



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER
2018-2019 NUMBER 3

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Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

President's Message


CHRISTINE SPATARA, *President*



October's program featured an excellent lecture on Victorian Literature, George Elliot to be precise. November is a continuation on the same theme. Three contemporary authors are interviewed by Roberta

Gates. Literature is an expression of our humanity no matter the century when it is written. In this tradition, our two committees, adult and young adult, read new authors to acknowledge their skill and their vision. Winners are chosen and awarded money prizes. We are unique in this effort from any other club in Chicago.

The FAW scholarship program reflects the mission of our organization to encourage new, talented writers associated with the Midwest

and to promote the arts, especially literature, among our members. In keeping with this mission, at our November 7th FAW luncheon, the FAW Foundation Fund Committee will be awarding \$1,500 scholarships to two promising graduate students in writing: Stephanie Rogers from National Louis University and Samuel Du Bois from Columbia College Chicago. We encourage our members to attend this meeting and show their support for a new generation of writers. 

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Historical Fiction Panel Three Writers You'll Want to Read

By ROBERTA GATES

You won't want to miss November's panel discussion with Connie Hampton Connally, Devin Murphy, and Kelly O'Connor McNeese, who will tell us about the agony and the ecstasy of writing historical fiction, including:

- How much research did you have to do?
- How difficult was it to create an atmosphere that was true to the period?
- Did you employ both real and fictional characters?
- Did you ever "fudge" the timeline for the sake of drama?
- In the absence of solid facts, did you ever have to decide for yourself what might have happened behind closed doors?



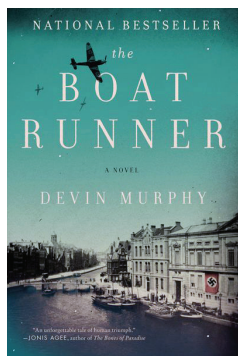
Connie Hampton Connally

Connie Hampton Connally's debut novel, *The Songs We Hide*, is set in Stalinist Hungary only a few years after the end of World War II. In it, Connally, who loves music as well as writing, brings together two young people who have nothing in common except their passion for singing. Péter Benedek is from a rural area where electricity and plumbing are unknown luxuries, while Katalin Varga is a young "bourgeois" woman from the city. When Péter moves to Budapest to do manual labor to help out his family, the two of them end up in the same apartment complex, where a relationship begins to blossom as soon as Katalin starts giving Péter singing lessons. But personal

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feelings are unimportant in Stalinist Hungary, where “class aliens” can disappear overnight—a threat which hangs over all the characters.

Connally holds an MFA in creative writing from Antioch University and has taught both high school English and elementary music. She is particularly interested in the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály, who was the inspiration for *The Songs We Hide*. Connally and her husband live in Tacoma, Washington.



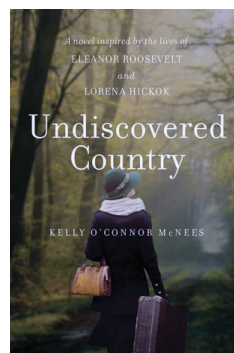
Devin Murphy

Devin Murphy's latest book, *The Boat Runner*, features Jacob Koopman, a teenager living in a small Dutch town with his older brother, Edwin, and his parents on the eve of World War II. His father, a factory owner who's pursuing a contract with Volkswagen, decides it would be good for business if he sent his sons to a summer camp in Germany. What he doesn't realize

(but the boys soon do) is that this is a Hitler Youth camp where intense competition and indoctrination go hand in hand. Later, after the Netherlands is taken over by the Germans, Jacob has to confront a new reality. What were once “games” are now deadly serious, not just for him and his immediate family, but also for his Uncle Martin, a fishing boat owner who inexplicably cozies up to the Nazis.

Murphy, who is an Associate Professor at Bradley University, was inspired to write this book by his grandfather who was an engineer in the Netherlands and had

to go into hiding during World War II. Murphy lives in Chicago with his wife and children.



