

Biblio File

Susan Croce Kelly has given three Zoom talks during the shut-down, one for Columbia, Missouri's Boone County



Susan Croce
Kelly

History & Culture Center, a second at Sentieri Italian Language School in Chicago which had an international audience, and a third, on Feb. 25 for the University of Oklahoma Libraries. ...

Helen Frost's novel in poems, *All He Knew*

(See Literary License, May 2020), has won the 2021 Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. Past winners of the award include Louise Erdrich and Harriette Gillem Robinet. Also, Helen's novel, *Blue Daisy* (See Literary License, May 2020), a mix of poems and prose, won the 2020 Best Dog Book Medal. ... David Radavich's essay, "Elegy for Jane": The Nature of Grief,"



Harriette Gillem
Robinet

appears in *A Field Guide to the Poetry of Theodore Roethke* (Swallow Press, Dec. 29, 2020), edited by William Barillas, with a forward by Edward Hirsch, who presented the Midland Authors' April, 2013 program. The volume provides a rich diversity of interpretations of this major poet of the Midwest. David will moderate the Midland Authors' March 9 program. ... David L. Harrison writes to say, "I wanted to tell you about an event that took place on Feb. 9 when I performed with Sandy Asher a reading of our novel in verse, *Jesse and Grace, A Best Friend Story*. Sandy's play version of our story about life in fourth grade was published more than a decade ago and she went to Chicago to receive the

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Author elevates discussion with talk about Chicago L

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Author Patrick Reardon took Zoom viewers for a spin on Chicago's Loop L on Feb. 9 during the Midland Authors' monthly program, which was conducted via Zoom.

Reardon, author of *The Loop: The "L" Tracks That Shaped and Saved Chicago*, the latest of his nine books, said the book's main argument is the L is the most important structure in Chicago's history.

Because of the L and its downtown loop, "Chicagoans could come from one end of Chicago to the other very easily," said Reardon, who was a Chicago Tribune reporter, feature writer and editor for more than three decades.

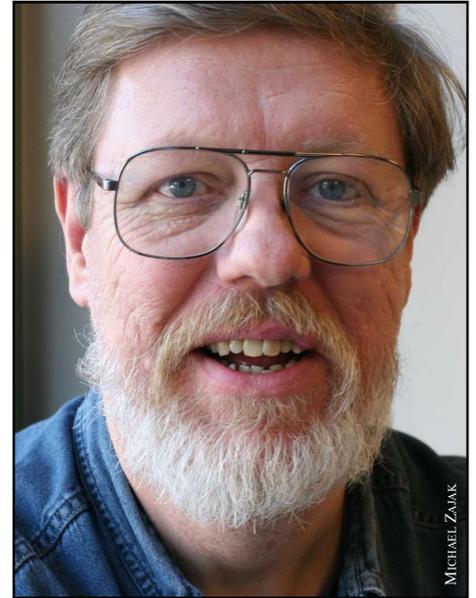
Before the Loop was constructed, Chicagoans could take an L train downtown, but then they had to get out and take a cable car, a "horse car" or walk to the center of the city or to another train station to go elsewhere in the city, he said.

"This was a very awkward situation," he said.

The Loop L also created a central downtown that "was everybody's second neighborhood," he said. "The downtown is owned by all Chicagoans. When I say owned, I mean the feeling of ownership."

The L also was important for Chicago's economic strength because "it marked off and anchored the richest property in the city, and the deep investment in the downtown made the people who owned it want to find ways to make the downtown work."

That helped the city's center ride out



Patrick Reardon

the trend toward suburbanization in the 1960s and 1970s, he said.

Many members of the Midland Authors make appearances in his book, Reardon said. For example: **Hobart Chatfield-Taylor**, the first president of the society. Chatfield-Taylor published a book in 1917 titled *Chicago*, in which he expressed his love for the elevated Loop, which shows that in 1917 it was already being called the Loop.

Some historians set the date for using that name as far back 1882 or thereabouts, Reardon said. Some writers said the Loop got its name from cable car loops that served the central business district. But, using illustrations, Reardon

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Distinguished Play of the Year award from Alliance of American Theatre and Education. This time we were chosen to be one of the events in the Philadelphia Online: DG Footlights™, a project sponsored by Dramatists Guild of America. We were especially pleased because ours was the first reading of a children's story in this program and we drew the greatest attendance they've had. The link to the reading is free: <https://bit.ly/2M0utQG>. In other news, I just had a 4,000-word article accepted in Missouri Reading, the online journal published by Missouri Literacy Association, about ways to celebrate National Poetry Month in April. Also, I granted reprint rights to an educational publisher in South Africa for "Mystery Lunch," a poem from Mouse was Out at Recess,

published in 2003 by Boyds Mills Press. ... The long list of books for the 2021 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction announced on Feb. 2 included *Scattered Lights* by **Steve Wiegenstein**



Steve Wiegenstein

(See *Literary License*, October, 2020). ... **W. Nikola-Lisa's** 2000 book *Hallelujah! A Christmas Celebration* was included on Dec. 2 in PBS SoCal's "Beyond Christmas: A December Holiday Book List for Little Ones." ... **Robert Starks** was quoted on Feb. 5 in the Chicago



Robert Starks

Crusader in an obit about hotel pioneer Herman Roberts. ... **Vicki Quade's** "Late Nite Catechism" was nominated for the Chicago Reader's best of 2020. ... **Mary Wisniewski** wrote the op-ed "The case against dibs – a lousy 'tradition'" for the Feb 4. Chicago Tribune. ... On Feb. 9, **Rebecca Johns** tweeted to say, "I'm wanting to start on the next novel already, please talk me out of it." ... Previously out of print, **Megan Stielstra's** newly re-edited *Everyone*

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Chicago L

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showed the six small cable car loops did not ring the central city the way the L later did.

