

IN THE MARGINS

LITCITY

3/9

Reading & Book Launch. 7pm. Authors Caroline Koebel & Kyle Schlesinger will discuss their book of text and images, *Schablone Berlin*. Big Orbit Gallery, 30D Essex St. (883-3209); free.

3/10

Storytelling. 7:30pm. "Spin Kids Make Their Storytelling Debut," by Spin-A-Story Tellers. Recommended for adults and older children. Central Presbyterian Church, 15 Jewett Pkwy. (833-6408).

Reading & Lecture. 9am. "American Masters" Series presents Howard Pollack, author of *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man*. Juliet J. Rosch Recital Hall/SUNY Fredonia (673-3151); free.

3/11

Book Sale. 10am-3pm. Collection of surplus books on sale to benefit the Museum's Research Library. Buffalo Museum of Science, 1020 Humboldt Pkwy. (896-5200)

Workshop. 12-4pm. Independent Publishing & Print on Demand w/ Geoffrey Gatz. CEPA Gallery, Market Arcade Building, 617 Main St. (856-2717); \$40-\$50. Call just buffalo at 832-5400 to register.

3/12

Workshop. 2-4pm. African-Caribbean Poetry and Dance with Henry Padron, Ramon Perez, and Stephanie Lopez. Castellani Art Museum/Niagara University, Niagara Falls, (286-8200); call to register.

3/14

Venue: Mystery and Intrigue. 1-3pm. Session 4 of a 5-week course on John Brendt's novel *The City of Falling Angels*, every Tues. through March 21 with instructor B.G. Flickinger; pre-registration required.

3/15

Open Readings. 7:30pm. Featuring Frank Santora & Jonathan Hite. 10 slots available for open readers. The Screening Room, Northtown Plaza, 3131 Sheridan Dr., Amherst (837-0376); \$2

Poetry Workshop. 5:30-8pm. *Off the Page onto the Stage* with instructor Robert Pomehrn. Every Wed. until March 29. Villa Maria College, 240 Pine Ridge Rd, Cheektowaga (896-0700); call the Lifelong Learning Center at 961-1818 or 961-1866 to register.

Bookmarkers Club. 7-8pm. Discussion of Sue Monk Kidd's novel *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*. YWCA of the Tonawandas, 49 Tremont St., North Tonawanda (692-5580)

RECURRING EVENTS

EM Tea Coffee Cup Open Mic Poetry Series. 7-9:30pm every Tues. EM Tea Coffee Cup Café, 80 Oakgrove Ave. at Hughes St. (884-1444).

Just Buffalo Writers Critique Group. 7pm, meets first and third Wed. of every month. Flux Gallery, Market Arcade Arts Centre; just buffalo literary center members only. (832-5400).

Moonlight Poetry Circle. 9pm, first Fri. of each month. Share poetry informally through spoken word, song, music, art, etc. 289 Winspear Ave (upper). (903-2884).

Northside Writers Group. 7pm, first and third Thurs. of each month. Ascension Lutheran Church, 4640 Main Street, Amherst. (626-4204).

Send weekly literary event info (name, description, location, date, time, and admission) to: editorial@artvoice.com, subject "In The Margins" or fax to: 881-6682. Listings must be received by the Wednesday before publication for consideration.

BOOKREVIEWS

**Pretty Little Dirty: A Novel**

by Amanda Boyden

Vintage Books, 2006 \$13.95

Pretty Little Dirty, the debut novel by Amanda Boyden, is a coming-of-age story that feels both immediately familiar and devastatingly foreign, a combination that produces an absorbing emotional torrent of a novel, whose fast-paced plot crescendos into horror. The story takes place in Kansas City, Missouri—a place not so different from Buffalo. The city consists of a few busy shopping strips, one vast and cool art gallery, a few local universities and a multitude of suburban neighborhoods, whose hometown homogeneity belies the inequable economic distribution of wealth between them.

The novel is narrated by Lisa, a girl whose story is inextricably intertwined with that of her best friend, Celeste. Lisa defines her life by the moments spent with Celeste, and her movements—through childhood, adolescence and the final hurtling advance into adulthood—are marked and mirrored by Celeste, her friend, love and partner-in-crime. "I doubt my coming of age," Boyden writes in Lisa's clear, strong voice, "was very different from most any other woman's, and mine likely doesn't make for much of a story. Fortunately, the bigger story is Celeste's..." Lisa is half right: The bigger story is Celeste's, but not because it's more interesting. The story is Celeste's because Lisa is imbued with her spirit. Celeste is one of those rare,

beautiful characters who capture your imagination, your heart and your desire. With a deft swiftness, Boyden engages her readers just as Celeste has captured Lisa's imagination. Boyden's tight prose shines as Lisa describes their angst, their shared sexual escapades and the gradual, exquisitely detailed fall from grace the best friends experience as the book moves toward its ruinous conclusion.