Kelly O'Connor McNees

Kelly O'Connor McNees is the author of *Undiscovered Country*, a novel about the real-life relationship between Eleanor Roosevelt and her close friend, the journalist Lorena “Hick” Hickok. Using the 3,000 letters Eleanor wrote to Hick during their 30-year relationship, McNees mixes fact and fiction to present a portrayal of two women who are fiercely independent. Having met on

the eve of FDR's election in 1932, they set out on a road trip the following year in Eleanor's sporty Buick convertible, traveling first to New England and then to Canada. This was probably their headiest romantic period, but McNees goes beyond her two protagonists to give us glimpses of Depression-era hardships, in particular the poverty of West Virginia, which Hick researches as an investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

McNees is the author of three other books, including *The Lost Summer of Louisa May Alcott*, *The Island of Doves*, and *In Need of a Good Wife*, which was a finalist for the 2013 Willa Award. She was born and raised in Michigan and lives in Chicago with her family.

Suzy Giordano of The Book Cellar will be selling all three books both before and after our luncheon, so you'll be able to buy copies and have them signed while chatting with the authors.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

The November 2018 meeting of the Friends of American Writers will be held on Wednesday, November 7, 2018. Luncheon reservations for this meeting are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 4, 2018. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. For November Only, to reserve, please contact Pat Adelberg (1-847-588-0911) or Tanya Klasser (1-312-337-9648.)

If you wish a permanent reservation, please mention it when you call. All Board members automatically

have permanent reservations. Also, a reminder that no permanent reservations are held over from last year to this year.

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 W. Bellevue Place. The cost is \$45 per person, payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. For group reservations, we ask that only one person make the reservation to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations

not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

Accessing the FAW Web Page

By KAREN BAKER

For those of you who have not yet accessed the FAW web page, our website manager, Karen Baker, has provided a quick and easy way to do it. For this month, simply type in <http://fawchicago.org/Nov2018.html>

Henceforth, the only change will be the month and, starting in January, the year. Each entry will provide a summary of the date and program offering of the upcoming meeting.

Literature Committee

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*

The Literature Committee met and welcomed one new member. Current membership includes Diana Adams, Mary Rob Clarke, Ida Hagman, Kathy Katz, Karen Pulver, Dori Roskin, Karen Burnett, Roberta Gates, Ellen Israel, Diane Miller, Patricia Ronan, and Judy Share. To date, fifteen books have been received and more are trickling in. Starting in December, the group will meet twice a month to accommodate the flow of books that arrive later in the year.

Young People's Literature Awards Committee

ANGELA GALL, *Chair*

Remembering Lorraine

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."

—THOMAS CAMPBELL

On October 3rd, the Young People's Literature Committee met at the Women's Athletic Club for our first official meeting of the 2018-19 year. We were still reeling from the death of our dear friend Lorraine Campione; however, we carried on faithfully in her memory.

The meeting became a reminiscence of Lorraine as each of us knew her. We all agreed Lorraine was a driving force in the FAW, and that she was instrumental in appointing many of our members to highly active positions within the group. Betty O'Toole smiled as she recalled: "There was just no saying NO to Lorraine! Once, she called me and asked that I assume the office of president since our president had just died. She said someone needed to finish her term, and I was that someone. I was new with the group and didn't know what the position involved, but whatever it required, saying no to Lorraine was not an option."

Tanya Klasser had the same experience when Lorraine asked her to head the Young People's Literature Committee (YPLC) after only having been a member of it for a short time. Tanya mused: "Lorraine was so persuasive, she could have sold me the Brooklyn Bridge." Vivian Mortensen added: "Lorraine is the reason I joined the YPLC. I had been on the adult committee for years and needed a break. She told me how great the Young People's Committee was, so I tried it and have stayed with it ever since."

Lorraine, herself, was vital to our organization. Vivian Mortensen reflected: "I'll always remember how nothing in the teen books she read fazed Lorraine— transgender issues, swear words, teen sexuality— these didn't bother her a bit. In fact, lots of time she'd laugh about it— 'What next?' was her attitude. She always rated the books on literary merit not isolated instances of sensationalism." Jane Foster added: "Lorraine was always helpful and friendly to a new member. I loved sitting next to her at board meetings and hearing her witty comments."

Colleen Kadlec observed: "Lorraine was a very valuable member of our reading committee. Her comments on book selections reflected the voice of common sense. And she was sincerely concerned about us as friends. After the last September luncheon," she recalled, "Lorraine phoned me to make sure I arrived home safely since I traveled by public transportation. 'Lorraine was the real deal. She was a very kind and generous person.'"

Deb Hall-Reppen admired Lorraine's personality: "Lorraine was such a feisty, spunky, little lady. She was exactly who I want to be as I get older. She was like the Energizer Bunny; she just kept going and going and going."