When you look at "many, many" 1890s novels, including three by Theodore Dreiser based on Charles Yerkes, who basically built the Loop, none of them refer to Chicago's downtown as the Loop, Reardon said.

"The interesting thing is *The Jungle* and *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* are from the first decade of the 1900s," Reardon said. "So this is even after the elevated Loop was built [but] these books are not mentioning it as the downtown. If they talk about downtown at all, they talk about it as downtown, often spelled as down-town."

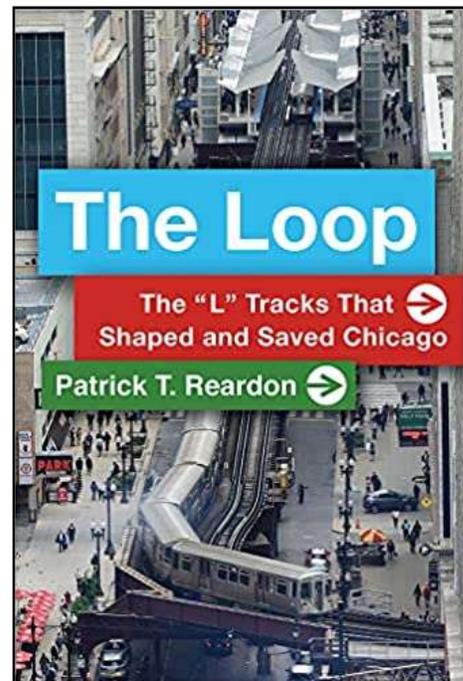
Two other Midland Authors members, **Clarence Darrow** and **Edgar Lee Masters**, were in Chicago in the 1890s, Reardon said. In their memoirs, they talk about walking in the downtown area in the 1890s that was "later" called the Loop, Reardon said. The two-mile-long loop was built in 1897.

"The L was not only a "looming presence on the streetscape," but it also anchored the downtown, Reardon said.

“If there is a [subway] train going by ... you don't see it and you don't feel it.”

The city's subways don't have the same effect, he said.

"If there is a train going by, there may be a whoosh in the grate, but you don't see it and you don't feel it," he said. "A lot of us have taken the subway to the



Loop, but could you draw the edges of the subway? You can't visualize it the way you can with the Loop."

Moreover, the Loop minimized the phenomenon of "wandering downtowns" that occurred in other cities," he said.

In some cities, new construction on the edge of a downtown might attract more activity at the expense of an older area on the opposite side of the downtown. Over time, the recognized center of the city can shift or "wander."

That happened in Chicago in its early days when the downtown shifted from South Water Street to Lake Street and then to State Street.

But once the circle of elevated tracks was constructed, that rooted Chicago's downtown, Reardon said.

Literary License

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www.midlandauthors.com

Follow the Society on
[Twitter@midlandauthors](https://twitter.com/midlandauthors)

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 and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

'I have seen resurgence of interest in poetry'

David Radavich will moderate the March 9 Midland Authors panel on poetry. The panelists will be **Angela Jackson, Grace Bauer and Lisa Fay Coutley**. Here is what Radavich tells *Literary License* about trends in poetry:

Literary License: *Do you see a resurgence of interest in poetry, especially among young people?*

David Radavich: With the advent of poetry slams and a huge range of poetry readings in all sorts of venues, I have seen a resurgence of interest in poetry in recent decades. During the Iraq War years, beginning around 2003 or 2004, a real florescence of war poetry occurred worldwide, thanks in huge part to the rise of the Internet. That period resulted in the greatest outpouring of war poetry since World War I.

Literary License: *Has the way that audiences access poetry changed as readings – live or transmitted electronically – join print? Has that shaped the poetry that is being created today?*

David Radavich: Poetry as a genre is ideally suited to the Internet.

Lyric poetry, at least, is highly portable and rather easy to read (if not to absorb) online. Longer poetic forms like verse satires and epics may have suffered somewhat, but overall, more people seem to be sharing poems over electronic media than ever. The enormous rise in the popularity of live readings has resulted in greater interest in the speaking and hearing of poems, their aural qualities. And as in

March 9, 2021, program

Presentation: 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. (Central Time). Followed by time to socialize: 8 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

**Join the meeting via Zoom:
<https://bit.ly/3qvYTcK>**

Details on Page 9

ancient times, modern poetry readings are often accompanied by choric effects or musical instruments.

Literary License: *Has the technological ability to publish books without institutional or commercial support connected readers of poetry in a new way?*

Literary Landscape **David Radavich**



David Radavich: Publishing options like self-publication and distribution through Amazon and other vendors has democratized writing of all kinds.

That has obviously led to wide disparities in quality, but it has also broadened poetry beyond the academic centers, where literary activity was heavily concentrated in the late 20th century.

Literary License: *Who are the poets you read or listen to?*

David Radavich: I must admit, I am a lover of the classics – Torquato Tasso, Rainer Maria Rilke, Czeslaw Milosz – but I am just now reading Patricia Hooper's marvelous *Wild Persistence* (2019), and at least a dozen of this year's entries into the SMA poetry book contest exhibit abundant talent and creativity.

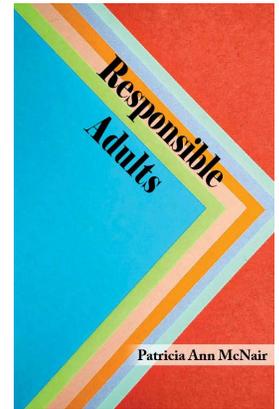
for programs such as the monthly programs and the awards at the annual May book awards banquet.

Thanks to **Christine Rice**, who made a recent contribution.

