

## Biblio File

The annual Society of Midland Authors book awards banquet will be held May 10 at the Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S.

### May 10, 2016, awards dinner

**Cliff Dwellers**  
**200 S. Michigan Avenue**  
**22nd floor**

**6 p.m. - Social Hour**

**7 p.m. - Program**

**\$75.00**

**Winners are listed on Page 3**

Michigan, 22nd floor, in Chicago. See Page 3 for this year's winning titles. ... **Michael Fedo** will be the featured speaker at the annual Northeast Minnesota



**Michael Fedo**

Book Awards on May 26 at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Michael's presentation is titled "Adventures of a Mid-list Author." .... **Dan Dinello** recently wrote a story on Juan Cole's "Informed Comment" website:

"Is Cruz even Worse re: Anti-Muslim Hate Speech than Trump?" ... **Glennette Tilley Turner** presented "The Underground Railroad in DuPage:

History That Happened Here" in April at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Ill. ...

**Beryl Satter** was named a 2016 Andrew Carnegie Fellow. Beryl will get funding for one to two years of scholarly research and writing. ... Former SMA President **Theodore Berland's** blog "The Writer's Life" appears on his



**Glennette Tilley Turner**

**Turn to Page 2**

## Rafterlife? An evening of poetry in 'The Attic'

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

*Eighteen years you beat me over the head with the butt end of our brotherhood. So where are you now, Mr. Top Dog on the Bunk Bed, Mr. Big Back on the High School Football Team?*

So begins the poem "Brothers," which James Reiss read near the start of the April 12 Society of Midland Authors annual poetry program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

Reiss, who said the poem is one of his favorites among the many he has written, finally showed it nearly 30 years ago to his brother, whom the poem is about.

"I thought, hell, he is going to take a look at this and read it, and he will never have anything else to do with me," Reiss said. "... Well, he read the poem, and he said, 'Ah, Jim, you remembered I lettered in high school football.'"

Appearing at the Cliff Dwellers resonated with Reiss, who said the papers of **Hamlin Garland**, a co-founder of both the Cliff Dwellers and the Society of Midland Authors, reside at Miami University "where I taught for 4,000 years, no, 42."

Originally, Garland called the club "The Attic," but two years after its founding in 1907, the name was changed to the Cliff Dwellers, Reiss said.

"I feel the roots of this place," he said.

The next poem Reiss read also was one of his favorites, "My Daughters in New York."



**Poet and novelist James Reiss speaks to the Society of Midland Authors April 12 at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago.**

"I wrote it when I was really worried about my kids," he said.

Here's how it begins:

*What streets, what taxis transport them over bridges & speed bumps-my daughters swift*

*in pursuit of union? What suitors amuse them, what mazes*

*of avenues tilt & confuse them as pleas-*

**Turn to RAFTERLIFE, Page 2**

*Literary Latest*  
New Books

PAGE 6-8

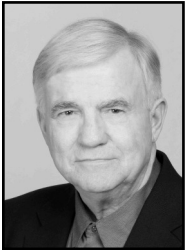
*Literary Lore*  
Robert Loerzel

PAGE 5

## Biblio File

### Continued from Page 1

Facebook pages (“Theodore Berland” and “The Diabetic Wine Lover’s Guide”) and on the page of his publisher, Dudley Court Press. On the blog, Theodore writes: “I was once in a restaurant with my father, just after I came home from five



Robert Harder

years in the U.S. Air Force. He introduced me to a friend of his, proudly explaining that I was a writer. The friend responded by asking, ‘Oh, and what do you do for a living?’ ” ... The Naval Institute Press has selected **Robert**

**Harder’s** *Flying from the Black Hole: The B-52 Navigator-Bombardiers of Vietnam* (2009) as one of 10 recommended books about the war. ... **Carol Rausch Albright** recently published a chapter in a Festschrift in honor of the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelén, who is a friend and associate from her years teaching in Hyde Park, with specialization in the interaction of religion

Turn to Page 3

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P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610

Editor: Thomas Frisbie  
tomfrisbie@aol.com

Copy Editor: Beverly Offen

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Society of Midland Authors members can now pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a \$1 fee to help cover PayPal’s fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right corner.

# Rafterlife

Continued from Page 1

*ure, that pinball*

*goes bouncing off light posts & lands in a pothole,*

*only to pop up & roll in the gutter? What footloose new*

*freedoms allow them to plow through all stop signs,*

*careening at corners, hell-bent for the road to blaze straight?*

“I have grandchildren by now,” Reiss said, after reading the full poem. “This episode is gone and is done, I am glad to say.”

