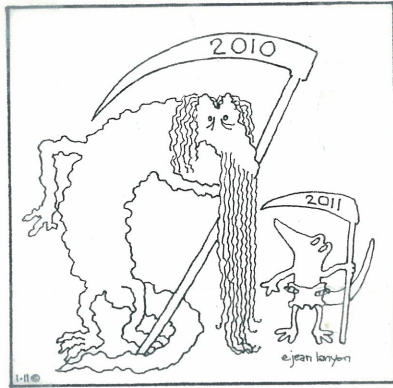


Delaware Literary Connection

January 2011 Newsletter



alligations

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Every October, my boss requests a new calendar for the upcoming year that's just like the one he used the year before. It needs to fit into another, more elaborate binder that contains a section for names, phone numbers and email addresses so that he doesn't have to re-enter that information from one year to the next. It's convenient. It's efficient. It's dull. I prefer to go to Borders or the UD Bookstore and give myself a gift – the indulgence of a calendar filled with art, something joyous to look at on a raw winter day, something that reflects my own interests or stirs memories, something that piques my curiosity about countries where I haven't been, or reaches out to touch my heart.

We hope that your interest is piqued by the articles in this newsletter. Get rid of the winter blahs by writing a story for the Out & About/DLC short story contest. Join us for a poetry workshop at the Kirkwood Highway Public Library at the end of January. Discover Josh Weil, up-and-coming author and former judge for the DDoA Fellowship Awards. Enjoy a poem and a few "Alligations" from the pen of the talented e. jean lanyon. See a play with the UD REP or attend the symposium offered by UD's English Department in February. Let one of our book reviews tickle your curiosity – then go visit your favorite bookstore. Pretend you're a kid again and pull out that sled from the back of your basement. Winter's waiting – snow and all – just outside your door. Enjoy!

- Barbara

In This Issue:

1. Out & About/DLC Fiction Writing Contest
2. The Art of Revision – A Poetry Workshop with Josiah Bancroft
3. Josh Weil – Up and Coming!
4. "artificial weathermakers," a poem by e. jean lanyon
5. What We're Reading
 - *Man in the Woods*, by Scott Spencer
 - *The Help*, by Kathryn Stockett
 - *The New Valley*, by Josh Weil
 - *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel*, by Jane Smiley

- *Zen in the Art of Writing*, by Ray Bradbury
- 6. On Language
- 7. The UD Repertory Theater Offers a Season of Humor, Thrills and Thought-Provoking Drama
- 8. UD English Department Offers Symposium, Readings, More...
- 9. We Tip Our Hats To...
- 10. Events
- 11. Opportunities
- 12. Contests

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Out & About/DLC Short Prose Contest Open!

Attention, Writers!

Let's see your best 1,500 words!

Writers, warm up your pens, notepads, computers, whatever. The ***Out & About*** short-story contest is back and this time, the competition is co-sponsored by the ***Delaware Literary Connection***, a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting Delaware writers.

Contest entries must be no more than 1,500 words, may be fiction or nonfiction, and must address the theme of turning points: marriage, the birth of a child, a career path, etc. Previously published pieces are not eligible. Entry deadline is Feb. 15. First-, second- and third-place winners will be announced in the April issue of *Out & About* and will be published in subsequent issues.

All entries must be typewritten (12-point type, preferably Times New Roman) and must be available in electronic form. Each entry must have a title sheet with the entrant's name, address, email address, and phone number. Subsequent pages must be numbered and include the title of the piece *but not the entrant's name* to ensure the anonymity of each submission when judged.

Entries will be judged by the DLC board of directors, who are not eligible to enter. Entries should be sent to: ***Delaware Literary Connection, 237 Cayman Ct., Wilmington, DE 19808.***

The grand-prize winner will receive an "Escape to the Brandywine Valley" package, courtesy of Hilton Christiana/Wilmington, which includes room accommodations, tickets to a Brandywine Valley attraction, and a buffet breakfast, all for you and a guest. Cash prizes will also be awarded: \$50 first place; \$30 second place; \$20 third place.

Contact graybeg@comcast.net with any questions.

Revising Poetry: the Art of Refinement

Workshop Leader: Josiah Bancroft

“I write all day and erase all night.”

Saturday, January 29, 2011, 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (lunch included)

Kirkwood Highway Public Library, Wilmington, DE 19808

Poetry is, in essence, the art of refinement: the refinement of thought, interpretation, language, representation, and emotion. It is rare that poems erupt from the pen or word processor fully formed and perfectly refined. Rather, it is revision that gives poems their fullness, depth, and acuity, and it is revision that allows a poet’s talents to grow. This workshop will include practical methods for assessing a poem on its own unique terms, and will include a review of basic methods of revision. Participants are invited to bring two copies of a single poem that they believe might benefit from revision. Over the course of the workshop, participants will have an opportunity to identify the particular vision of their poem; begin to experiment with the discussed methods of revision; and share their revision with the group.