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Remain Calm and *Once I Was Cool* will be published by Northwestern University Press in August, with new covers. ... Midland Authors award winner **Samira Ahmed** tweets to say: "Authors, what's your favorite revision tool. Like do you make a spreadsheet (but whyyyy) for edits? Use note cards, perhaps? Or do you use a bizarre "system" of post-its, different color pens, and punctuation without a legend so later it makes no sense? And maybe there's crying?" ...



Christine

Sneed tweets to say, "Starting April 12, I'll be teaching a four-week online #fiction #workshop for @CatamaranLit (a perennially beautiful literature and arts magazine based in Santa Cruz) with an especial focus on crafting strong characters." ... **Patricia Skalka** was the Novel Bay Booksellers' 2020 best seller. ...

Bonnie Jo Campbell has this to say

about **Patricia Ann McNair's** new book, *Responsible Adults* (Cornerstone Press, December 2020): "*Responsible Adults* is devastating, in the best possible way. McNair guides us through domestic worlds where

we might fear to tread alone, revealing truths and exposing worlds peopled with want, kitchens with empty refrigerators and strange men. Children eat grape jelly with a spoon and long for ordinary lives as they negotiate adult problems as best they can. Readers are wiser and more compassionate for knowing these stories." ... **Patricia Hruby Powell** reviewed *King and the Dragonflies* for the Feb. 21 Champaign-Urbana (Illinois) News-Gazette. ... **Rick Perlstein** was inter-



Patricia Skalka

Literary Largess

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Midland Authors always needs additional money

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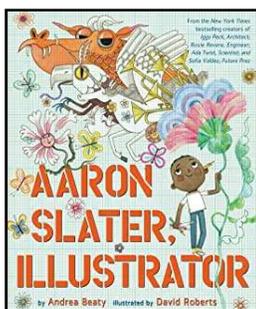
viewed about Rush Limbaugh for the Feb. 17 Washington Post. ... **Patrick Hicks** is among the upcoming writers in the Sierra Nevada University's Writers in the Woods. ... On Jan. 25, WBEZ-Chicago said **Rita Woods' Remembrance** is "an ambitious, absorbing novel." ... **Scott Turow** was interviewed in early



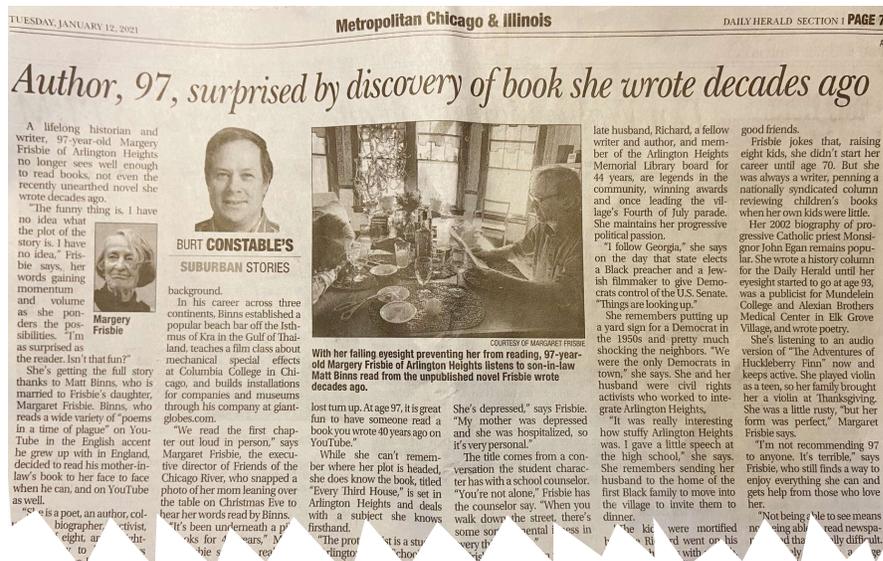
Ruth Goring

February on KUOW. ... Aljazeera.com quoted former Midland Authors President **Robert Loerzel** on Feb. 18. ... **Ruth Goring's** book *Isaiah and the Worry Pack* is due out in November from InterVarsity Press' new imprint IVP Kids. It is about a boy whose mother helps him create a spiritual practice to set aside his worries. ... *The Lost Tribes: Trials* (Move Books), by **Christine Taylor-Butler** is due out in July. ... **Patrick Reardon** wrote "Nothing new about America's cancel culture" for the Jan 27 Chicago Sun-Times. ... Former Midland Authors President **Craig Sautter** was quoted in The DePaulia on Jan 14. ... **Rebecca Sive** wrote "Karen Lewis reminded us Chicago's institutions need rebuilding for residents who rely on them" for the Feb. 10 Chicago Sun-Times. ... **Robert Pruter** was interviewed on WGN Radio in November about "the emergence of Chicago soul music out of the city's thriving rhythm-and-blues industry from the late 1950s through the late 1970s." ... **Andrea Beaty's Aaron Slater Illustrator** is due out Nov. 2 from Abrams Books for Young Readers. ...

Anne Calcagno was quoted in the Feb. 11 Rolling Stone. ... On Dec. 10, Midland Authors Board Member



Aaron Slater, Illustrator by Andrea Beaty, illustrated by David Roberts



Columnist Burt Constable interviewed Margery Frisbie about a lost book she wrote some 40 years ago, *Every Third House*.

Columnist writes about the finding of lost book

Three or four decades ago, **Margery Frisbie** wrote a book *Every Third House* that never got published. Recently it came up in conversation and she expressed a desire to read it, but at 97 her eyesight has made that difficult. **Matt Binns**, who posts "Poems in a Time of Plague" (See Literary License, June/July 2020) recorded *Every Third House* in chapters via YouTube. You can listen to it at <https://bit.ly/2LY6r8O>.

Binns says, "I would advise you to treat it like an audiobook and turn off the video to save you from my ugly mug."