Next, Reiss read a poem inspired by a Loop-area Chicago store called Northwest Cutlery.

“Maybe you know the area, a sort of restaurant area with the L and so forth, which I mention,” he said. “I remember one time, my wife, who is a professional chef, stopped at this place to get knives, and it was a wonderful store, with cooking implements.

“I just stepped in there for maybe five seconds, and I saw enough to create this poem.

“Henry James used to talk about writing a novel on just the basis of just a few words you would hear going down the staircase when the person was going up, something like that, not too much, just to savor the initial impact. Here I have it in a poem called ‘Lake Street.’ ”

After that, Reiss read the poem “The Green Tree,” in which “I invented the

names of my daughters as Wendy and Jill ... to get some kind of esthetic perspective.”

Taking a break from poetry, Reiss next read the beginning of his novel coming out in September called *When Yellow Leaves*.

*From afar, Boyd could see it like the patched gray quilt his grandmother used to cover him with, saying, Good night, sleep tight, wake up right, in the morning light, and do what’s right. She must have learned those rhymes before the Wars of Excision, back when doing what was right was a credible notion. Now, as the gray cloud swallowed hills and palm groves many kilometers east, he didn’t need to remind himself that there was neither right nor wrong anymore.*

Acknowledging he spent almost all his life as a poet and only recently turned to writing novels as well, Reiss said he wrote fiction when he was a child.

“I switched to poetry for a variety of reasons,” he said. “... I read fiction, current fiction, scads of it, loads of it. I loved **Mary Morris’** novel, for instance. She gave a reading here in November. Terrific. ...

“Poems have been much more difficult for me.”

For example, he began one poem in 1983, but it didn’t get published until it appeared in *The Atlantic* in 1996.

“It took 13 years to figure out how to work that poem, how to get it to come around.”

## Slots available for Printers Row

This year’s Printers Row Lit Fest will be on June 11 and 12. The Society of Midland Authors has tent spaces available for members.

To sign up for a two-hour slot, contact **Robert Loerzel** at [loerzel@comcast.net](mailto:loerzel@comcast.net). The fee is \$30 and the slots run from 10 a.m. to noon; noon to 2 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Authors who sign up for a time slot can sell their books during that time. Authors are responsible for transporting their books to and from the tent.

The SMA has been at Printers Row

since **Richard Lindberg** and **Carol Carlson** started the tradition in 2000, as, Lindberg said, “a means of showcasing and promoting the aims of the Society and the fine work of our author members for a nominal fee – far less than what individuals might otherwise pay were they to reserve a table on their own.”

Last year, more than a dozen SMA members sold their books at the Lit Fest, the Midwest’s largest annual free literary event.

A note to authors: Prepare for gusts of wind and don’t be surprised if it rains.

# 2016 book award winners

The Society of Midland Authors will present its annual awards May 10 in Chicago, honoring its choices for the best books by Midwest authors published in 2015:

## ADULT FICTION

WINNER: **Joe Meno**, *Marvel and a Wonder*, Akashic Books. (Author lives in Chicago.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Bonnie Jo Campbell**, *Mothers, Tell Your Daughters*, W.W. Norton. (Author lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan.)  
— **Rebecca Makkai**, *Music for Wartime*, Viking. (Author lives in Chicago.)

The judges were Mark Eleveld, Tony Romano and Michele Weldon.

## ADULT NONFICTION

WINNER: **Alice Dreger**, *Galileo's Middle Finger: Heretics, Activists, and One Scholar's Search for Justice*, Penguin Press. (Author lives in the Chicago area.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Clark Elliott**, *The Ghost in My Brain: How a Concussion Stole My Life and How the New Science of Brain Plasticity Helped Me Get it Back*, Viking. (Author lives in the Chicago area.)

— **Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer**, “\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America,” Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (Shaefer lives in Michigan; Edin lives in the Baltimore area.)

— **Jeremy Smith**, *Epic Measures: One Doctor. Seven Billion Patients*, Harper Wave. (Author was born and raised in Evanston, Illinois, and now lives in Missoula, Montana.)

The judges were Connie Fletcher and Kim Hiltwein.

## BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

WINNER: **Ray E. Boomhower**, *John Bartlow Martin: A Voice for the Underdog*, Indiana University Press. (Author lives in Indianapolis.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Michele Weldon**, *Escape Points: A Memoir*, Chicago Review Press. (Author lives in River Forest, Illinois.)

— **Joseph Tabbi**, *Nobody Grew but the Business: On the Life and Work of William Gaddis*, Northwestern University Press. (Author lives in Chicago.)

The judges were Davis Schneiderman, Robert Remer and John Hallwas.

## CHILDREN'S FICTION

WINNER: **Evan Kuhlman**, *Great Ball of Light*, Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (Author lives in Ohio.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Stephen T. Johnson**, *Alphabet School*, Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books. (Author lives in Lawrence, Kansas.)

— **Kate DiCamillo**, *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon: Tales from Deckawoo Drive, Volume Two*, Candlewick. (Author lives in Minneapolis.)

— **Melinda Braun**, *Stranded*, Simon Pulse. (Author grew up in Wisconsin and lives in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.)

The judges were Nancy Crocker and Judith Fradin.

## CHILDREN'S NONFICTION

WINNER: **Ann Bausum**, *Stonewall: Breaking Out in the Fight for Gay Rights*, Viking Books for Young Readers. (Author lives in Janesville, Wisconsin.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Suzanne Slade**, *The Inventor's Secret: What Thomas Edison Told Henry Ford*, Charlesbridge. (Author lives in Libertyville, Illinois.)

— **Fern Schumer Chapman**, *Like Finding My Twin*, Gussie Rose Press. (Author lives in Lake Bluff, Illinois.)

The judges were Margaret McMullan and Ilene Cooper.

## POETRY

WINNER: **Iliana Rocha**, *Karankawa*, University of Pittsburgh Press. (Author lives in Portage, Michigan.)

### FINALISTS:

— **Dennis Hinrichsen**, *Skin Music*, Southern Indiana Review Press. (Author lives in Lansing, Michigan.)

— **Lisa Fay Coutley**, *Errata*, Southern Illinois University Press. (Author lives in Ephraim, Utah, and is a former Michigan resident.)

The judges were Jim McGarrah, Grace Bauer and Joshua Corey.

## JAMES FRIEND

### MEMORIAL AWARD FOR LITERARY AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM

WINNER: **Kelli Christiansen**, founder and editor of Chicago Book Review.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

WINNER: **Robert Remer**, awards judge and former SMA treasurer, board member.

## Biblio File

### Continued from Page 2

and science. Carol's essay is titled “An Ontology of Creative Interaction,” the book is titled *Embracing the Ivory Tower and Stained Glass Window* (Springer, 2016). Also, Carol is co-editor of a book forthcoming from Wipf and Stock in



Milton Nieuwsma

2017, again in the field of religion and science. Its broad collection of invited essays in science, history and theology will explore the theme expressed in the tentative title of the book, *Interactive World, Interactive God*. The other two co-editors are John R. Albright

and Mladen Turk; the editors will also contribute essays. ... **Milton Nieuwsma** is the writer and creator of a “live” interview with four of the nation's founders filmed at Michigan's Hope College that will be featured on PBS stations around the country in July. The series, called “Inventing America: Conversations with the Founders” was developed as a joint project of Hope College and WGUV Public Media. ... **Kathleen Rooney** reviewed *Hardly War* for the April 22 New York Times Book Review. ... The March 15 Christian Science Monitor quoted **Walter**

**Podrazik**. ... **Arnie Bernstein** was interviewed about his book *Swastika Nation* for an article posted on Huffington Post. Arnie writes to say, “‘Mike Antonovich, Tear Down That Sign!’ looks at a controversial historical



Walter Podrazik

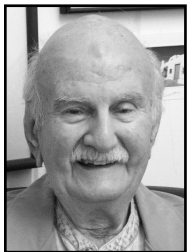
marker placed in a park near Los Angeles; the newly minted sign highlights the area's past while ignoring that the park was host to German-American Bund pro-Hitler rallies in the 1930s. Among my other erudite remarks, I said: ‘What was going on there was pro-Hitler

Turn to Page 4

## Biblio File

Continued from Page 3

activity. It's an ugly fact of history but to avoid any mention of that is to erase an important part of the park's past, which is something that people who use the park,



Harry Mark Petrakis

or whose tax dollars pay for it, should know about.' ... **Harry Mark Petrakis** wrote an essay for the Winter 2016, Authors Guild Bulletin about "the writer in old age." He wrote: "I need to continue my daily struggle to harness my waning

spirit and body and endeavor to put words together to make sentences, and to fashion those sentences into stories. There is no saner way for an old writer to end his days." ... At the the Glenview (Ill.)