Josiah Bancroft is a Delaware poet who teaches at Cecil County Community College in North East, Maryland. Josiah’s poems have appeared in the *Portland Review*; *The Mid Atlantic Review*; *Gulf Coast*; *BOMB Magazine’s Word Choice*; *The Bitter Oleander*; *Willow Springs*; *Pinyon Poetry*; *Rattle*; *Kennesaw Review*; *The Hollins Critic*; *Salamander*; *Euphony*; *New South*; *Whiskey Island Magazine*; *The Roanoke Review*; *Bat City Review*; *Redivider* and *Passages North*. His book of poetry, *The Death of Giants*, was selected as a finalist for the 2010 Donald Hall Prize in Poetry. Alberto Rios served as judge and had this to say about the collection: “These are poems of constantly surprising adventures for the reader. The title poem sets the tone, marvelous in its pragmatism and equanimity, and the poems benefit from this start. Things happen, and things get done because of that, but what is so easily said is the precise source of wonder in these pieces in that even the most complex and strange occurrences are simply dealt with.”

Many of you will remember Josiah’s powerful readings at both the DLC “Cooling It With Kerouac: A Beat Generation Reading” and at the “Sing the Body Electric: A Reading to

Celebrate Walt Whitman” that were held at the Deer Park Tavern in Newark, DE in October of 2009 and 2010, respectively. He has also read at Second Saturday Poets.

The workshop will be provided at no cost and will be limited to 20 participants. Please contact graybeg@comcast.net to register for the workshop. Early registration is encouraged.

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JOSH WEIL – UP AND COMING!

- Russ Reece

Josh Weil is the author of *The New Valley* (Grove, 2009), a *New York Times* Editors Choice that won the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from The American Academy of Arts and Letters; a “5 Under 35” Award from the National Book Foundation; the New Writers Award from the GLCA; and was shortlisted for the Virginia Literary Award in Fiction. Josh's short fiction has been published or is forthcoming in *Granta*, *One Story*, *American Short Fiction*, *Narrative*, and *Glimmer Train*. He has written non-fiction for *The New York Times*, *Granta Online*, *Oxford American* and *Poets & Writers*. Since earning his MFA from Columbia University, he has received the Dana Award in Portfolio and fellowships from the Gilman School, the MacDowell Colony, Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers' Conferences, the Writer's Center and the Fulbright Foundation. Josh is currently the writer-in-residence at the James Merrill House; this spring he will be the Distinguished Visiting Writer at Bowling Green State University. He was a fiction judge in the 2010 Delaware Division of Arts artist grants.

I met Josh in 2009 at the Sewanee Writers' Conference. He had received a fellowship that year and participated in my two-week workshop with Tony Early and Alice McDermott.

RR: When I contacted you, I found it interesting that you were at an artist colony working on your next book. Is this a standard part of your creative process or was this something new for you? Can you tell us a little about that?

JW: I think when you called I was at McDowell. That was the second artist colony I've done. I went to Virginia Center for the Creative Arts right after my first book was published and did some writing there. This year I was at McDowell for six weeks and then back to the Virginia Center for the Arts for two weeks so a total of eight weeks overall. Actually, my favorite place to write is the family cabin in Virginia. It is where I do my best writing, but there's no social life and it is not always available to me. Artist colonies give you a chance to step aside from life and get away. They provide everything so it gives you a chance to just work. This summer I wrote almost 450 pages, sometimes working 12 hours a day.

RR: What other kinds of artists were there?

JW: All kinds: sculptors, photographers, architects, composers, etc., which is great. It's inspiring to be around people who do great work and I found it creatively helpful to see the kind

of things they do. But that cuts two ways for me. Writing is such a solitary process. I like to believe I'm the only person in the world when I'm doing it. But overall it's really worth it. I can't recommend it enough.

RR: At Sewanee you were a strong advocate of the novella form. Your book, *The New Valley*, is a triptych of novellas that share a common geographical setting. What draws you to that literary form and should we expect to see more of the same in forthcoming books?

JW: I hope so. You never know if I will get one published, but I like to write them. I actually have a new novella coming out in *American Short Fiction* in their 50th edition this winter, so that will be out there. I'm working on a novel now and it is such a huge, sprawling, complicated thing. For me a novella is small enough to let me get my head around the story while I'm working on it. There is an un-jumbled cleanness to it. That doesn't mean it isn't complex in the way it is structured, just pared down. Actually, I like the longer work, I'm not naturally a short form writer, but there is something about the cleanness of the story line in a novella and the size which allows me to get in the world and charge through the story and not back out of it. I'm not cobbling together a lot of complex threads like I am with a novel. Although I enjoy that, the novella fits the way I write. Once I break a story open it allows me to move very quickly in a way that feels more organic, more natural and less planned.

RR: What writers have inspired you and how has that been reflected in your work?