(Suburban Chicago) Daily Herald columnist Burt Constable got wind of the project and wrote about it on Jan. 12, and newspapers across the country picked it up. Frisbie told Constable, "It's been under a pile of books for 40 years. It really is very funny to have something lost turn up." The title refers to a conversation the main character has with a school counselor, who says, "When you walk down the street, there is some sort of mental illness in every third house."

Patrick McBriarty was quoted on WTTW News. ... The annual corruption report by Midland Authors President **Dick Simpson**, **Thomas J. Gradel** and **Marco Rosaire Rossi**, released on Feb. 22, said Chicago remains America's most corrupt city, and Illinois the third-most corrupt state. Dick is also working on a book with different authors on different chapters called *Modern Mayors of Chicago*. It covers the mayors from Harold Washington to Lori Lightfoot. Also, Dick's book

Democracy's Rebirth: The View from Chicago is in press at the University of Illinois Press to be published by the spring of 2022. The mayors book is expected to publish in 2023. ... Chicago's WGN-TV profiled **Timuel Black** on Feb. 15. ... **Chris Fink** is the fiction judge for the 2021 Wisconsin People & Ideas awards.

Follow Biblio File on Twitter @BiblioFile_SMA.

Society of Midland Authors presents

AUTHENTIC VOICES:

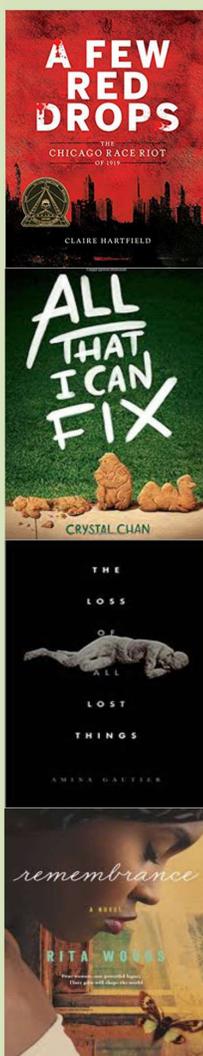
Three authors on representation, writing
& diversity in literature

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Social: 6:30-7 p.m. / **Panel discussion:** 7-8:15 p.m. Central

Free, open to the public, no registration

Zoom link: [Bit.ly/3qvYTCk](https://bit.ly/3qvYTCk)



Claire Hartfield, moderator, YA nonfiction.

A Few Red Drops: The Chicago Race Riot of 1919

Hartfield is the 2019 Coretta Scott King Author award winner for her account of the 1919 Chicago race riot sparked by racial inequities that remain central today.

Crystal Chan, middle grade fiction.

All That I Can Fix

Chan has written two starred review books featuring mixed-race protagonists growing up in the small-town Midwest.

Amina Gautier, adult short stories.

The Loss of All Lost Things

Gautier has received numerous prestigious awards for her three short story collections. She writes about the experience of African-Americans and Afro-Puerto Ricans in the northeastern United States.

Rita Woods, adult historical fiction.

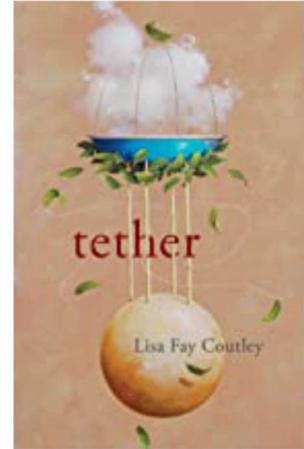
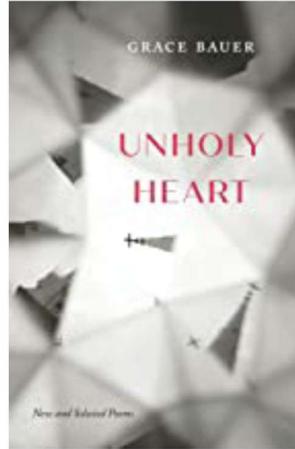
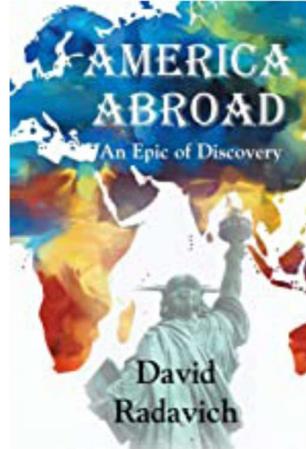
Remembrance

Woods is a first-time author who has received much praise for her work that mixes history and fantasy to tell the stories of four Black women across 200 years.

Purchase panelists' books via Semicolon: SemiColonChi.com

MIDLAND AUTHORS *presents*

Writing Poetry Today



Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Social half hour: 6:30-7:00 pm; Panel discussion: 7:00-8:00 pm (CT)

Free, open to the public ❖ No registration needed

Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/3qvYTcK>

☞ **Angela Jackson, Illinois' Poet Laureate, *Seems Like a Mighty Long Time***

Jackson is a poet, playwright and novelist who grew up on Chicago's South Side. She is the author of numerous collections of poetry and was named the Illinois Poet Laureate in 2020. Jackson's forthcoming collection, *More Than Meat and Raiment: Poems*, will be published this year. "Poetry is life distilled," she says.

☞ **David Radavich, Moderator, *America Abroad: An Epic of Discovery***

Radavich describes himself as a socially committed poet, playwright and essayist. His latest narrative collection, *America Abroad: An Epic for Our Time*, is a companion to his earlier *America Bound: An Epic for Our Time*. Recent lyric collections are *Middle-East Mezze* and *The Countries We Live In*. His plays have been performed across the United States and in Europe.

☞ **Grace Bauer, *Unholy Heart: New and Selected Poems***

Bauer's latest collection of poems is *Unholy Heart: New and Selected Poems*. She was the 2015 winner of the Society of American Authors Book Award in Poetry for her collection *Nowhere All At Once*. Bauer is the Aaron Douglas Emerita Professor of English & Creative Writing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has long been known for the wide range of both her subject matter and poetic styles.

☞ **Lisa Fay Coutley, *tether***

Coutley is an Assistant Professor of Poetry & Creative Nonfiction in the Writer's Workshop at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She judged the Midland Authors' Book Award for poetry in 2018 and 2019. In *tether*, Coutley "engineers both recovery and healing in poems that swerve emotionally between the landing bays of grief, longing and wonder," said Major Jackson in a review.

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For more information, contact Midland Authors event chair Greg Borzo: (312) 636-8968; [gregborzo54@gmail.com](mailto:gregborzo54@gmail.com)

## Final chapters

*Harry Mark Petrakis, 1923-2021*

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

In 2000, **Harry Mark Petrakis** was the speaker at the annual Midland Authors dinner, at the invitation of then-Midland Authors President **Richard Lindberg**.

“He did not disappoint,” Lindberg wrote later. “Harry recounts the mundane incidents of childhood in such a way that elevates his listening audience to high levels of anticipation, converging with inevitable tears and laughter.”

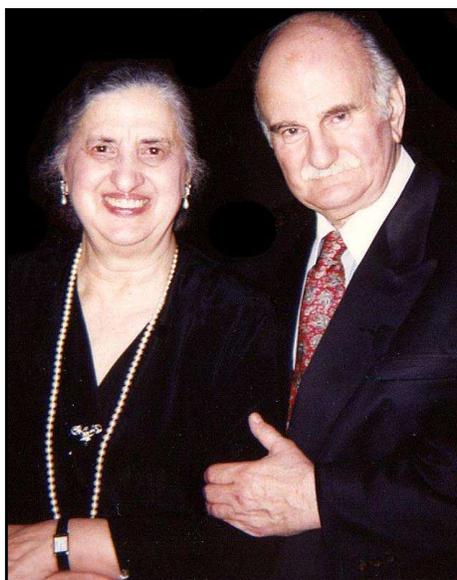
Mr. Petrakis, a Midland Authors member for decades and author of 24 books and numerous short stories, died on Feb. 2 at his longtime home near Chesterton, Indiana, of what relatives said was old age. He was 97.

“Harry Mark Petrakis was a fantastic storyteller,” said former Midland Authors President **Craig Sautter**. “Whether in person or on the page, he kept his audience mesmerized with vivid details and lovable and realistic characters. My favorite book of his was a later one, *Twilight of the Ice*, that memorialized a profession I didn’t even know existed. His characters worked like acrobatics carrying big blocks of ice across the tops of railroad cars in all sorts of weather, dropping them into the interior compartments to chill perishables like meat, before the day of refrigeration. He captured and recreated so many lost worlds for his readers. And, he was a generous, humorous, noble man and a wonderful writer who Chicago will greatly miss.”

Mr. Petrakis sold his first story, “Pericles on 31st Street,” in 1956 to the Atlantic magazine, launching a long career that made him one of Chicago’s best-known authors.

He “was a major figure, certainly in 20th century Chicago literature,” said Midland Authors member **Stuart Dybek**. “He was part of a movement that was national at the time, with Chicago in the forefront, in which America claimed its identity through its ethnic writers.”

Mr. Petrakis, the son of a Greek Orthodox priest, was born in 1923 in St. Louis and grew up on Chicago’s South Side with five siblings in what he



**Diana and Harry Mark Petrakis**

described as “a series of dingy, desolate, city apartments which seemed to me built to prevent any light or warmth from entering the cold, shadowed rooms.”

At age 11, he missed two years of school with tuberculosis and couldn’t even go out to play. He filled his time reading hundreds of books. He later said the authors of those classics gave him a joy of reading and a “compass for his life” that made him a writer.

His first novel, *Lion at My Heart*, was published in 1959 after Mr. Petrakis had scraped by financially for years. When the first copy arrived at his home, the Petrakis family marched through the house, as Mr. Petrakis’ older sons, then children, banged metal pots and Mr. Petrakis held the book above his head. His best-known book, the best-selling 1966 novel *A Dream of Kings*, was made into a 1969 movie starring Anthony Quinn.

**M**r. Petrakis continued to polish his craft over his lifetime, working, as he said in a 2009 Chicago Sun-Times interview, “to hone and shape [his writing] and fashion it so that it strikes harmoniously on the ear.” He won the annual short story O. Henry Award and the Chicago Public Library’s Carl Sandburg Award. He twice was a finalist for the National Book Award in Fiction. He taught as a visiting lecturer and as a writer-in-residence in various universities, and held the Nikos Kazantzakis Chair in Modern Greek

Studies at San Francisco State University. He was awarded honorary degrees from the American College of Greece, the University of Illinois, Roosevelt University, Hellenic College, Governors State University and Indiana University Northwest.

“Harry was among the most exuberant writers to walk the streets of Chicago,” said Henry Kisor, a retired book editor of the Chicago Sun-Times and author of 10 books. “He belongs right up there with Studs Terkel, Nelson Algren, Gwendolyn Brooks, Carl Sandburg, Sandra Cisneros and others who showed how ordinary Chicagoans could be extraordinary Americans. He really should have been better known, although he was hardly a neglected author.”

“I view Harry Mark Petrakis as one of the greatest Chicago writers throughout our history,” said Midland Authors President **Dick Simpson**. “He gave a unique voice to the Greek community and to the entire human community.”