Angela Gall noted that Lorraine had the best of characters. She truly cared for the well-being

of others in the FAW and for society as a whole: "At our last get together at the Original Pancake House," Angela remembered, "Lorraine discussed police brutality. She told about her days as a nurse in the ER and how she was trained not to react to violent gang members who attacked verbally and physically as they were being treated for gunshot wounds. She felt that police today should be subject to the same type of training." Vivian Mortensen concluded: "Lorraine also felt strongly about encouraging boys to read. She always wanted at least one of the winning books to have a male protagonist. Last year, she was in favor of *Walking With Miss Millie*, but she pushed for *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*, a book about a boy living in Harlem."

Lorraine, you will live on in our memories, and we will be inspired by your example of how to live a wonderful life. We love and miss you!



Membership Committee

IDA HAGMAN, *Chair*

Thanks to everyone who has brought guests and promoted Friends of American Writers. We added four new members last month, which brings our membership total to 91. We are proud to announce the following new members to our group: Mary Amoroso, Patricia DuPont, Andrea Grass, and Patti Smart. Welcome all.

Sustaining Clubs

JANE FOSTER, *Chair*

We all love a good book. We also love our local book club! At the next meeting of your club, urge your members to consider becoming one of the Sustaining Clubs of Friends of American Writers.

The Woman's Reading Club of Riverside is a Sustaining Club, as

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are the Ogden Dunes Book Club, the Babes and Books Book Club, and The Renaissance Art Club. How about your club?

The process of becoming a Sustaining Club is easy, and it costs only \$50 per club per year. Contact FAW Membership Chair Ida Hagman for an application form, or ask me. Your club might want to choose a program or two from our excellent schedule and arrange

a group tour down to a wonderful lunch and presentation at the beautiful Fortnightly of Chicago. Have your club recognized in the FAW yearbook, and help support and sustain this great organization.

Your local club will thank you!

Scholarship Awards

By LINDA GUSTAFSON

At our November 7th FAW luncheon, the FAW Foundation Fund

Committee will be awarding \$1,500 scholarships to two promising graduate students in writing: Stephanie Rogers from National Louis University and Samuel Du Bois from Columbia College Chicago. The FAW scholarship program reflects the mission of our organization to encourage new, talented writers associated with the Midwest and to promote the arts, especially literature, among our members.

FEATURE ARTICLE

by SHIRLEY BAUGHER

THE MYSTIQUE OF RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Did you ever know that you're my hero.

And everything I would like to be?

I can fly higher than an eagle,

For you are the wind beneath my wings.

— BETTE MIDLER

She is a Justice on the United States Supreme Court. She is a Harvard, Cornell University, and Columbia Law School Graduate.

She is a staunch advocate of fair treatment of women. She works with the ACLU's Women's Rights Project. She was the first tenured woman law professor at Columbia University.

She was a member of the editorial board of the American Bar Association Journal.

She is Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg in a Nutshell



JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG

She was born on March 15, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in a low-income, working-class neighborhood. Her mother, Celia, worked in a garment factory to help pay for her brother's education. Celia did not go to college, but she was the

major influence in Ruth's life and taught her the value of independence and a good education.

Ruth absorbed those values. She was first in her class at high school and graduated with highest honors. Sadly, her mother died of cancer the day before Ruth's graduation and did not see her achieve her valedictory distinction.

The Harvard Years



1954 was a big year for Ruth Bader. She earned her bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University—again finishing first in her class. She married fellow law student Martin D. Ginsburg, and, along with Martin, she was accepted at Harvard Law School. Martin was drafted into the military in 1954 and served for two years. Ruth, in the meantime, had a baby, and had to balance life as a mother, law student, and wife. As challenging as these roles were, she faced another, even bigger obstacle—discrimination. Harvard Law was a male-dominated, hostile environment. There were only eight women in a class of 500 law students. Even the dean chided her for taking the place of a qualified male student, but Ruth Bader Ginsburg persevered. She excelled academically and eventually became the first female member of the Harvard Law Review.

Added to her challenges was her husband's health. Martin contracted testicular cancer in 1956 and required intensive treatment. Ruth not only cared for him, she attended his classes and took notes for him while keeping up with her own studies and taking care of their daughter. When Martin recovered, he finished his studies and was offered a position with a New York law firm.