JW: Oh boy. Lots of writers. I would say the first literary writers I loved were Hemingway and Steinbeck. Both of them affected my work dramatically before I was even doing work, how I started thinking about stuff. Steinbeck, in the sweep of the stories he tells and maybe the tone of the work. With Hemingway there is a refusal to lead the reader too much that I love, although there is a mistaken idea that he is stripped down and not very descriptive. I think he is extremely descriptive and provides such fine detail. Also his characters, there is always an interesting moral complexity. So those two for sure. And then I read Frederick Forsyth and Ken Follett, who wrote thrillers and stuff. I read a lot of westerns but the first time things came together for me with contemporary writers was when I read Ron Hansen's *Desperadoes* and Annie Proulx. They affected me tremendously. I think they are two of the best writers working today. But I am inspired by so many. Annie Proulx, Toni Morrison, Cormac McCarthy, W.G. Sebald, lots of others. Jim Harrison for the novella form. Jim Shephard, my favorite short story writer today, has really inspired my recent work. Also, I am lucky to have friends who are coming out with books that I think are among the best things out there, books that I find inspiring. So lots of writers have had an impact on me.

RR: You mentioned Jim Harrison, who is one of my favorite authors. He blurbed *The New Valley*. Most of his books have similar settings, themes and characters. Will future Josh Weil books continue to have that "New Valley" feel and a focus on the Stillman and Osby type characters?

JW: Good question. It depends on how you define the "New Valley" feel. I can definitely guarantee that the book I am working on now is very different. But the novel I hope to write after this one will be set back in that area. So I hope to keep returning to it.

RR: Do you have a sense for how your book was received in the Virginias?

JW: Yeah, I do have some sense of that. It was something I was concerned about. The first reading I ever did was in a small general store near the cabin, called Sinking Creek General Store. I went down there and met with Junior, the proprietor, who we know and then read to a handful of people. They seemed happy with what I read and were supportive of me. They sent the book around to their friends. I read in Blacksburg and some of my neighbors came out to the reading, probably the first literary reading many of them had been to. Mostly they were supportive and kind about it. It meant a lot to me, as much as any other feedback I've had on the book. I did get a couple people – no one whom I knew – but who seemed to be a little miffed. The only thing I can say to that is I wasn't trying to do a representation of the people there. It was a fictional world inspired by the country down there.

RR: I found the tractor illustrations in the story "Stillman Wing" clever and haunting. I didn't know that you had done the artwork until recently. Great job, and how did you ever come up with the idea of altering the schematics of the old Deutz tractor?

JW: It was a funny story, actually. When I was doing my research I ended up looking through these old catalogs and manuals from the '20s and '30s that I found online. They reminded me of the charts that hang in a doctor's office and for some reason I liked them. I thought it helped communicate the blending of the machine and the human part. I wanted to use images from the manuals but the lawyers at Grove got nervous about it because the manuals were so old it would be impossible to find out who did the drawings and photographs. I had done some drawing in the past and thought, why not? I'll give it a shot. They were happy with my work and I think it made the book seem a little more mine, which adds to it as well.

RR: You've enjoyed some success as an author. As you look back over your climb through the ranks, what worked well for you, and conversely are there things that you wish you had done differently?

JW: Boy, it's hard for me to take it apart sometimes. The biggest break was *Granta* published a piece of mine in 2007. They took it in 2006 and that was like climbing into the big leagues for me. I guess with that I would say I did it the traditional way, sending out things and getting published in small journals and working my way up to better journals. And of course along with that is doing better work. I really believe if you are doing work that is good enough, if you keep pushing it, things will eventually fall into place. It was really a process of writing better stories and getting them out there. Two important things, though. I wrote these novellas never expecting them to be published. They were what I really loved. I think that it is important to write what you love and I did them really for myself. They became *The New Valley*. The other thing I'm really glad about is this: My first agent took me on for a novel I'd written. I think it was a good novel but not a great one. She wasn't able to sell it. And it's that that I'm grateful for. Because, though it was tough to get that close with a good agent and a good house and not have it go, in the end it was the best thing for my career. *The New Valley* was much better work, and I'm so happy that was the book that launched me.

RR: How important have critique groups and workshops been in your development as a writer?

JW: I think they have been quite important. Workshops maybe less, although workshops have helped me improve individual stories and there have been a few big lessons I've gotten from workshops. Occasionally someone will say something that will really strike me. I had a workshop leader, Mark Sloker, who said one of those old chestnuts, a great piece of advice

which now largely drives my work. He would always ask, “Where’s the wound in the character? Where’s the big hurt?” And that’s where you want to put your finger, and the story drives from there. I had never thought of it like that before. It has really changed the way I look at stories. There were a few moments like that that have been important.

Critique groups or other writers who I exchange work with are immeasurably vital to me. There are a few writers who I know their work and I know how they read my work and we have been exchanging stuff for a while. Virtually everything that I write goes to a few of my close readers and other writers who I respect a lot. I’d be in bad shape without them. I have a hard time stepping back from my work with clear eyes. So that’s really important to me.

RR: I think that’s tough for everybody. I know it is tough for me.

JW: I find there are two kinds of writers. There are those who hate everything as soon as they’ve done it and they can immediately look at things with a critical eye. There’s the other kind of writer, which I am. I frankly love something when I’m working on it. If I don’t love it I can’t continue it. When I’m done I’m still usually in love with it and it is hard for me to see what’s really there.