In his later years, Mr. Petrakis turned to

“*He kept his audience mesmerized with vivid details and lovable and realistic characters.*”

writing occasional essays about his recollections for the Sun-Times’ opinion section, many of them set in the 1930s and 1940s. Among his topics were a woman with a disfigured face who finally found her true love; young men waiting to see when they would be called to war; a passionate race-track bettor; a story-telling high-school ROTC commander; his thoughts of suicide when he mistakenly believed he had ALS; his youthful gambling addition, and his various early jobs. His final Sun-Times essay appeared in October.

In one essay, Mr. Petrakis recalled lively family discussions in a cramped Depression-era apartment over meals of rice pilaf, a slice of bread and a glass of milk. “Only when I, the last of the 10 who sat at that table still alive, only after death finally claims me, will those buoyant and contentious voices fall silent, settling to rest beside me for eternity,” he wrote.

*A version of this obituary appeared in the Feb. 4 Chicago Sun-Times.*

**Note from the SMA Board of Directors:** *Members of the Society of Midland Authors are encouraged to nominate authors from our 12-state region who have published with a recognized publisher. The nominations will be considered by the SMA board at its next meeting. The 12 states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. The nomination form is below. Send it to Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610. You can also email it as a PDF to Membership Secretary Thomas Frisbie at tomfrisbie@aol.com.*

**For the use of members only.**

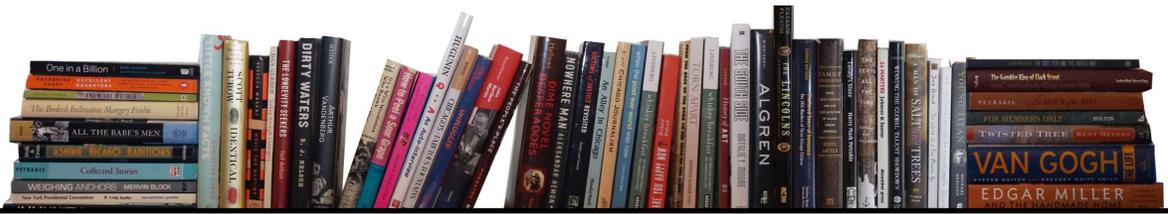


## NOMINATION FORM

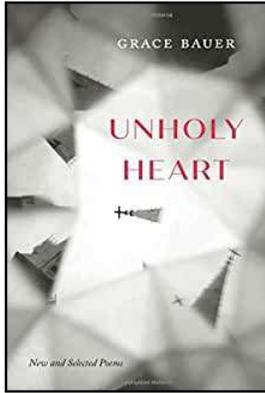
**Author Member:** Author Members must be an "author or co-author of a book demonstrating literary style and published by a recognized publisher, or of a published or professionally produced play."

**Associate Member:** Associate members (without voting rights) may be "persons having some connection with literature, such as librarians, teachers, publishers, and editors."

|                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>WORKS:</b>                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Title:</p> <p>1:</p> <p>2:</p> <p>3:</p> <p>4:</p> <p>5:</p> <p>6:</p> <p>7:</p> <p>8:</p> <p>9:</p> <p>10:</p> <p>11:</p> <p>12:</p> | <p>Publisher:</p> <p>Year:</p>                                                                                                                                       |



## Literary Latest



### ELEGIAC WORK

Grace Bauer's latest book is *Unholy Heart* (University of Nebraska Press, March 1, 2021).

From the publisher: "Unholy Heart includes generous selections from each of



Grace Bauer

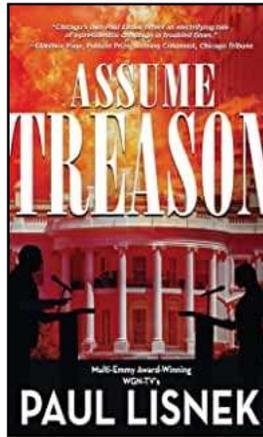
Grace Bauer's previous books of poetry, plus a sampling of new poems. Bauer has long been known for the wide range of both her subject matter and poetic styles, from the biblical persona poems of *The Women at the Well*, to the explorations of visual art in *Beholding Eye*, to the intersections of personal history and pop culture in *Retreats and Recognitions* and *Nowhere All At Once*, and to the postmodern fragmentations in *MEAN/TIME*. Along with these selections, Bauer incorporates her most elegiac work yet."

### REFLECTING OUR REALITY

*Assume Treason* (Written Dreams Publishing, Jan. 5, 2021) is the latest work of fiction by Paul Lisnek.

From the publisher: "It puts the characters introduced in his first novel, *Assume Guilt*, into the presidential election setting. Jury consultant Matt Barlow is hired

to work with one of the leading presidential candidates, but as campaign offices get bombed, white supremacists emerge, the race is shaken up and it becomes unclear just how involved the current president may be involved, or others. It's



a work of fiction that takes on an amazing reflection of the environment we have just lived thru in the 2020 election."

Lisnek tells Literary License: "My first book, *Assume Guilt*, took a look at the corruption in the Illinois political world, something I've studied and reported on for quite some time. When the publisher asked for a second book in the series, we were about to get underway into what I knew would be a contentious presidential election cycle. I couldn't have predicted just how crazy things would become and the sense to which my new book, *Assume Treason*, tends to reflect our reality is a sign of the times, not a reflection of any insightful planning on my part.

"I wanted the characters to mimic the kinds of personalities we were seeing on the campaign trail. Crafting the current president who I call Mike Toomey (yes, he is a well-known and popular announcer at WGN-TV who was more than happy to lend his name) is indeed Trump-like in his record.