Public Library on April 19, **Bill Yarrow** was scheduled to read from his many published poems. ... Historical societies in Effingham and Lawrenceville heard **Stan "Tex" Banash** discuss Illinois history during a recent two-day swing

through the east central part of the Prairie State. Shortly after his return, he spoke to a group of older adults at a church in suburban Oak Lawn. Stan writes to say, "Interest in state history remains high

downstate despite the Illinois' budget crisis." ... On April 13 **Robert Hellenga**

read from *The Truth About Death* (See Literary Latest, Page 6) at Book Culture in New York. It was the first time he's read about a character – Bob Mankoff, cartoon editor of *The New Yorker* – who was actually present in the audience. ...

The story of **Gunter Nitsch** and other World War II refugees who received care packages as children and now are sending letters and other special items to Syrian refugee children has been reported in the Washington Post (April 8), ABC News (March 16), the Bradenton Herald (April 29) and the Bend Bulletin (March 17). ...

**Richard Lindberg** was scheduled to give a presentation on the "White Sox Then and Now" at the Winnetka/Northfield Library April 17. Rich gives several of these programs with slide presentations each year at area libraries in his capacity as Sox historian. ... Not only did **Ray E.**

**Boomhower** win the 2016 Society of Midland Authors Adult Nonfiction Award, he also now appears on the Carmel Clay Public Library "Indiana Author Bingo" cards, along with such former SMA names as **James Whitcomb Riley, Jessamyn West, Kurt Vonnegut** and other authors. ... **Bonnie Jo Campbell** reports her *Mothers, Tell Your Daughters* was reviewed in India. ...

**Scott Turow** has earned a Carl Sandburg Literary Award from the Chicago Public



Bonnie Jo Campbell

Library Foundation and the Chicago Public Library, the library announced April 13... **Vicki Quade** will bring the interactive one-woman show "Bible Bingo: An Act of Charity...in Two Acts" to the McAninch Arts

Center's Playhouse Theatre May 7 at 8 p.m. and May 8 at 3 p.m. ... The April 2 Manitowoc, Wis., Herald Times Reporter called **Kerry Trask** "one of the world's foremost authorities on the Blackhawk Wars." ... The March 29 Green Bay (Wis.) Press Gazette said of **Patricia Skalka's** *Death Stalks Door County*, "Skalka skillfully weaves a tale that will intrigue and delight." ... **Michael S.**

**Maurer** was scheduled to speak at Indiana University's graduate commencement ceremony on May 6. ... **Joseph Schwieterman** was quoted in an April 11 Chicago Tribune story on



Patricia Skalka

Transportation Security Administration staffing. ... **Jim Schwab** writes to say, "After 65 years on the planet as a bitter loser, facing failure at every turn, I seem to have found my groove in 2016. In addition to winning two major federal grants and being inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners, I now find my blog, "Home of the Brave," on a list of three finalists for the Chicago Headline Club's annual Lisagor awards in journalism under the category, "Online: Best Individual Blog Post, unaf-

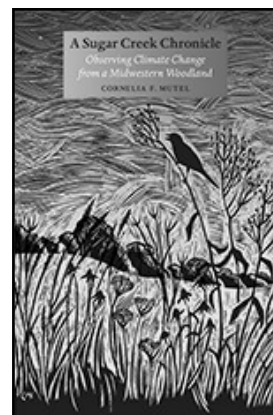
filiated." The finalists were announced by the Chicago chapter of the national Society of Professional Journalists."