RR: When we were at the Sewanee conference I was frankly overwhelmed with the extensive nature of the program. Fourteen consecutive days, morning, noon and night filled with workshops, craft lectures, readings, agent interviews, performances, etc. I tried to do everything but finally found I had to pick and choose. I’ve experienced this to some degree even in a few weekend conferences. I know you have been to Sewanee and Bread Loaf and I suspect other conferences. Do you have any suggestions for our members who regularly attend conferences on how to get the most from that experience?

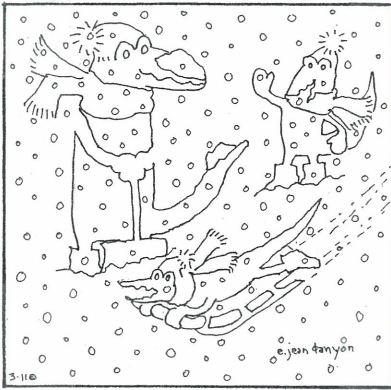
JW: I love both Sewanee and Bread Loaf. I’ve been to them twice and they’ve both played very important roles in my life. For one thing I’d say, don’t try to write at all. Go to as many readings and craft lectures as possible. The most important things I’ve gotten from both conferences were writer friends I can share work with. Even as inspiring as the craft lectures and workshops have been, it’s the contacts that are important. I don’t mean schmoozing or social things but people whose work you like and that you hit it off with as to how you see things. I’ve come out of both those conferences having met great people.

RR: One last question, Josh. Those of us who have read and enjoyed *The New Valley* are looking forward to your next book. When can we expect to see it in the bookstores and can you give us a peek under the covers?

JW: I’m working on a story collection and a novel and they are kind of linked. Right now I can’t say when the novel will be finished. It’s not under contract so I don’t know if it will even be published, but these days I’m feeling good about it. I don’t want to say too much but it is set in Northern Russia and deals with issues of capitalism and socialism and is really a love story between two brothers.

Visit Josh’s website: www.joshweil.com.

alligations



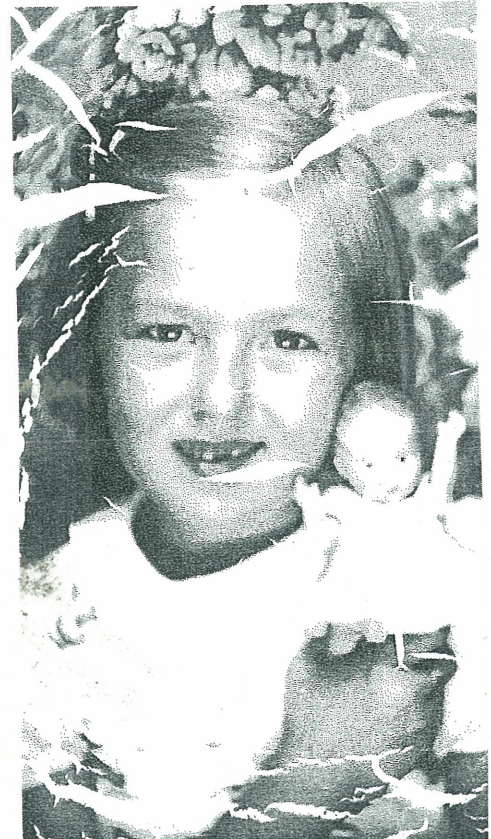
“artificial weathermakers”

- e. jean lanyon

except for an occasional dusting
of white powdery flakes between greyed blades,
there was no snow in vermont.
winter chill bites deep; nakedly brown,
the ground keeps the jello mould foot print
of a large dog, each round toe hole
filled just to the brim with white crystals.

one morning, brother and i took
the pink cardboard box of scented powder
from our mother’s dresser top
and sprinkled the entire contents
on the bedroom carpet. we took turns
shaking the shaggy puff, obscured
each woven flower and ribboned design.
we created a snow storm, and like careful gods
left no footprints on the perfect white.

grandmother discovered us by our silence.
that afternoon, she sat us facing each other
in the living room; the tips of our fingers
tucked under the edges of our thighs
left small round indentations
in the brown plush of the upholstery.
january, and no snow in vermont.



e. jean lanyon

What We're Reading

Man in the Woods, by Scott Spencer

- Review by Bob Yearick

In my sophomore year at Penn State, the professor of our fiction writing class asked if we had read John Updike. When none of us dolts could answer yes, he was rightfully appalled, and immediately assigned *Rabbit Run* as our next assignment. My reading thus was raised to a new and breathtaking literary stratosphere, something that the stuff I had been reading – Hemingway, many of the classics, Mickey Spillane – could only hint at.

Updike, whom we lost in 2009, remains, in my mind, the most elegant writer in the English language. His descriptions, which often send the reader scrambling for the dictionary, are striking and unerring. More important, his portrayals of male-female relationships are among the most insightful in the history of literature.