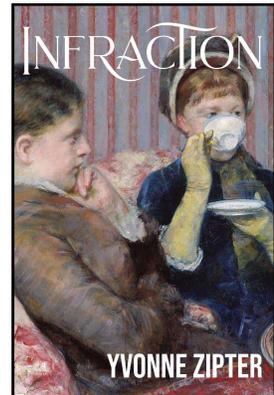
"And at the time I started to write, Elizabeth Warren was capturing a lot of

attention. So my Marie Kent is a reflection of her values. I'm glad I created that character as friends of mine who follow the role and power of women in politics were intrigued to see how she would fare in my book. And of course the young and promising candidate, JoJo Campanella, is modeled to a great degree on Pete Buttigieg, a rising and charismatic presidential star taking the campaign world by storm.



Paul Lisnek

"The characters reflected reality by design, the plot reflects reality by fate I suppose. How this story comes out may or may not reflect what happened in the real world. My hope and invitation is that my fellow authors will check out the book and find out!!"



### CASE STUDY

Here's what Yvonne Zipter tells Literary License about her new book, *Infraction* (Rattling Good Yarns Press, June 1, 2021).

"During my early years working as a manuscript editor at the University of Chicago Press, I edited articles for various journals published by the press. One

## Literary Latest

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of those journals, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, published archival material as part of their issues. In 1990, one of the archival features I edited was Laura Engelstein's "Lesbian



Yvonne Zipter

Vignettes: A Russian Triptych from the 1890s" (vol. 15, no. 4 [1990]: 813–31), in which Engelstein presented three case histories of lesbians recorded by a Russian gynecologist in the latter

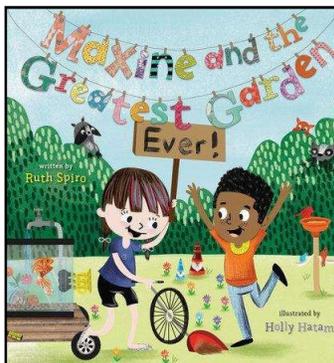
half of the nineteenth-century. One of the case histories particularly captivated me, and after spending time getting myself up to speed on Russian culture and history at that time, I set about expanding that 12-page case history into the novel *Infraction*.

"Marya Zhukova is a woman of many passions. Her husband isn't one of them. It's mathematics and literature that captivate her, in part, but her lover, Vera, enthalls her most of all. These are, however, all dangerous obsessions in the socially turbulent St. Petersburg of 1875.

"Marya is the fiery center to a small solar system of characters, each of whom depends on her to light their own lives. There is her aunt Lidia, a spinster who, dying of consumption, exacts from her niece a promise to marry. There is Grigorii, Marya's one-time math teacher, who longs for his former pupil to achieve the scholarly glory he cannot. There is Vera, a young tutor surprised to find she's fallen in love with a woman. There is Sergei, an earnest librarian captivated by Marya and willing to do whatever it takes to be near her, even if that means a platonic marriage. But when Sergei is consumed with desire for Marya, his anguish over the promise he made sets in motion a deadly chain of events.

"Finally, there is St. Petersburg itself, adding a richness to these characters as they walk and muse along the city's canals or bounce along the rutted streets behind a hardy droshky driver on their way to dine at Privato or Leiner's Deli or to watch ballet at the Marinsky Theater.

Inspired by a real life account, *Infraction* takes place at a time when women who yearn for more find that freedom comes at a cost.



### FRIENDSHIP, PERSISTENCE, KINDNESS

*Maxine and the Greatest Garden Ever* (Dial Books, Feb. 16, 2021) is the follow-up to *Made by Maxine*, which came out in 2018. The original book was sold at auction in a three-book deal; this is the second book in the series. The series features Maxine, a girl who likes to tinker, hack and code with a goal of making things better.

Author **Ruth Spiro** tells Literary License: "My idea for *Maxine and the Greatest Garden Ever* came from a challenge I experienced in my own garden.



Ruth Spiro

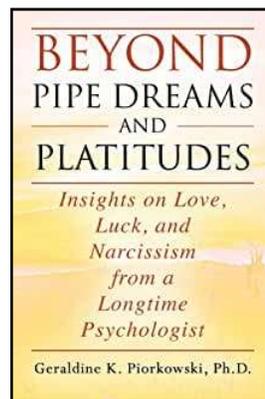
Like many gardeners, I've had my share of frustration when critters nibbled on the fruits of my beloved tomato plants. Nothing seemed to deter them, until a master gardener gave me some surprising advice. She said

the animals were taking bites of my tomatoes because they were thirsty – they only wanted to drink the liquid inside. So, I set out a pan of water for them near the vegetable plants. And it worked!

"Without revealing too much more about the story, *Maxine and the Greatest Garden Ever* is about friendship, persistence and being kind to one another. There are often multiple solutions to a problem, and sometimes a problem isn't really a problem at all, but an opportunity to grow.

"After sketching and plotting and planting, Maxine and Leo know they've made The Greatest Garden Ever! But they're

not the only ones who think so. Soon, all sorts of animals make their way in, munching on carrots and knocking over pots. When Leo and Maxine can't agree on a way to deter these unwelcome critters, it looks like there's more on the line than saving their garden – they just might need to save their friendship, too.



### COMPILATION OF EIGHT ESSAYS

**Geraldine K. Pirokowski** tells us this about her new book, *Beyond Pipe Dreams, and Platitudes: Insights on Love, Luck, and Narcissism from a Longtime Psychologist* (Outskirts Press):



Geraldine K. Pirokowski

"My book was published in October, 2020 with a 2021 copyright. This is my third published book; the other two were: *Two Close for Comfort Exploring the Risks of Intimacy* (1994) and *Adult Children of*

*Divorce: Confused Love Seekers*.

"*Beyond Pipe Dreams, and Platitudes* is a compilation of eight essays that I wrote upon retirement to answer my own question: What have I learned working with people for over 50 years?