Fellow SMA member **Thomas Frisbie** also was a finalist for a Lisagor Award, in the category of newspaper editorial writing. ... **Patrick T. Reardon** wrote an article headlined "'Your Friend Forever, A. Lincoln' detailed Lincoln's best friendship" for the April 26 Chicago Tribune. ... **Margi Preus** was scheduled May 3 at the International Falls Public Library to discuss how she combined history, fiction and folklore for her book *West of the Moon*. ... The April 29 Salt Lake Tribune said of **Patricia Polacco's** 2009 book *In Our Mothers' House*, "Patricia Polacco brings her trademark humanity to this story." ... **Anne-Marie Oomen** published an article about Catholic school memories in the April 2016 issue of Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine. ... **Craig Sautter** participated in a Floyd Dell Symposium April 21 at Chicago's Newberry Library. ... The May 1 Champaign (Ill.) News-Gazette called **Cornelia Mutel's** *A Sugar Creek Chronicle: Observing Climate Change from a Midwestern Woodland* (University of Iowa Press, March, 2016) "a beautifully written, passionate engagement with the most crucial environmental issue of our time." The University of Iowa Press says the book is "an artful weaving together of the science behind rising temperatures, tumultuous weather events, and a lifetime devoted to the natural world." ... The April 24 Arkansas Online quoted **Edward "Ted" McClelland**. ... **Louise Erdrich** was the topic of the May 1 New York Times Book Review "By the Book" column.



Margi Preus

of Iowa Press, March, 2016) "a beautifully written, passionate engagement with the most crucial environmental issue of our time." The University of Iowa Press says the book is "an artful weaving together of the science behind rising temperatures, tumultuous weather events, and a lifetime devoted to the natural world." ... The April 24 Arkansas Online quoted **Edward "Ted" McClelland**. ... **Louise Erdrich** was the topic of the May 1 New York Times Book Review "By the Book" column.



# A history of the Society

*This is Part Ten of the History of the Society. It picks up in the 1920s.*

**Sherwood Anderson** (1876-1941) became a member in 1922, three years after writing his most enduring work, the short-story cycle *Winesburg, Ohio*. H.L. Mencken wrote that the book “embodies some of the most remarkable writing done in America in our time.” When he joined the SMA, Anderson was living in the southwest Chicago suburb of Palos Park.

“He was a big, dreamy-eyed man with a sock of black hair straggling into his eyes – he looked as much like a gypsy rom as you’ll often meet on Michigan Avenue,” Fanny Butcher said.

“He was more a struggling than a permanently arrived writer, however, when he lived here. His international fame came later.”

His only best-seller during his lifetime was *Dark Laughter*, a 1925 book about sexual freedom, which was influenced by James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Anderson (who was inducted into the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame in 2012) spoke, albeit somewhat reluctantly, at an SMA luncheon in the early 1920s. **John Stahl**, who served as SMA president from 1920 to 1922, recalled:

“Before the luncheon Sherwood Anderson came to me and insisted that I should not call on him to speak. He declared emphatically that he could never think of three sentences to utter when he was on his feet before any audience, big or small, of any character. He was so earnest about it that I believed him. So I started the post-luncheon program by asking him to rise, saying that I would not call on him to speak, as he did not feel disposed to speak that day. I thought that I had done it all in masterly fashion and all he would have to do would be to make his pretty bow and smile idiotically, as prescribed for such occasions and the prescription nearly always followed. But Sherwood had changed his mind. I think he does that occasionally. I think that I

have noticed a tendency that way. He rose slowly, with great dignity, and spoke for five minutes, and faultlessly. It was one of the best little luncheon talks I have ever heard. It was a gem. I was the fellow to look foolish and smile idiotically. Sherwood has been mighty careful never to give me a chance to call on him again.”

**Sinclair Lewis** also attended that luncheon. Other SMA events in that era featured appearances by Carl Sandburg,

Edna St. Vincent Millay, Harriet Monroe and English novelist Rebecca West. At one SMA dinner, Stahl noticed a conversation between **Marcia Masters**, the young daughter of **Edgar Lee Masters**, and novelist

Literary  
Lore

Robert  
Loerzel



**Zona Gale:**

“Little Marcia Masters had an ambition to be an author some day. She was at the dinner. During the dinner I had her come to the speakers’ table and I presented her to Miss Gale, making the inane remark that Marcia wished to be an author and had a long and rocky road ahead of her. ‘But every step will be full of joy!’ immediately exclaimed the famous author, who had, indeed, found the road long and not easy. And she talked to the little girl in that kind way of which Zona Gale is the mistress, God bless her for her big, warm heart I and Marcia will remember always, with a feeling too deep to be profaned with words, the few minutes she stood beside Zona Gale with Zona Gale’s arm around her.’

Some four decades later, writing under her married name Marcia Masters Schmid, she won a Society of Midland Authors award for her 1965 book of poetry, *Intent on Earth*, and a 1968 award for her weekly “Today’s Poets” in the Chicago Tribune (as Marcia Lee Masters). Along with her half-brother, Hardin Wallace, she spoke at an SMA luncheon on November 13, 1969, at Stouffer’s Restaurant, marking the hundredth anniversary of their father’s birth.