While there may be several pretenders to Updike's mantle – Jonathan Franzen comes to mind – my personal nominee is Scott Spencer. Author of 10 novels over a 30-year period, Spencer is probably best known for *Endless Love* (Please disregard the Brooke Shields movie based on the book, and please note that the *Men in Black* movies are *not* based on his novel, *Men in Black*). Twice nominated for the National Book Award, Spencer has been embraced by millions of readers. His latest, *Man in the Woods*, is sure to expand that fan base.

The eponymous man is a fugitive lowlife, Will Claff, whom Paul Phillips, the protagonist, encounters one gray afternoon in woods off Saw Mill Parkway. Phillips is Claff's antithesis: a sensitive builder/artisan who crafts one-of-a-kind furniture from carefully-selected wood that comes alive under his loving hands. Those strong hands prove his undoing when he finds Claff mistreating a dog. He asks Claff to desist, a physical confrontation ensues, and Claff is killed.

Paul flees with the dog – whom he names Shep – and heads home to his soul mate, Kate Ellis, a successful author of Christian books who has become a TV personality. Her grade-school-age daughter, Ruby, completes the harmonious household. Paul shares his secret with Kate, who unconditionally becomes complicit in the secret. But they are pursued both by an unkempt yet competent detective and their own consciences, and soon their idyllic lives begin to unravel. Kate loses her faith, Paul becomes ever-more guilt-ridden, and Ruby presents her own set of everyday challenges. Meanwhile, the book's minor characters -- including the detective, Paul's lesbian assistant, Kate's driver, the dog's owner -- are drawn in precise detail.

With touches of noir fiction and a denouement that is both stunning but seemingly inevitable, this is a "serious" novel that appeals to a large audience.

Spencer is no spring chicken – he turned 65 last September – so he seems even more worthy of taking over for the master, Updike. I urge you to savor them both. *Rabbit Run* would be a good place to start.

The Help, by Kathryn Stockett

- Review by Ramona Long

The hype about *The Help* is that it is a debut novel that took its author five years to write and 45 agents to reject before it was published with great success in 2009. Its jacket copy tells of a young white woman who returns home from college to discover that the black maid who raised her is gone from the family. That is a good, and effective, log line, but it barely scratches the surface of what this novel is about, and what it accomplishes.

The young white woman is Skeeter Phelan, who graduates from Ole Miss in 1962 and returns home to Jackson for two reasons: she doesn't have a husband and she wants to be a writer. Her contemporaries in Jackson earned a different type of degree—a Mrs. And they employ help, just as their mothers employed help, and their mothers' mothers employed help.

Skeeter's own maid has vanished, and no one will tell her why. She asks questions that no one wants her to ask and no one wants to answer—except an editor at a New York publishing house who once lived in Alabama and who is interested in hearing the help's point of view.

Skeeter is one of three narrators in *The Help*. The other two are black domestics who, finally and secretly, agree to be interviewed for Skeeter's book. Aibileen Clark is raising her seventeenth white child, and she agrees to help Skeeter because her only natural son died and no one cares. Minny Walker is young, angry, feisty, constantly getting fired, and constantly getting hired because she is the best cook in Jackson. Minny helps because she wants change—both in the homes where she serves and in the home where she lives.

There is a pervading sense of danger and injustice in this novel, alongside elements of survival and humor. The fear of the maids who cooperate with Skeeter is palpable. Skeeter's cluelessness about that danger, and her growing understanding of it as the story progresses, is as compelling as Aibileen's love for her charges and Minny's fury at her powerlessness. This is a book of characters who are real and should be long remembered.

The New Valley, by Josh Weil

- Russ Reece

I had seen *The New Valley* (Grove 2009), by Josh Weil, in Borders and had been intrigued by the great cover-art and testimonials – Tim O'Brien and Jim Harrison to name two – but for some reason I passed on purchasing it. Then, in the summer of 2009, I met Josh and had to buy the book and check it out.

The New Valley is a triptych of novellas set in the hills straddling the border between the Virginias. The first, *Ridge Weather*, tells the story of Osby, a rancher who just lost his father. Osby is a man of few words and is more comfortable with his cattle than with people. He nurses a sick steer as he works through his loneliness, thoughts of his father and his questionable future. The piece is reminiscent of works in Annie Proulx's collection, *Close Range*.

The second novella is *Stillman Wing*. Stillman was recently forced into retirement from the farm implement dealer where he has worked all his adult life. The next day, just before dawn, he backs a trailer up to a field filled with the dealer's used equipment and steals an antique tractor, a Deutz. He hauls it to his barn and for the next few years his life with his obese and promiscuous daughter unfolds around the piece-by-piece restoration of the tractor. Although this story dragged a little in the middle, I liked it a lot and can think of nothing I've read that is in anyway similar.

The third and final novella is *Sarverville Remains*. The narrator, Geoff, is a slightly retarded 30-year old who hangs out with teenagers Russ and Vic, and falls in love with a 30-something waitress, Linda, from Criggers Den. Linda is a bored wife who fools around with teenage boys but draws the line at adult men. The story unfolds through a series of letters written by Geoff to Linda's husband who is currently in jail. The narration came across to me as Holden Caulfield meets *The Sound and the Fury* but once you get used to it, it works well.