The Reality of a Woman

Ruth transferred to Columbia to be with Martin. Not only was she elected to the school's Law Review, she graduated first in her class. But no New York law firm would hire her. She took a job clerking for U. S. District Judge Edmund Palmieri (1959-61) and taught at both Rutgers and Columbia Law Schools. She became Columbia's first tenured female professor. During the seventies, she

served as director of the Women's Rights Project of the ACLU and argued six landmark cases on gender equality before the U.S. Supreme Court. She won five of them. A key victory came in the case of *Frontiero v. Richardson* in 1973. In an eight to one decision, the Court struck down a fringe benefit scheme that awarded male members serving in the military housing allowances and medical care for their wives regardless of dependency. The same benefits accrued to women only if they supported their husbands, and even then women had to prove the dependency of their spouses.

Judicial Appointments

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the U. S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia where she served until 1993 when President Bill Clinton appointed her to the United States Supreme Court to fill the seat left vacant by Justice Byron White. Clinton believed Ginsburg had the intellect and political skills to deal with the more conservative members of the Court. She was confirmed by the Senate 96-3.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

As a judge, Ginsburg rules with moderation and restraint. She is considered part of the Supreme Court's moderate-liberal bloc. She is strongly in favor of gender equality, workers' rights, and separation of church and state. In 1996, she wrote the landmark decision in *United States v. Virginia* which held that the state-supported VMI could not refuse to admit women. In 1999, she won the ABA's Thurgood Marshall Award for her contributions to gender equality and civil rights. She ruled to uphold the a critical portion of the Affordable Care Act which allows the government to provide subsidies to Americans who purchase health care through exchanges regardless of whether they are state or federally funded. And she voted to uphold the ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that made same sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

Ginsburg opposed the election of Donald Trump to the presidency. She initially called him a faker, but later apologized for commenting on the campaign. In January 2018, Trump released a list of potential Supreme Court candidates, assuming Ginsburg was going to retire. Ginsburg responded by hiring a full slate of clerks and saying that she was going to stick around for at least five more years.

A Media Darling

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's star has never shone more brightly. In January 2018, she appeared at the Sundance Film Festival to accompany the premiere of the documentary RBG. She showed herself a supporter of the "Me Too"

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movement and talked about having to put up with the advances of a Cornell University professor when she was there. She defended the importance of a free press and an independent judiciary which she believes are being challenged by the Trump administration. And, to show what a good sport she is, she agreed to Kate McKinnon's sassy

portrayal of her on "Saturday Night Live."

If you're interested in reading more about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, you might want to check out her 2016 memoir *My Own Words*. Writings in the book date as far back as her junior high school years. The book was on the New York Times Best Seller List for many months.

The Reading Corner

A Complete Synopsis of
Wide Sargasso Sea
by Jean Rhys

November's Readers and
Reviewers Discussion Topic

By TAMMIE BOB

On Wednesday, Nov. 7 at 10:45, FAW's literary discussion group, Readers and Reviewers, will meet to discuss the wonderful novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, and I hope you will not miss this, even if you haven't time to read the book. There is a wonderful film version from 1993 on Netflix, and I am providing a complete synopsis of the book below.

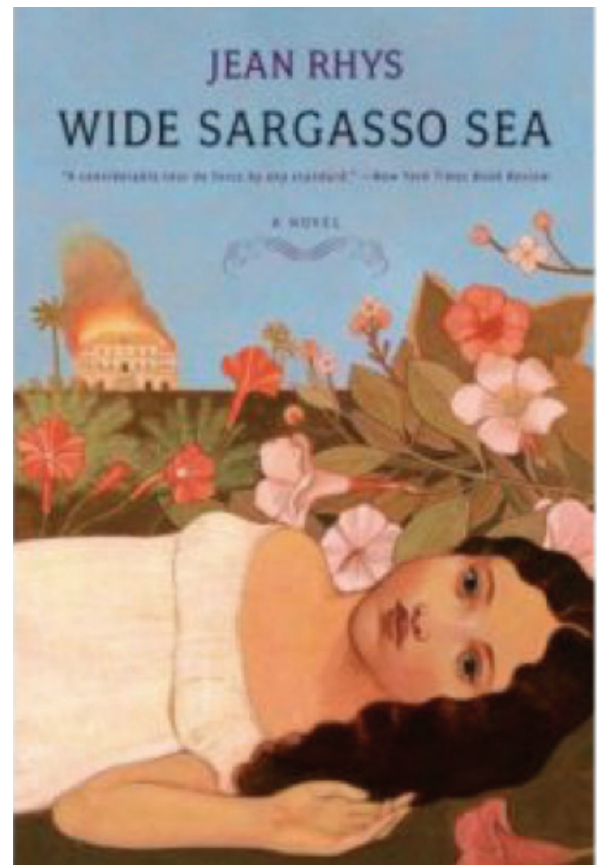
Wide Sargasso Sea, first published in 1966, imagines the life of the first Mrs. Rochester, a character made famous over one hundred and twenty years earlier in Charlotte Brontë's classic novel *Jane Eyre*, which I wrote about in last month's newsletter. The first Mrs. Rochester was the prototypical "madwoman in the attic," and in *Jane Eyre*, she is presented very poorly: a murderous, monstrous presence, a wild Creole unrecognizable as a human being.

Jean Rhys made a career of writing books about women driven mad by skewed societal attitudes about women: their intelligence, their autonomy, their sexuality, and she does this with Antoinette Cosway, the hapless heroine of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

It's a very different book from *Jane Eyre*, which is stately, Victorian, strait-laced with religious piety and sacrifice, cold and damp like its English setting. Most of *Wide Sargasso Sea* takes place in steamy Jamaica, and as you read you can almost hear the drums pounding a capoeira, the tropical birds shrieking, almost smell the hibiscus. *Jane Eyre* helps Mr. Rochester to his feet when his horse slips on the ice; Antoinette Cosway skinny-dips with him in a lagoon.

Below is the summary of the events of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. If you wish to avoid spoilers, read no further and get the book—if not, read on, and plan on joining the discussion Nov. 7th.

Antoinette Cosway, a creole, or Caribbean person of European descent, recounts her memories of growing up at her family's estate, Coulibri, in Jamaica in the 1830's. Her family, consisting of her mother, Annette, and her mentally disabled younger brother, Pierre, are destitute and isolated after her father's death and the passage of the Emancipation Act of 1833, which freed Jamaica's slaves. Annette becomes withdrawn and depressed, shunning Antoinette and talking to herself. Antoinette seeks refuge in the gardens and the company of her nurse Christophine, who is known for her practice of obeah, a voodoo-like folk magic. An-

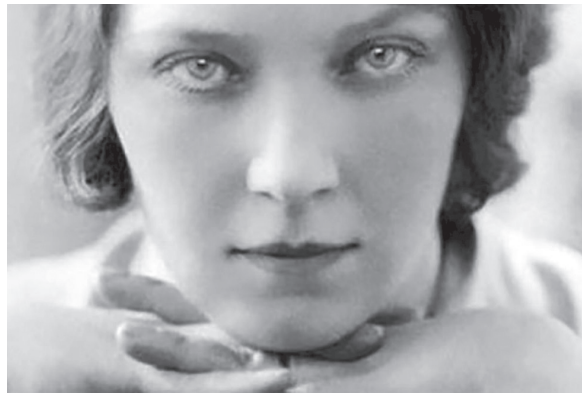


toinette has a short-lived friendship with a little black girl, Tia, until the two fall out over a bet while they're swimming, and Tia runs away with Antoinette's money and clothes. After seeing Antoinette in Tia's dirty dress, Annette resolves to lift the family out of poverty. She soon marries Mr. Mason, a wealthy Englishman. Mr. Mason has Coulibri completely renovated. The show of ostentatious wealth causes resentment in the neighboring village of poor ex-slaves. Annette and Aunt Cora, fearing retribution, urge Mr. Mason to move the family out of harm's way, but he ignores them. One night, a mob sets fire to the house at Coulibri. The fam-

ily narrowly escapes, but Pierre is badly injured. Antoinette descends into a fever for six weeks. When she finally awakes, she learns that Pierre has died, and that her mother Annette is being kept at a convalescent house in the country. Antoinette goes to visit her, but finds her mother unrecognizable, mad with grief.

Antoinette begins to attend an all-girl's convent school. The nuns there instill the values of chastity and good behavior in their students, and place a high premium on appearance. Antoinette is comforted by the routines of the convent, but fails to find faith or solace in prayer. After eighteen months, during which time Annette has died, Mr. Mason comes to visit her and informs her that he is taking her out of the convent school, implying that there is a suitor waiting for her. Antoinette has a recurring nightmare about a stranger leading her through the woods and up a flight of stairs.