In 1923, Stahl pushed the idea of creating a more permanent home for the Society. “For several years I have seen the need of some place in down town Chicago that could be the rendezvous of those interested in art in its various forms—literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, etc.,” he wrote in a March 19, 1923, letter to SMA members. “... this room would best be in a first class hotel or in some building like the Stevens Building where there is a good restaurant at reasonable prices. It will be necessary, of course, to provide for the care of the room. I think that it might easily be possible to arrange to give a stenographer desk room in exchange for her keeping an eye on the room – a public stenographer, who would probably get quite a little work from authors and others, and which would justify her in making the arrangement. A table or two, chairs, etc., could be provided without enormous expense. A room that would answer could probably be obtained for from \$100 to \$125 a month.” He asked other organizations to contribute \$10 a month.

At various times during the SMA’s history, it has had special rooms set aside for its members to use, at places such as the A.C. McClurg & Co. bookstore in the 1920s, the Hotel Sherman in the 1930s

and the Sheraton-Chicago Hotel in the 1960s. But as **Alice**

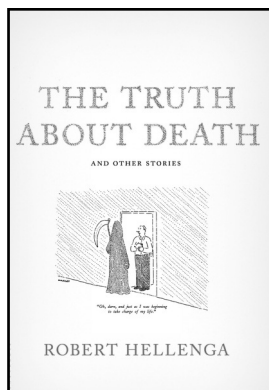
**Gerstenberg** observed in the early 1960s: “There were expectations that the Society of Midland Authors might have a nook of their own where they could drop in to chat with one another but such revival of 18th century custom required more leisure than can be snatched in the modern world.”

The SMA has also kept a collection of books written by its members. Over the decades, these books were stored at places including the Newberry Library, the University of Chicago and the Press Club. Since 1968, the SMA’s old documents and its collection of books have been maintained by the University of Illinois at Chicago Library’s special collections department.



Zona Gale

## Literary Latest



### WRITING 'IN DISCOVERY MODE'

**Robert Hellenega**, whose *The Confessions of Frances Godwin* won the 2015 SMA Adult Fiction Award, has a new book: *The Truth About Death: And Other Stories* (Bloomsbury USA, April 5, 2016).

In "The Truth About Death," the title novella, Simon, an undertaker, embalms his own father and faces his own death. Louisa, Simon's mother, makes peace with her husband over his dead body in a cooler in the basement of the funeral home. The dog, Maya – who works as a greeter at the funeral home where she comforts those who are grieving hardest – eventually makes the truth

about death known to Elizabeth, Simon's wife.

Hellenega writes to say, "The first trace of *The Truth About Death* (the novella) that I can find in my notebooks (5 October 2012) goes back to the discovery, among our books, of my mother's copy of



**Robert Hellenega**

Salvatore Farina's *Fra le corde d'un controbasso*, which she had read when she was a student at Knox College. I started to imagine my mother (who has been dead for many years) as a student at Knox, reading *Fra le corde d'un controbasso* in her dorm room. I read it myself, with some difficulty.

"My note to myself, written with my Pelikan 623 Souverän fountain pen, says: 'Put yourself in discovery mode vs.

toothpaste-squeezing mode.' And a few lines later: 'Don't stop to think.'

"I took my own advice and didn't stop to think, and I soon left reality behind and imagined this young woman – who becomes Louisa in the novella – falling in love with her Italian professor. Their affair is discovered. The professor loses his job and goes back to Rome. Louisa is expelled from the college and disowned by her family. She turns to the chaplain at the Newman Club, who helps her find a job at the Oldfield Funeral Home, where she meets Bart Oldfield, whom she later marries.

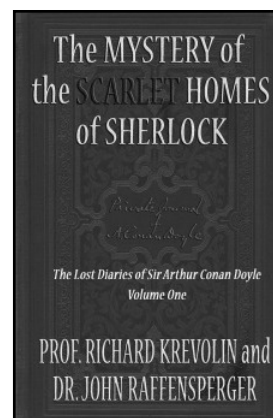
"The other characters, including the dog, gather in the funeral home like campers gathering around a fire, bringing their stories with them.

