

News Words

A L A B A M A W R I T E R S C O N C L A V E

From the Program Chair:

With the 2010 annual AWC conference filed in the archives of history, it's not too soon to start thinking of 2011. The venue for the July 15 – 17, 2011 AWC annual meeting is the Marriott at Tranquility Base – right next door to the Space and Rocket Center – in Huntsville, Alabama. And, it is shaping up to be another creativity-stimulating and entertaining meeting. Though the Marriott has all the amenities of a grand conference center and comfortable hotel, one attractive feature is that the room rate for conference attendees is only \$95.00/night + taxes. The 2011 writer-in-residence and slate of workshop faculty are distinguished, published writers in their genre – their identities will be divulged later when I have them under contract. As in previous conferences, all the popular events and perhaps others will be included. So dust off your suitcase, write a story or poem, and plan to attend the 2011 AWC Annual Conference.

- Richard Modlin, Program Chair 2009-2011

M E M B E R S H I P

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Membership in the Alabama Writers Conclave begins October 1 through September 30 of each year. We try to keep up with our members and offer support as they develop their writing. If you have a writing web site, please email the link to us or write it on your return card when you pay dues. We will add the address to the AWC web site for all site visitors to see. If you have a book published or an award received, please let us know and we would love to post it on the site and in this newsletter. As part of our organization, you should receive a membership card in the mail after you pay your dues. That card can serve as a reminder that you have paid for that year.

Please send your news to:
awcmember@gmail.com

Thanks!

Membership Chair, Francesca Gross

YOUR AWC BOARD CHAIR
GREG SCREWS

“The question you have to ask yourself at the end of the day is...Did I write today?”

Writing teacher Judy Goldman cut to the chase on the first and last day of class. Recently, I attended a Goldman memoir class near Little Switzerland, North Carolina.

“Did I write today?” It’s a question we need to ask ourselves every day as writers.

Goldman, the author of two novels, told us you can go to all the writing workshops, conferences, seminars and lectures you want to attend. But to be a writer, you have to write every single day.

It’s a drumbeat you’ve heard before from your humble AWC president. But I plan to hit it louder. It’s too important. Everyone who read at open mic night at our July conference was great. The conference had almost 40 people read tight tense writing that ranged from gut-wrenching to drop-dead funny. Other words brought tears to everyone in the room.

Too many people worry if their pages are good. Not

enough worry about their pages getting done. Look at your day. Figure out when to write, and then do it. Author and writing teacher Abigail DeWitt calls it appointment writing. You make an appointment with yourself and write. If you are on the phone, you tell people you have to go. Write it on the refrigerator. Write it on your bathroom mirror in soap. Put it in your day, and don’t look back. Don’t let up.

“If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster.” ~Isaac Asimov

Figure out how you are going to type faster. Figure out how you are going to get it done. A great way to learn how to get those pages done is by attending the AWC gathering in July. The Conclave is a warm gathering of writers whose ability dot all sections of the learning curve. Our goal is to nurture and grow writers. What you do after that is up to you. Don’t let yourself down. *Greg, AWC Board Chair, Huntsville.*

The great advantage of being a Southern writer is that we don't have to go anywhere to look for manners; bad or good, we've got them in abundance. We in the South live in a society that is rich in contradiction, rich in irony, rich in contrast, and particularly rich in its speech.”

[Flannery O'Connor quotes \(American writer 1925-1964\)](#)

NEWS FROM THE 2011 ALABAMA
WRITERS' CONCLAVE ANNUAL
WRITERS' CONTEST

Mark it on your calendar. **APRIL 20, 2011** is the postmark deadline for entering the **Annual AWC Writing Contest**. The contest is open to receive entries any time between now and April 20th. Categories include fiction, short fiction, juvenile fiction, nonfiction, humor, traditional poem, free verse poem, and first chapter novel. Prizes of \$100, \$75, \$50, \$25 and four honorable mentions will be awarded in each category in July 2011. The AWC contest is nationally recognized and membership in the Conclave is not required to enter. In 2010 writers from 23 states in addition to Alabama, two Canadian provinces and an American in Wales submitted entries. Go to www.alalit.com to read some of the winning pieces. More information will soon be available on the AWC website so watch for it at www.alabamawritersconclave.org.