Part Two of the novel begins during Annette and her new husband's honeymoon, on the island of Granbois, near Jamaica. This section is narrated from the point of view of the husband, an unnamed Englishman who feels menaced by the strange landscape, language, and customs of the Caribbean. He distrusts the servants, particularly Christophine and the young and defiant Amelie. He has married Antoinette for her money, and sees her as a beautiful but unsettling stranger. The two spend afternoons swimming and nights making passionate love, until one day the husband receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, who claims to be Antoinette's half-brother, the product of an illicit relationship between her deceased father, Old Cosway, and one of his slaves. The letter warns the husband that madness runs in the Antoinette's family on both sides, relating rumors that both Antoinette's mother and father died "raving." Daniel Cosway insists that Antoinette's family, especially Richard Mason, deceived the



JEAN RHYS


husband when making the marriage arrangements. The husband does not mention this letter to Antoinette, but becomes distant and cold. Christophine leaves Granbois because of her dislike of the husband, which devastates Antoinette. Shortly after Christophine's departure, the husband gets lost in the woods and is sure he sees a 'zombi,' or the walking dead, near an abandoned house. He is found by Baptiste, the butler, who refuses to answer his questions about the house.

The narration switches to Antoinette's point of view. She goes to Christophine's house to beg her to use obeah to make the husband love her again. Christophine refuses at first, advising Antoinette to act for herself. Antoinette eventually wears her down, though, and Christophine supplies her with a bottled liquid.

The narration shifts back to the husband's point of view. He goes to see Daniel Cosway, who attempts to blackmail the husband into giving him five hundred dollars. That night, the husband and Antoinette argue, and he demands to know the truth about her past. She tells him of Coulibri burning, Pierre's death, and her mother's descent into madness. It is revealed that her mother was sexually abused at her convalescent home. The husband begins to call her his wife Bertha, which disturbs her. The two go to bed, and Antoinette hands him a glass of wine, after which point the husband loses all memory of the rest of the night. The next morning, he realizes that Antoinette has drugged him, and runs into the woods. When he

returns, Amelie tends to him, and they sleep together. When he emerges from his room, Antoinette, who listened to their tryst from the next room, has fled the house. She returns with Christophine several days later. As a distraught Antoinette barricades herself in her room and drinks to excess, Christophine and the husband argue. When the husband threatens to go to the police and report her practice of obeah, Christophine, though outraged, has no choice but to relent. She leaves without saying goodbye to Antoinette. The husband decides that they must leave Jamaica. Antoinette is numb and silent on the day of their departure. The husband is overtaken with remorse, but the hatred between himself and Antoinette soon outweighs it.

Part Three opens in the point of view of Grace Poole, Antoinette's caretaker in England. It is revealed that Antoinette is being kept against her will in the attic of the husband's house, in conditions that make Grace Poole uncomfortable, but she is paid twice what the other servants are for her silence.

The narration switches to Antoinette's consciousness. She is unsure of where she is or how much time has passed. She often steals Grace Poole's keys and explores the rest of the house at night. One day, Grace Poole tells her that the night before she, Antoinette, was visited by Richard Mason and attacked him with a knife. Antoinette does not remember this. That night, she has her recurring nightmare for the last time. It is clear that the stairs she has dreamt of her whole life have led here. In this version of the dream, she takes a candle and sets fire to the house, sits out on the roof watching it burn while recalling the fire at Coulibri. In the dream, she hears the husband calling to her and jumps to her death. When she wakes, she is filled with a sense of purpose, lights a candle and descends into the house to act out her dream. 



SHIRLEY BAUGHER
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FAW MEETINGS 2018-19

A reminder of the FAW meetings for 2018-19.
Be sure to mark your calendars.
You won't want to miss a single one!

OCTOBER 10, 2018

Steve Venturino
Speaking on Daniel Deronda

NOVEMBER 7, 2018

**Exploring Historical Fiction:
A Panel of Three Writers**

Connie Hamilton Connally
(author of *The Songs we Hide*)

Kelly O'Connor Mcnesse
(author of *Undiscovered Country*)

Devin Murphy
(author of *The Boat Runner*)

DECEMBER 12, 2018

interFRIENDtions will perform
Christmas and Hannukkah music

JANUARY 9, 2019

The American Writers'
Museum will send a
representative

FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Adult-Books Editor
Booklist Reviews

MARCH 13, 2019

Patricia Frazier
National Youth Poet
Laureate

APRIL 10, 2019

Leslie Goddard, actress
As Rachel Carson

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2019

Awards Luncheon

