

# Writers: Are they all a little crazy?

**T**HERE ARE good writers in this town and then there are even better writers. All of them have at least one trait in common: They all think they're good some of the time, but not-so-good most of the time.

Even when they agree they've written something good, the praise on the back comes half-heartedly. Even as their fans congratulate them, they're thinking, "Don't those fools know this is just a fluke? Don't they see I'm a fraud? Don't they realize I'll never be able to do it again?"

And, heaven forbid, if it does happen again, it makes life even worse — now they have two successes to live up to.

Doesn't sound so bad, you say? Then consider this: What if you write your heart out — spend years at it — and have no successes?

What if you never convince the publishing world that your stuff is fit to print? Talk about your insecurities then.

So who would choose such a life? That's easy. We all would. Anybody, a whole lot of us would.

And a whole lot of us spend our off-hours talking about those very insecurities. "Are writers born or bred?" we ask over and over, and never come up with an answer. And, we ask, why is it we can sweat and struggle and nothing comes; then something wonderful — a keeper — seems to come right off the top of our heads? Where was it all that time? Can we tap that source again? And if not, why not?



## book break

### Mona Grigg

Well, now comes new evidence suggesting that, beyond "born or bred," there might be a third possibility: It helps to be a little crazy.

Constance Holden, a writer for Science Magazine, poses that theory in an article in the April issue of Psychology Today, entitled, "Creativity and the Troubled Mind."

She starts right off with, "A small handful of modern studies indicate there may be something to (a connection between art and madness).

"In particular, they indicate a striking association between creativity and manic depression, or bipolar illness. The phenomenon appears especially pronounced among writers, particularly poets."

And, to prove her point, she gives a description that could apply to nearly every writer and poet in the world today:

"Full-blown cases of manic depression are characterized by episodes of uncontrollable hyperactivity, often accompanied by grandiose delusions, and longer periods of incapacitating and often suicidal depression."

In one study, University of Iowa psychiatrist Nancy C. Andreasen

compared the emotional makeup of 30 "topflight" writers from the Iowa Writers' Workshop with 30 "others" (non-writers, I'm assuming) over a 15-year period.

She found that 43 percent of the writers had some degree of manic-depressive illness, compared with 10 percent for the others. Also, alcoholism struck 30 percent of the writers and only 7 percent of the others.

In another study, UCLA psychologist Kay R. Jamison surveyed 47 of the top British artists and writers on this same subject in 1983 and found that, "One-third of the 47 reported that they suffered from severe mood

swings, particularly the poets and novelists."

Although Holden allows that, "Most investigators believe that creative achievement occurs despite, not because of, emotional illness," Jamison found that, "Intense creative episodes are, in many instances, indistinguishable from hypomania."

But now for the good news. Holden concludes that, "The similarities suggest that mild mania can supply intense energy as well as a way of seeing reality that, filtered through a creative mind and a discerning intellect, can be highly conducive to artistic productivity."

Well, that certain explains things. Now, back to the real world. . .

**J**IM HARRISON, poet and novelist from Michigan's north woods ("A Good to Die," "Warlock," "Sunday," "The Theory and the Practice of Rivers and Other Poems") and possessor of what Publisher's Weekly calls an "untrammeled, renegade genius"

(hmmm), makes a rare visit to Detroit on Thursday, April 2.

Sponsored by the Miles Modern Poetry Committee, the 8 p.m. reading will be in Room 100 of the General Lumber Hall on Wayne State's main campus. It is free and there will be a book signing and reception afterward. Call 577-3324 or 577-2450 for information.

Joyce Carol Oates makes two appearances in the Detroit area next month. On Wednesday, April 15, she's back at U-M to deliver the Hopwood Creative Writing Awards lecture at 4 p.m. in the Rackham Auditorium.

Then on the following evening at 8 p.m. (Thursday), she starts off a four-part reading series sponsored by Detroit Women Writers (Oates was a member when she lived here). Friends of the Detroit Public Library and the Creative Writing Program at U-M (under the direction of Nicolas Delbanco).

Oates' reading is also sponsored by the Bloomfield Township Library, in memory of journalist Jack Smith.

a past president of Detroit Women Writers and Oates' good friend. Call the DPL Friends office, 833-0408, for more information.

• **C. MICHAEL** Curtis, executive editor of Atlantic Magazine, speaker in the Rackham East Conference Room at 4 p.m. Monday, March 30, Free.

• **David Hughes**, author of 10 novels ("The Major," "The Man Who Invented Tomorrow," "The Joke of the Century") and several volumes of non-fiction, reads at 5 p.m. Thursday, April 16, at U-M Rackham Conference Room.

• **British novelist Julian Barnes** ("Flaubert's Parrot," "Starting at the Sun"), television critic of the Observer in London and winner of the Somerset Maugham Award, reads from his work at 4 p.m. Tuesday, April 21, in the Rackham East Conference Room.

Curtis, Hughes and Barnes appear courtesy of the U-M English Department Visiting Writers Series. For more information, call 784-0473.

## Biblical stories focus of art exhibit

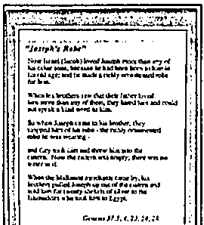


STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Artist Susan Rothamel with one of her art pieces, entitled "Joseph's Robe," an oil with gold leaf embroidery.

**A**RTIST SUSAN Rothamel will exhibit her contemporary, impressionistic and interpretative artwork of a very old subject, entitled "An Old Testament Survey" at the Renaissance Gallery at Baker's Street Interior Design Studio, 16320 Middlebelt Road, Livonia through Friday, May 1.

A dramatic departure from the familiar pieces of the Old Master's biblical renditions, Rothamel's work includes a wide range of subject matter in a variety of media from mixed-media collage, watercolor and pastel to oils, which are often distinguished by her unusual application of metallurgical powers.



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

A Bible verse accompanies the painting.

**SUBJECTS INCLUDE** "The Wilderness," the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt (a watercolor collage); "Joseph's Coat," the famous coat of many colors (an oil with gold leaf embroidery); and "Rebekah's Veil," (a mixed-media collage with gold thread and glass bead overlays), depicting the marriage of Rebekah to Isaac.

From the jewel-like colors to the soft pastels and from the vague impression to the almost illustrative quality of "Solomon's Gift," (a gold and precious stone necklace given to him by the Queen of Sheba), Rothamel embues these pieces to adapt to contemporary placement.

Philadelphia born and educated, the 35-year-old Rothamel comes from a creative family of publishers, writers, musicians, graphic and fine artists.

## Week's best sellers

### FICTION

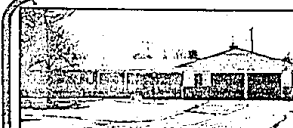
- "Fine Things," Danielle Steel
- "Windmills of the Gods," Sidney Sheldon
- "The Eyes of the Dragon," Stephen King
- "Red Storm Rising," Tom Clancy
- "Bolt," Dick Francis
- "I," Stephen King
- "Outbreak," Robin Cook
- "Flight of the Intruder," Stephen Coonts
- "Destiny," Sally Beauman
- "Night of the Fox," Jack Higgins

### NON-FICTION

- "A Season on the Brink," John Feinstein

- "Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them," Forward and Torres
- "Fatherhood," Bill Cosby
- "Communism," Whitley Strieber
- "The Frugal Gourmet Cooks With Wine," Jeff Smith
- "The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys," Doris Kearns Goodwin
- "The Rotation Diet," Martin Katcher
- "Echoes in the Darkness," Joseph Wambaugh
- "Betty: Glad Awakening," Betty Ford and Chris Chast
- "Be Happy You Are Loved," Robert Schuller

— Associated Press  
(Courtesy of Time, the sociology news magazine)



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## OPEN SUNDAY 2 TO 5 P.M.

<b>BLOOMFIELD</b> 3645 Chalmers, \$29,900	544-4700	<b>OAK PARK</b> 2620 Seneca, \$58,800 14201 Tenth, \$58,800	558-2300 558-2300
<b>BLOOMFIELD HILLS</b> 2410 Tenth, \$51,777	544-4700	<b>REDFORD</b> 1540 Norborn, \$47,500	261-0700
<b>FARMINGTON</b> 5237 Thomas, \$44,000	477-1111	<b>SOUTHFIELD</b> 5231 Henry, \$74,900 2330 Ten Mile, \$74,900 2330 Wadsworth, \$43,500 2511 Dorset, \$59,900 2230 Maplewood, \$52,900 2120 Negawan, \$58,800	851-9900 477-1111 477-1111 477-1111 477-1111
<b>FARMINGTON HILLS</b> 2821 Larkley, \$112,900 2478 Oak Ct, \$112,900 2173 Arbor, \$39,900 5250 Wright Way, \$117,000 21101 Forest Hill, \$112,900 24241 Briarley, \$130,900	477-1111 477-1111 477-1111 477-1111 851-1900 851-1900	<b>WEST BLOOMFIELD</b> Shenwood Creek, From \$154,000 478 Westside, \$40,900	644-4700 644-4700
<b>FRANKLIN</b> 3030 Helmsdale, \$137,900	544-4700	<b>WESTLAND</b> 2525 Seneca, \$58,800 31111 Redwood, \$45,900	261-0700 329-2000
<b>LIVONIA</b> 19500 Dowling, \$148,000 29004 Embury, \$62,900	261-0700 261-0700	<b>WHITE LAKE TWP.</b> 245 Lake Dr, \$119,000 261 Tequesta, \$87,500	365-1511 365-1511
<b>NOVI</b> 148 Harding, \$43,000	365-1511		