"The first journal entry about my mother was dated 5 October 2012. That November my wife and I went to Rome to see the Caravaggios, knowing that Louisa and her granddaughter, Hildi, were going to Rome to see the Caravaggios. By this time an outline for *The Truth About Death* was in place.

"In Rome Hildi explains to the doctor who treats her grandmother's *mal di gola* that she wants to become an undertaker because she sees the family funeral home as a place where the big questions get asked, if not answered. 'What are these big questions?' the doctor (soon to become Hildi's lover) wants to know. 'Oh, you know, about the meaning of life, about love, death.' 'Oh,' the doctor says, 'those questions.'

"These questions get asked, if not answered, over and over in the novella – as Hildi helps prep her first dead body, as two undertakers (one American and one Italian) meet in Rome and share a meal, as Hildi's father cooks up cartoons on his death bed. They get asked again in the eight 'other stories' in this collection.

"Whatever 'truth' emerges is not the kind of truth that can be put into words. It's the kind of truth that's embodied in washing the dead body of someone you love, and in New Yorker cartoons, and in the image of the Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu, riding backwards on the back of a water buffalo."



### A SHERLOCKIAN ROMP

**John Raffensperger's** *The Mystery of The Scarlet Homes of Sherlock* by Prof Richard Krevolin and (MX Publishing, May 22, 2016) spins a tale of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's early years, recounted in a diary Conan Doyle wrote in 1878 when he was a 19-year-old student at the University of Edinburgh Medical School.

The book's adventures begin with Conan Doyle's clerkship under the legendary Doctor Joseph Bell, the real-life inspiration for the world's most famous literary detective, Sherlock Holmes.

As the adventure unfolds, Dr. Bell and others journey to America on a secret forensic mission to solve a string of grisly and mysterious murders. Conan Doyle's real-life contemporaries – such as fellow University of Edinburgh student, Robert Louis Stevenson – appear as well.

Raffensperger says the book got its start when an essay he wrote, "Was the Real Sherlock Holmes a Pediatric Surgeon," in the *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, [2010 45, 1567-1570] caught the eye of Richard Krevolin, a Hollywood screenwriter and professor of creative writing.

Together, they further investigated the relationship between the young Arthur Conan Doyle and the Edinburgh surgeon, Dr. Joseph Bell. Many of the adventures take place in the Midwest, including at the old Cook County Hospital, where Raffensperger was chief of pediatrics.

The July/August 2014 *Literary License* quoted Raffensperger saying, "If the right editor gets [this the manuscript] you will read how the medical student Conan Doyle and his professor ... foiled an attempt by Confederates to blow up

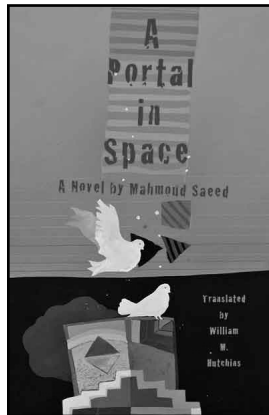
**Turn to Page 7**

## Literary Latest

Continued from Page 6

Lincoln's tomb, assassinate the president and take over the government."

The right editor got the manuscript.



### 'WISE, WRY TALE'

Here's what the University of Texas Press says about **Mahmoud Saeed's** newly translated book, *A Portal in Space* (University of Texas Press, December, 2015): "Masterfully bringing the sights and sounds of Iraq to life, this wise, wry tale by a prominent and prolific Iraqi novelist chronicles an affluent Iraqi family's attempt to maintain a sense of normality during the Iran-Iraq war."

The book is translated by William M. Hutchins.

The book follows the lives of Anwar, a newly minted architect, and other members of his affluent family as they struggle to make life as normal as possible despite frequent bombing attacks from Iran. When Anwar joins the Iraqi Army and then goes missing in action, his family must cope with uncertainty.

It's a story of human beings trying to retain their humanity during a war that is anything but humane.

### 'BEAUTIFULLY LYRICAL POEMS'

The literary magazine Red City Review wrote, "In her collection of poems *In the Garden of Luxembourg* (Harmattan), which is written in both English and

French, poet **Rosina Neginsky** constructs beautifully lyrical poems that reveal concepts and images that both engross and



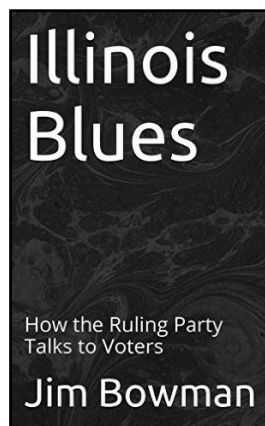
captivate the reader. Through her writing, she creates a world where love and death co-exist, as if they were a couple, dancing together through the wind. By inputting elements of magical realism, where both grey wolves and mermaids can be found among her lines, the poet does good job of transporting the reader to another realm."



Rosina Neginsky

### 'EXERCISE IN SYNECDOCHE'

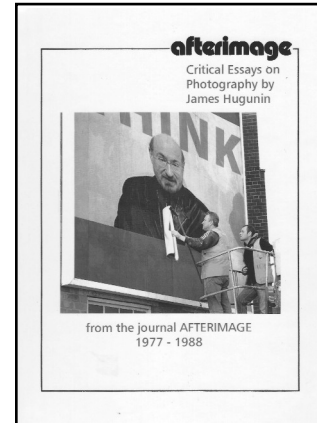
**Jim Bowman's** self-published book *Illinois Blues: How the Ruling Party Talks to Voters* (April, 2016) "tells how



two [politicians] and a few of their colleagues talked to constituents in Chicago-suburban Oak Park and neighboring

towns and neighborhoods in the summer and fall of 2013."

Bowman writes, "It's an exercise in synecdoche, in which parts stand for the whole, in this case some politicians for the entire breed."



### ESSAYS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

*Afterimage: Critical Essays on Photography* by **James Hugunin** (JEF Books, April 25, 2016) contains 30 essays compiled over 10 years.

In his introduction, Hugunin writes the essays were written "during a period of upheaval in the photographic world as modernist practices and theories began to be supplanted by postmodernist ones. Straight photography's hegemony, largely thanks to John Szarkowski's influence, was being challenged by synthetic (manipulated) photography which took two paths: post-visualization and the fabrication of the 'pro-filmic event' (what New York critic A.D. Coleman termed 'the directorial mode.'"



James Hugunin

### EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY

Here's what the publisher says about **Chris Abani's** latest book:

"*In The Face: Cartography of the Void* Restless Books, acclaimed poet, novelist, and screenwriter Chris Abani has given us a brief memoir that is, in the best tradi-

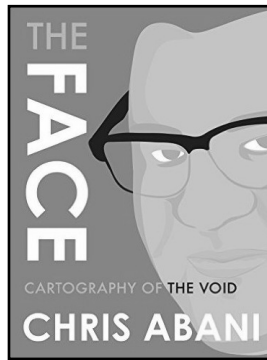
Turn to Page 8

## Literary Latest

Continued from Page 7

tion of the genre, also an exploration of the very nature of identity. Abani meditates on his own face, beginning with his early childhood that was immersed in the Igbo culture of West Africa. *The Face* is a lush work of art that teems with original and profound insights into the role of race, culture, and language in fashioning our sense of self. Abani's writing is poetic, filled with stories, jokes, and reflections that draw readers into his fold; he invites them to explore their own "faces" and the experiences that have shaped them.

As Abani so lovingly puts it, this extended essay contemplates "all the people who have touched my face, slapped it, punched it, kissed it, washed it, shaved it. All of that human contact must leave some trace, some of the need and anger that motivated that touch. This face is softened by it all. Made supple by all the wonder it has beheld, all the kindness, all



the generosity of life." *The Face* is a gift to be read, re-read, shared, and treasured, from an author at the height of his artistic powers."

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### A STUDY OF 'CASABLANCA'

**James Plath** is editor of *Critical Insights Film: Casablanca* (May 1), the first volume in a new series from Salem Press.

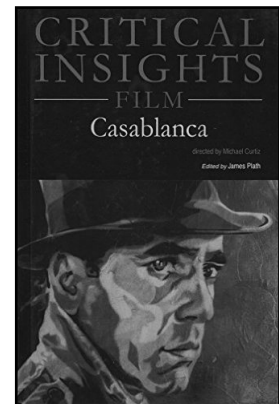
The book contains 14 scholarly essays about the perennial film favorite. They discuss explanations for the movie's pop-

ularity and examine its influence on modern culture.

Being editor meant more than reading submissions as they came in and writing an intro.

When the contributor of an essay on music of "Casablanca" had to pull out at the last minute, Plath had to write the essay himself.

Plath also edited a book in an earlier Salem Press series, *Critical Insights: Raymond Carver* (May 1, 2013).



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