"While I discovered that all people are fundamentally the same in terms of needs, hopes, dreams, fears and defenses, there were several counterintuitive and counter-cultural ideas that emerged from my clinical work that prompted the writing of the book. Among my ideas that run counter to popular culture is the observation that positive thinking does more harm than good at times, especially when it bypasses the normal processing of neg-

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## Literary Latest

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ative events and emotions. Another cultural misdirection is the overemphasis on romantic love as the be-all and end-all of existence, where unrealistic expectations lead to love's downfall. Other essays provide an innovative twist to topics such as anger, vulnerability, control of others, luck or chance, healthy vs. unhealthy narcissism, empathy, and healthy religion.

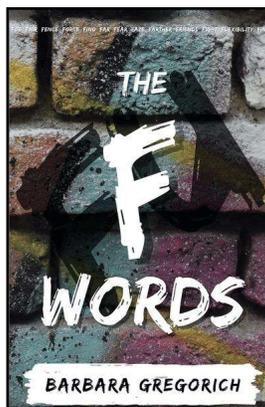
"The book has received some wonderful reviews, the most recent of which is by Dr. Kimberly Merenkov, selected by Chicago Magazine in January, 2021 as one of the top psychiatrists in Chicago. She wrote: 'I highly recommend this to anyone searching for insights about themselves, others, finding meaning, and dealing with our limitations. This book is pithy – it gets to the point about many issues that the general public may wonder about. It is refreshing, direct, and honest about our potential strengths and struggles in life, touching upon some of the dilemmas in our current culture. It has one of the best explanations for empathy I have ever read – beautifully, simply defined.'"

### POWERFUL AND DIVERSE

**Barbara Gregorich's** new book is *The F Words* (City of Light Publishing, Sept. 1),

From the publisher: "Sophomore Cole Renner knows teamwork inside and out from running cross-country at his multi-ethnic Chicago public school. He knows about braving the elements and not getting passed in the chute.

"What Cole doesn't know is how much



he'll need all of his mental and physical skills when the heavy doors of Cook County Jail slam shut on his father, a community activist; when his English teacher catches Cole tagging the school with the F word and sentences him to write two poems a week, each on a word that starts with F; when his best friend Felipe Ramirez runs for class president against the girl who dumped Cole; and when the school bully prowls the halls looking for Cole and the principal seems more interested in punishing Cole than the bully. As much as Cole wants to win meets, what he wants even more is justice – for his father, for himself, for Felipe, and for his fellow students. Cole learns that actions matter, but so do words.

"He takes his write words (in both Spanish and English) and turns them into the right words to fight for justice.

"This powerful and diverse book will



**Barbara Gregorich**

inspire young readers to stand up for what they believe in, to believe in themselves, and to fight for justice.

"It is perfect for teens finding themselves – and tentatively writing poetry – during the era of Me Too and Black Lives Matter.



### SWEEPING ACCOUNT

*New York, New York, New York: Four Decades of Success, Excess, and Transformation* (Simon & Schuster, March 16, 2021) is **Thomas Dyja's** latest book.

From the publisher: "*New York, New York, New York*, Thomas Dyja's sweeping account of this metamorphosis, shows it wasn't the work of a single policy, mastermind, or economic theory, nor was it a morality tale of gentrification or crime. Instead, three New Yorks evolved in turn.

"A lively, immersive history by an award-winning urbanist of New York City's transformation, and the lessons it offers for the city's future."

Kirkus Reviews wrote: "Morally and politically charged, an urgent, readable story of Gotham's fortunes."

## New Members

**Thomas Dyja** has written three novels, a biography of civil rights pioneer Walter White and *The Third Coast: When Chicago Built the American Dream* (Penguin Press, 2013), a New York Times Notable book, One Book One Chicago selection, and winner of the 2013 Heartland Prize for Non-fiction.

His next book, *New York, New York, New York: Four Decades of Success,*

*Excess, and Transformation* (See above), will be published by Simon & Schuster in March.

Dyja was born and raised on Chicago's Northwest Side. A graduate of Columbia University, he worked as a bookseller, on the agency side at ICM and then at Bantam Books. From there, he became a partner in the book packaging company Balliett & Fitzgerald.

His novels are *Play for a Kingdom; The Moon in Our Hands*, and *Meet John Trow*.

He is co-author with Rudy Crew of *Only Connect: The Way to Save Our Schools*. He also has edited four anthologies.

He was nominated by **Dominic Pacyga**.



**Eileen Favorite**

**Eileen Favorite** is the author of *The Heroines* (Scribner,

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## New Members

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2008), her first novel, which has been translated into six languages. Her essays, stories and poems have appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Rumpus*, *TriQuarterly*, *The Toast*, *Chicago Reader*, *Diagram* and others, and her essays and poems have aired on Chicago Public Radio. She teaches writing and literature at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she received her MFA, and at the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies.

She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize for her short story "Gangway: The Space Between Two Houses."

Her essay "On Aerial Views" was

named a Notable Essay in the Best American Essays 2020, and it won First Place in the 2019 Midwest Review's Great Midwest Writing Contest. The Rocky Mountain News called *The Heroines* one of the best debut novels of 2008, and the audio version was nominated for best audio recording of 2008 by Booklist.

She was nominated by **Christine Sneed**.

**Michelle Falkoff** is a lawyer, fiction writer teacher and director of the Communication and Legal Reasoning program at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.

She is the author of the novels *How To Pack for the End of the World* (Harper-

Collins, 2020); *Questions I Want to Ask You*; (HarperCollins, 2018); *Pushing Perfect* (HarperCollins, 2016), and *Playlist for the Dead* (HarperCollins 2015).

*Playlist for the Dead* was named an NPR Great Read of 2015.



**Michelle Falkoff**

Of *Packing for the End of the World*, Booklist said: "One of those rare books you can't put down. Teens looking for a character-driven novel with a touch of mystery can't do better than this."

She is a graduate of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop.

She was nominated by **Kate Hannigan**.

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