **Washington University Summer Writers Institute and Young Writers Institute** will be held June 16–27, 2008. The institute consists of two weeks of intensive writing workshops. Choose from fiction (beginner or advanced), poetry, or creative nonfiction. The two weeks include personal conferences, readings, craft talks, and panel discussions. You may choose to attend on a noncredit basis or to earn three college credits. The Young Writers Institute is a workshop for St. Louis-area high-school juniors and seniors. They can receive helpful guidance on their poetry and prose. Noncredit basis: \$795. For three college credits: \$1,595. Applications must include a \$35 application fee, a completed application form, and a writing sample. Young Writers Institute applicants must submit an application and application fee, a writing sample, and a teacher's recommendation. Applications will be accepted on a space available basis. For more information visit the website <http://ucollege.wustl.edu/summerwr> or call 935-6759.

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; UCPL: University City Public Library, WU: Washington University, WGPL: Webster Groves Public Library.

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 935-5576.

**Practicing for Print:
The Hale Children's
Manuscript Libraries**

Karen Sánchez-Eppler, distinguished teacher and author on the topic of children and American culture, will give a talk entitled "Practicing for Print: The Hale Children's Manuscript Libraries." The event will take place Tuesday, February 26 at 12 pm, in Dunker Hall's Hurst Lounge (room 201), Danforth Campus, Washington University in St. Louis. This lecture is free and open to the public. Please RSVP by calling the Center for the Humanities at 314-935-5576 for seat and parking sticker.



Karen Sánchez-Eppler

Karen Sánchez-Eppler is Professor of English and American studies at Amherst College and is author of *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (2006) and *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (1993). She is currently working on a book tentatively titled "The Unpublished Republic: Manuscript Cultures of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States." She is

one of the founding editors of the new journal *History of Childhood and Youth*, which will be publishing this essay in its second issue.

In her talk, Sánchez-Eppler will focus on children's manuscript printing. Her argument is that children and manuscripts are regarded as ephemeral sites of cultural production, preparatory stages to be passed through on route to cultural content and historical agency. In order to enter the public sphere of political discourse and social or cultural exchange, children must wait to grow up and manuscripts must find their way into print. In turning to the handmade libraries produced by two generations of an extraordinary family of child book-makers, she wishes to interrogate these assumptions to see what can be learned about the nature of books and of the public sphere from heeding the insights offered by children's manuscripts.



ARTS & SCIENCES

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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