The brutally realistic stories in *The New Valley* are a refreshing change from today's typical bestseller and, in my opinion, worth the read. I encourage you to check it out.

And two on the craft of writing. . .

13 Ways of Looking at the Novel, by Jane Smiley - Ramona Long

13 Ways of Looking at the Novel reads like a guide book. Its author, Pulitzer Prize winner Jane Smiley, takes the reader through chapters about novels and writing (What is a Novel? Who is a Novelist? Morality and the Novel. The Circle of the Novel). That's the first half of the book. The second half is an almost phenomenal project: Smiley reads **A Hundred Novels** and shares her impressions, interpretations and professional gleanings of each.

This is not a book to be read from cover to cover, a chapter at a time before bed. It is nothing if not ambitious, but is it helpful to a writer? Yes. Smiley takes the reader on a journey to consider what makes a successful novel. In the first chapter, she breaks the novel down into five basics: "A novel is a (1) *lengthy*, (2) *written*, (3) *prose*, (4) *narrative* with a (5) *protagonist*." The rest of the book refers back to these facts, elements, truths, characteristics, qualities - whatever you care to call them - time and time again. The subsequent chapters build on the basics, and end with 100 examples of novels that, in Smiley's opinion, deserve discussion.

I read the first half of the book and took notes. For the 100 novels section, I skipped around. With each of the 100, Smiley summarizes the plot and points out what makes the novel interesting. Discussing *Anna Karenina*, for instance, she remarks on Tolstoy's mastery of character moods. She praises Rebecca West for flawless prose. She describes *Heart of Darkness* as interesting in a historical and social sense, but a "bad work of art."

It took me months to read this book, because I did not read this book - I studied it. I broke out highlighters and Post-It flags as I did in college, to help me remember the important parts. I would recommend that serious writers study it, too, and keep Post-Its and highlighters handy.

Zen in the Art of Writing, by Ray Bradbury
-- Review by Bob Davis

In a recent issue of *The New Yorker* devoted to short fiction, Richard Bausch, the American novelist and story writer, advised aspiring fiction writers to avoid how-to books on the craft, and to read novels and stories. He claimed that writers can learn all the lessons they need to know by reading Tolstoy. Maybe Bausch, who's written 11 novels, eight story collections, and received both a National Endowment for the Arts grant and Guggenheim fellowship, is appalled by the deluge of how-to-write books that have appeared since Natalie Goldberg published the immensely popular *Writing Down the Bones* in 1986.

Zen in the Art of Writing isn't as much a how-to book filled with shop talk as it is a paean to enthusiasm. "Zest. Gusto," begins "The Joy of Writing," the first of Bradbury's 12 essays in the book. "How rarely one hears these words used. How rarely do we see people living, or for that matter, creating by them." The essays were published between 1961 and 1986, and Bradbury, who was born in 1920 and is still alive, prefaces the collection with a story of how, as a nine-year-old spurred by the ridicule of his fourth-grade classmates, he tore up his beloved Buck Rogers comic strip collection, destroying his tribute to his first hero. It took Bradbury a month to realize his mistake and vow never again to give in to peer pressure if it compromised his passions.

Like Kurt Vonnegut, Bradbury recommends that writers write about their loves and their hates, and gives examples of early stories that evolved from following this advice. The first was the result of the anger he felt when, flipping through a *Harper's Bazaar* in the waiting room of his dentist's office, he saw a photo that used Puerto Rican natives to offset, or to complement (?), an emaciated model posing on a San Juan backstreet. In the story, "Sun and Shadow," a man named Ricardo, who objects to his house being photographed without his permission, pulls down his pants, exposing himself to the camera during the fashion shoot.

As a writer, Bradbury renewed his inspiration by walking the streets of his neighborhood late at night. More than once, the police stopped and questioned him. His indignity over this spurred him to write "The Pedestrian," a futuristic story in which the main character is arrested and made the subject of a clinical study because he was caught gazing at the stars, instead of televised reality, and breathing the wind, instead of recycled AC air.

Bradbury starts with an idea, a premise, a "what if," and then adds characters to the speculative scene and has them play out their dramas. Unlike John Steinbeck, who said writers shouldn't think of the titles of their stories until they've finished them, Bradbury makes long lists of potential titles. Some of the titles have taken up to 60 years to formulate themselves into stories.

He trusts the subconscious mind, or the Muse. "How to Keep and Feed a Muse" is the title of one essay. He warns readers that the Muse is flighty. Rein her in too tightly and she'll slip away. Give her too much leeway and she'll do the same, maybe even laughing at you as she sails off. At the same time, he reminds us that nothing is ever lost:

"If you have moved over vast territories and dared to love silly things, you will have learned even from the most primitive items collected and put aside in your life. From an ever-roaming curiosity in all the arts, from bad radio to good theatre,

from nursery rhyme to symphony, from jungle compound to Kafka's *Castle*, there is basic excellence to be winnowed out, truths found, kept, savored, and used on some later day. To be a child of one's time is to do all these things."