Pretty Little Dirty is a rare find: familiar and revealing, engrossing and disturbing—an early indicator of great things to come from an inspired first-time novelist.

—jill froebel

**Her Mother's Daughter: A Memoir of the Mother I Never Knew and of My Daughter, Courtney Love**

by Linda Carroll

Doubleday, 2006 \$24.95

If you are looking for a frothy tell-all about the early life and exploits of one of rock's most notoriously rowdy and drug-addled front women, Courtney Love, it would be in your best interest to rent *Kurt and Courtney* rather than read Linda Carroll's new, verbosely titled memoir, *Her Mother's Daughter: A Memoir of the Mother I Never Knew and of My Daughter, Courtney Love*. Though at first the memoir seems intent on replicating the exposé style of Deborah Spungen's biography of her drug-crazed punk rock daughter Nancy, who also happens to be Love's idol, Carroll's story quickly becomes a sensitive inquiry into the nature of the myriad roles women take on in relation both to each other and to men and the ways in which these roles enrich and shape the course of a woman's life. Love's presence in the memoir is undeniable—the book contains memorable descriptions of Love's conception while Carroll was on an acid trip and of Love's violent bipolar outbursts as a child—but she is merely the ribbon tying together this rich and woman-friendly account of a young woman's search for identity during the confusing and turbulent 1960s. Ultimately, the intense vulnerability Carroll displays in rehashing the events of the childhood she spent with her adoptive parents and the adulthood she spent searching for herself and her mother leave a strong impression on the reader. While Love may be the reason a woman picks up the book, Carroll's colorful portrait of the female condition in this country is what will keep her reading.

—emily d. mcclellan

BOOMDAYS Poetry Contest

BOOMDAYS is a celebration of the advent of Spring, commencing each year with the lifting of the Lake Erie-Niagara River Ice Boom on Friday, April 7 from 4:30-10:30pm at the CPO Club (at the foot of Porter, next to the Buffalo Yacht Club). Contest: Write a poem about the Ice Boom. All forms of poetry are acceptable. First Prize—\$200; Second Prize—\$150; Third Prize—\$100. Winning poems will be published in *Artvoice* and winners must read their work at the BOOMDAYS kickoff event. All ages welcome to apply. Poems should be typed, should not exceed a single page in length. Each entrant may submit only one poem. Please include name, address, and telephone number. Submissions must be postmarked by March 24, 2006 to be considered. Winners will be notified by phone on March 30. Send entries to: BOOMDAYS Poetry Contest, Just Buffalo Literary Center 617 Main St., Suite 202A, Buffalo, New York 14214. For further information on Boomdays and a history of the iceboom, go to www.boomdays.com. Sponsored by Just Buffalo Literary Center.

**Mencken, The American Iconoclast: The Life and Times of the Bad Boy of Baltimore**

by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers

Oxford Press, 2005 \$35

H. L. Mencken was, without question, the finest newspaper columnist, book reviewer and political commentator this country has ever produced. He also made important contributions to academic linguistics with his multi-volume *American Language*. Even when he was wrong, as he often was—about Jews, Nazis, Orientals, Blacks, Britons, women and WASPs, for example—he was worth reading. Some loved him; some hated him; all read him. Until, that is, he died a half century ago on January 26, 1956. How then can a biographer miss? I depart from other reviewers, one of whom considers *Mencken, The American Iconoclast* "the best Mencken biography to date," in believing that unfortunately Ms. Rodgers has found a way. Her book succeeds as a detailed diary of the author's life; it fails to add meat to those bones. If you want to learn of Mencken's affairs, some with Hollywood and Broadway actresses; if you want to read how he acted up at the Scopes trial and at national political conventions; or if you want to read about his editing positions and how he worked, read here. But if you want to gain an understanding of this amazing man, look elsewhere. Look in particular at his writing. Open to any page of *The American Language* or its supplements, to any collection of his columns, his essays or his correspondence and you will meet a prose stylist of the highest order. This is, after all, the writer who tells us, "Nature abhors a moron," and "Every election is a sort of advance auction sale of stolen goods."

—gerry rising