Marian Lewis, Contest Chair and Alalitcom Editor

A W C B O A R D C O N T A C T

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rfm1937@earthlink.com**Historian** Teresa Thornetthornecap@aol.com**Publicity Chair** Open**Recording Secretary** Marie Peersonmpeerson3@hotmail.com**Treasurer** Don Johnsone.d.johnson@bellsouth.net**Assistant Treasurer** Open**Contest Chair & Alalitcom Editor**Marian Lewis bo325sky@earthlink.net**Past President** -Jim Reedjim@jimreedbooks.com**Long-Range Planning Committee Chair**

Jimmy Carl Harris

harrisjc@bellsouth.net**Corresponding Secretary**

Kathleen Thompson

kthompson42@aol.com**Second VP Membership** Francesca Gross

Send membership dues, conference payments and registration to:

Francesca Gross

2229 Chapel Road

Birmingham, AL 35226

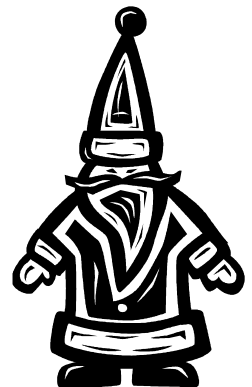
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G I F T S F O R T H E W R I T E R S I N Y O U R L I F E

- Books from your local independent book stores.

Go to www.newpages.com/bookstores/alabama_bookstores.htm for a list of stores.

- A membership in AWC for a starving artist, or beginning writer. www.alabamawritersconclave.org
- A gift subscription to the critically-acclaimed non-profit Birmingham Arts Journal, now in its 9th year of publication. www.birminghamartsjournal.org
- Poets and Writers Magazine—the source of information, support, and guidance for creative writers — www.pw.org
- *Ordinary Genius* by Kim Addonizio—great for unleashing the genius within.
- Membership to Alabama state poetry society. Alabamapoets.org
- Subscriptions to literary reviews such as the Louisville Review www.spalding.edu/louisvillereview/
- Gift certificates at office supply stores
- Chocolates --gobs!!!
- A bottle of lamp oil for writers who burn the midnight oil.
- Maid service for a day (or more) would be nice. Baby-sitting while writer is writing. Weekend at the beach. Cruise. Anything that gives a writer TIME and space to think. A new computer. A backup service. A meal out. A writer's conference.



"Well, they're Southern people, and if they know you are working at home they think nothing of walking right in for coffee. But they wouldn't dream of interrupting you at golf."

Nasper See b.1926)

A WRITING TECHNIQUE FROM KATHLEEN

Repetition as a Fictive Technique

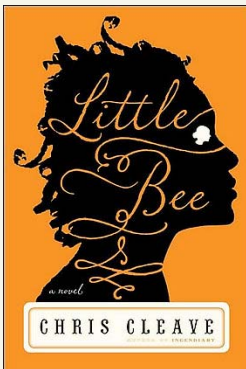
More often employed in poetry than in fiction, repetition can propel the plot of a story and establish its tone. Rick Moody's "Boys" in *The Best Short Stories of 2001* takes the reader through the life of two boys from their birth through the death of their father. Each sentence repeats a phrase. The crisis action (*boys enter the house carrying their father, slumped*) is followed by the boys exiting this house. I determined to write such a story. Moody had said *boys enter the house* was perhaps "the most essential gesture in a boy's life." What then was the most essential gesture in a girl's life? Always among the earliest beachcombers at the Gulf, I had encountered a woman who sat alone each morning under an umbrella nursing a cup, staring at the sea. Was she divorced or widowed? I'd just written a poem "Widow" based on a famed exercise by Maura Stanton involving death by water; thus, my phrase choice: *a woman waits*. And form? Like Moody, I

would use present tense without the advantage of paragraph breaks. The story came to me quickly, whole cloth. Ultimately, I did add paragraphs and a few present perfect and past tense verbs. It was, however, the repeated phrase that moved the action along, and also created the plaintive circularity of a pantoum.

-Kathleen

Kathleen Thompson, MFA in Fiction/Poetry Writing

Kathleen's little craft miracle "Woman's Wait" was recently published by Kathy Rhodes in *Muscadine Lines: A Southern Journal* and is archived at www.asouthernjournal.com.



Little Bee

By Christopher Clive

The opening pages of this unusual book are a warning: This is not

Kansas. Or, at least, not a familiar point of view. Little Bee is a Nigerian refugee, haunted by what she has seen that she should not have seen. She has spent the past two years as a detainee in a stark immigration facility in Britain where she studied the Queen's English as her only hope of making a life in that country. Raised in a tranquil, rural African village, the Western world is a mysterious place, and we see it (with great delight) through her eyes, and then through the sensibilities of a liberal English woman Little Bee met on a beach in Nigeria, the only person she

BOOK REVIEW

knows in England. This woman is the editor of a sassy fashion magazine; the mother of a precocious young boy; the wife of a successful, driven journalist; and the lover of a government worker. She and her husband travel to Nigeria on a spontaneous whim to attempt to rekindle their marriage, but what happens on a lonely stretch of beach changes everyone's lives.

Clive takes you deeply into the hearts of these flawed, but extraordinary characters and their entwined lives. Although the pace is at times slow, and sometimes strains a bit at credibility, it is an exceedingly rich experience and a very worthwhile journey that will make you think about the world we live in.

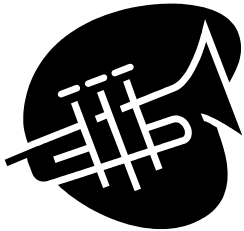
Reviewed by T.K. (Teresa) Thorne, author of *Noah's Wife*

STATE POETS LAUREATE



Sue Brannon Walker

AWC has the privilege of sponsoring the Alabama State Poet Laureate. Sue Brannon Walker has been re-elected as poet laureate for 2008-2012 by the AWC membership.



Take The Elevator: An Invitation

Sue Walker

She took the elevator to the 5th floor, though as for that she might have chosen any number, a number limited only by the sky, and whatever its limits are that are sterling promises wrapped in feathers of down.

When I step out, I might turn in any direction, left, right, go straight ahead, or realize, alas, and yes, sometimes it happens, you find yourself on the wrong floor. Let this be an exercise, an assignment, if you will. The door opens, Enter the elevator. Push the button to the floor of your choice. Get off. What do you find there? Whom do you see that you know? What do you say to each other? Do you tell her / him about the ballgame on the weekend? "What does it take to be a winner?" you ask. Maybe an answer is expected, maybe not. Maybe you feel like you no longer know the language you have spoken all of your life. Maybe you start to sing, and remember the day you played hooky from school and belted out: "I Ain't Nothin' But a Hound Dog" while the Gulf played its own trumpet song. Maybe you are headed for New Orleans in a Lexus with a dented bumper, but you can just taste the fried catfish at Commander's Palace.

I'm on the 5th floor of the Monteleone Hotel. I am in love with Louis Armstrong; I want to take the Streetcar Named Desire. I look out the hotel window. 5th Floor. The streetcar rumbles down St. Charles Avenue. I believe in the possibility of tomorrow. Yes. Can't you imagine the smile on my face? This is a prose poem. Think Baudelaire. I think I saw him on the elevator, same one I was riding. He is getting off on the 13th floor.

Won't you do this? Won't you get on the elevator? Get off on the floor of your choice. Tell me about it in 150-600 words. The deadline is December 18. I'll send you a New Year's award—but don't expect money – just a book which is worth more than money and more lasting, *nes't pas?*

I'll also send you 31 Writing Exercises – one for each day of the good New Year.

Let's have fun with prose. Yes?

Send to Sue Walker

Poet Laureate of Alabama

62 Ridgelawn Drive East

Mobile AL 36608

AWC FOUNDED 1923

**A L A B A M A W R I T E R S
C O N C L A V E**

Newsletter Editor
Francesca Gross
2229 Chapel Road
Birmingham, AL 35226

**The oldest writers' organization in continuous
existence in the United States. Founded 1923.**

B I T S A N D P I E C E S



Birmingham Arts Journal has been nurtured for 9 years by Jim Reed, Liz Reed, Irene Latham and Kathy Jolley. Their web site posts the last seven years of the journal. This might be a good place to start getting your work into print.

They accept Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Artwork and Photography. All the specifics are on their web site—length, deadlines etc.

If you have any questions, the Birmingham Arts Journal folks are an excellent team who support writing and publishing.

If you would like to support this publication and its dedicated staff—send them \$25 for the next 4 issues as a gift of appreciation.

Contact Info for BAJ

*Birmingham Arts Journal
2021 Third Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203*

www.birminghamartsjournal.org

205-326-4460



CHECK OUT THE WEB SITE: WWW.ALABAMAWRITERSCONCLAVE.ORG