Zen in the Art of Writing reminds me of Flannery O'Connor's statement about a writer's subject matter: "The fact is that anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days." Ray Bradbury advises writers to consider their early passions as the most fertile subject matter for their fiction. He believes that most people, at least in America, mentally die before the age of 10, killed by their peers and homogenized culture. I recommend this collection of essays to anyone seeking to live a more exuberant and creative life.

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On Language

- Bob Yearick

Frank Reust, who directs the news and features copy editors at the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, studied language errors that occur in his very well-respected newspaper. His sleuthing found a slew of errors -- mostly near misses, along with many redundancies. While most of us are writers of fiction or poetry, we can learn from the mistakes made by professional journalists. Check the list below and see if you're guilty of any of these. All errors are in boldface.

1. amidst

Correct: amid (Similarly, **amongst** and among)

2. first ever/ first annual

Correct: first

3. safe haven

Correct: haven. Along the same lines: respite, not **brief respite**

4. sneak peak

Correct: sneak peek. And, we're thinking, most times "sneak" is superfluous, so it should simply be "peek."

5. tensions

Correct: Tension. This is an example of a false plural: The word is fine without the letter s. Other examples are rain, wind, revenue, material, skill, and toward.

6. begs the question

This requires discussion. The term is almost always used incorrectly. It does not mean to bring up or create a question. The definition in Webster's New World College Dictionary is: To use an argument that assumes as proved the very thing one is trying to prove. So ... bonus points to anyone who can use "begs the question" correctly in a sentence.

7. proven guilty/proven innocent

Correct: Proved guilty or innocent. The verb is proved; the adjective is proven: a proven remedy.

8. healthful vs. healthy

Correct: Healthy is often misused. Healthy means having good health; healthful means helping to produce, promote or maintain health. So a person or animal object can be healthy, have a healthy complexion, have a healthy appetite. But a diet, food or choice is healthful because it promotes health, not possesses it. You can find a spirited debate online that says "healthful" is outdated and nobody uses it. But certainly there's room for both words.

9. left (number of people) dead

Correct: killed. Here's a common example: "Thailand's international reputation, economy and sense of identity have been battered by street fighting that has left 82 dead and nearly 1,800 wounded." Better to say: ... has killed 82 and wounded 1,800. As someone once said, "Bad things don't leave people dead; they kill people."

10. frozen tundra (This wasn't in the original list but we decided to add it)

Correct: tundra (which is frozen ground)

A few of our personal peeves: **amount** and **less** instead of, respectively, number and fewer (a word that people do not seem to have in their vocabularies), and "separate," as in, "There were 24 **separate** stories about the senate race in Delaware." The use of separate in this and similar situations is redundant.

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The UD Repertory Theater Offers a Season of Humor, Thrills and Thought-Provoking Drama

We're half-way through the 2010-2011 UD REP/PTTP season and couldn't be more excited about the plays to come. Be sure to witness the haunting poignancy of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, the political intrigue of *All the King's Men*, and the zaniness of Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*. The REP presents a brand-new play, *O Beautiful*, by award-winning playwright Theresa Rebeck that was written especially for them, and the season closes with Juna Mayorga's dynamic *Way to Heaven*. If you haven't seen at least one production, you've missed a delightful treat. Don't lose the whole season: Check out the REP!

January 27 – February 27
 February 17 – March 5
 March 31 – May 14
 April 20 – May 15
 April 28 – May 14

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams
All the King's Men adapted by Adrian Hall
The Good Doctor by Neil Simon
O Beautiful by Theresa Rebeck
Way To Heaven by Juna Mayorga

FOR TICKETS: Contact the Box Office at (302) 831-2204, Monday – Friday, noon to 5:00 p.m., email cfa-boxoffice@udel.edu or stop by the REP box office in the Roselle Center for the Arts, 110 Orchard Road, Newark, Delaware from Monday – Friday, noon to 5:00 p.m.
TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW! GREAT SAVINGS ON SUBSCRIPTIONS!

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University of Delaware English Department Offers a Symposium, Readings and More...

The University of Delaware English Department is offering a number of upcoming events that should have great appeal to the literary community throughout Delaware.

- **Wednesday, February 9, 2011**
 English Department Speakers' Series
 Reading by Fleda Brown, former Poet Laureate of Delaware.
 5:00 p.m. in Memorial Hall on the main campus.
- **Saturday, February 26, 2011**
 Saturday Symposium – "All the King's Men"
 Trabant University Center, Room 206

Registration and continental breakfast begin at 9:00 a.m. Symposium includes lectures by University faculty; a tour of the Museum's Permanent Collection; lunch; and the 2:00 p.m. performance of "All the King's Men" by the UD REP at the Roselle Center for the Arts. Estimated cost: \$55 per person (to be confirmed shortly)

- **Wednesday, April 27, 2011**
 W.D. Snodgrass Symposium at the University of Delaware
 Roselle Center for the Arts
 Featuring readings by X.J. Kennedy and Adam Gopnik, followed by a reception
 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.
 Free to the public

We Tip Our Hats to...

***JoAnn Balingit:* Delaware Poet Captures 2010 Global Filipino Literary Award**

- Press Release courtesy of Remé Grefalda, our.own.voice@gmail.com

Your Heart and How It Works, a collection of poetry by **JoAnn Balingit**, published by Spire Press, was selected as the GFLA recipient for poetry published in 2009. **Ms. Balingit holds the title of Poet Laureate of the State of Delaware.** Fleda Brown, poet and founder of the University of Delaware “Poets in the Schools” program and herself the Delaware poet laureate from 2001-2007, praises Balingit’s deconstruction of love’s clichés “shrewdly celebrating the heart as a live object, more vulnerable and complicated than a machine pumping blood also to itself.” Ms. Balingit teaches in schools and community organizations in Delaware to promote the art of poetry. She has led workshops at the Writers Retreat at Cape Henlopen, the annual Delaware Book Festival, at the 2008 Diamond State Reading Association Conference and at the 2009 Delaware Literary Connection Writers Conference

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Events

Saturday, January 29, 2011: “Revising Poetry: The Art of Refinement.” Poetry workshop sponsored by the Delaware Literary Connection, to be held at the Kirkwood Highway Public Library, Wilmington, DE 19808. 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Includes lunch. No charge. Contact graybeg@comcast.net to register. Workshop limited to 20 participants.

Saturday, February 26, 2011: 14th Annual Bay to Ocean Writers Conference. Sponsored by the Eastern Shore Writers’ Association. Find detailed information, including registration forms, at www.baytooocean.com. Advance registration only. Online registration is **NOT** available. Registration closes February 19, 2011. This very popular conference is designed for all skill levels and genres. It has sold out regularly in the past. Early registration is advised.

Saturday, May 14, 2011: *Suburban Noir: Writing From the Dark Side of Life.* How do they do it, those skilled writers who build characters that fall victim to their own fatal flaws, who come face to face with the dark side of their lives in the middle of the night and run screaming from their beds? Join the DLC and workshop leader Mary Pauer, MFA, for a workshop delving into emotional noir. Utilizing several short stories from well-known noir writer Joyce Carol Oates, we will explore the nuances of writing noir and try our hand at in-class exercises. Participants will be assigned several Oates’ stories to read prior to the workshop (materials provided by the DLC), and these will kick off our discussion of this popular genre. The workshop will be held in Dover, location to be announced. We will begin at 10:00 a.m. and run until 3:00 p.m. Cost: \$35.00/person, which includes lunch. Workshop limited to 15 participants. Please contact graybeg@comcast.net for more information as we move toward spring.

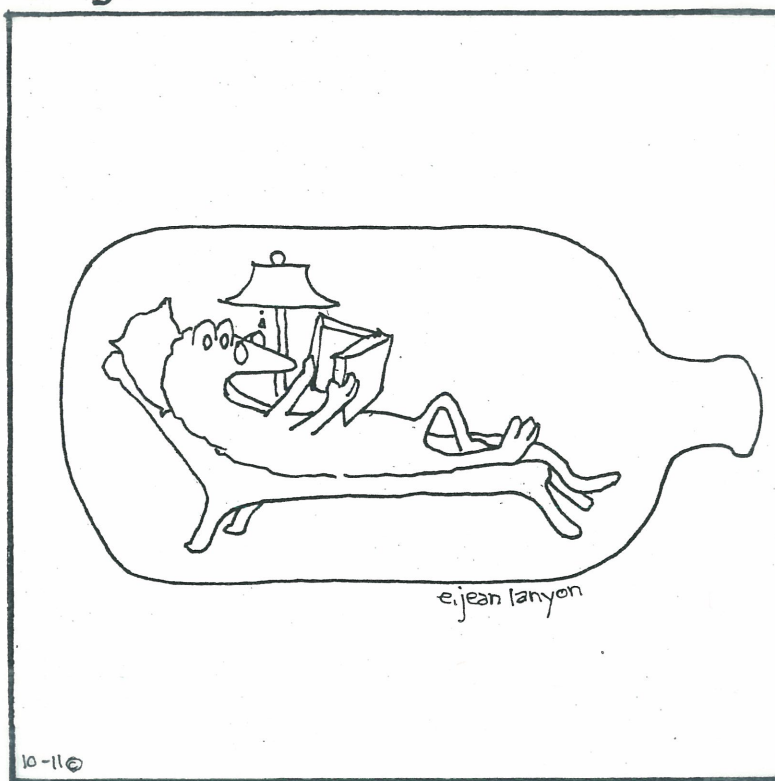
Opportunities

February 28, 2011: Deadline for submissions for the next issue of *The Delmarva Review*, scheduled to be published in November 2011. Check guidelines on the Eastern Shore Writers Association website at www.easternshorewriters.org.

Contests

Out and About/DLC Writing Contest. Short Prose. Maximum 1500 lines. Deadline for submission: February 15, 2011. See article on page 2 for details.

alligations



To purchase copies of e. jean lanyon's "Alligations," please contact her at: 8 winston avenue, wilmington, de 19804. Phone: (302) 654-6236.

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The Delaware Literary Connection is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and fostering the literary arts in Delaware. It is headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware.