Habitat

My Blue Heron

Herbert Kohl

Where I live it is impossible to own the night. It swallows you, surrounds you outside of the beam of your flashlight, dainties at nocturnal life, silences, silen
tances punctuated by the last cries of owls and the first rustle of leaves and leaves get up before the sun walk and my study when it is dark, when there is no moon or when the waxing and waning is faint, the trees silver and yellow. I talk to the few stars left in the sky, wish upon them and, before getting to my writing, sit in my chair and listen to the silence, look out and, hope someone event or detectable movement will inspire me for more.

Growing up in the Bronx I also loved that time of day and sometimes in the morning I find the lyrics and tune of the eponymous song sung by Sky Masterson in Guys and Dolls hitting me when I sit down in my study.

My time of day is the dark time

A couple of deals before dawn

When the street belongs to the cop

And the janitor with the mop

And the grocery clerks are all gone.

I laugh whenever this happens: I can't

Shake the Bronx out of my head. Fortu

nately when this occurs the sun comes up

And the tides fade.

On most days it takes time to turn to writing and I vaguely look out the window hoping to detect some movement of some

Mystic I look for my blue heron.

Recently a blue heron came to me periodically. I first noticed it as a flash of wings across the sky, bigger than any bird I had seen by our pond. A few days later there was it sitting on a stump looking at the pond. It was as small still that one could easily look through it, beyond it, or

Into the water in front of it. But a little

Tum of the neck gave her or him away for just a second before the bird swept into

The pond and came away carrying one of our goldfish almost big enough now to be called a carp.

When our family first moved from Berkeley to Point Arena in 1977, in order to distract our children from the trauma of moving we bought a bag of a hundred or so tiny goldfish from a Chinese tropical fish store on San Carlos Avenue. The little fish were bred to feed the bigger fish that were more. It seemed like a good idea to have the kids move the goldfish, as well as our dog and cats with us. It made it a total family adventure.

The first day we moved in we dumped the bag of goldfish into the pond and now, 33 years later, these tiny fish have grown into an interdisciplinary community of gold, black, white, and any mixture of those three, now grown to many times their original volume and a delicious treat for some of the most beautiful birds I have ever seen.

The pond, the birds, the fish all remind me, on an everyday level, that life can be beautiful and cruel at the same moment. It helps me understand the creative imbalance that drives my writing.

I always discover new things about the dosings of the night above here, and in the

Scheming in Color

Meanings & moods of different hues

Rebecca Taksel

For many years I have worked as an interior decorator, first full time and later as a consul
tant. What that means to a lot of people I meet in the other spheres of my life is that I take in art is limited to what will look good above a sofa. Occasionally I protest, but less and less. I've learned not to talk seriously about this side of my life to anyone but my sister Martha, who owns our interior design business. Martha loves contem
porary art, collects it, makes it (she's a sculptor in metal) and never advices cli
ents to match sets or anything else when looking at art with an eye to buying.

These days Martha and I are seldom
together in our work, but we have a long
history, one that has been mostly happily lived in the design center showrooms. In
those rooms, attended by sales assistants who fit like butterflies among larger billowing wings hung with fabrics, under rainbow light cast by thousands of chun
deliers crystals, Martha and I inhabit an atmosphere of warmth, texture, perfume, and color. Especially color. That is our secret. Over the years we've become pre
meated with colors. We've absorbed them as light rays and fingered them as pig
ments in blocks of wood. We've watched them quivering along the free-floating wisp threads of satin and the waves of cut velvets.

We learned color first in nature and in
art, in our neighborhood and in our trav
els, in art museums and house museums. All of that was our real and subconscious training. In all the houses of our clients, we've stood anxiously in beautifully empty rooms and watched a newly applied paint color play over four walls, darker and richer in corners, rising lighter here, brighter there, differently tinged around a window, to meet a ceiling which is itself not white but tinted with a breath of the same color. Martha has become better and better at predicting that play of light and shade, brightness and calm, making perfect music out of what others might call ephemeral mounds of color and texture, a chaos of shouts and smells. Like the chefs, Martha and I love the apparent chaos out of which we can draw our ideas of color.

There's a lot of nonsense talk about color, as if each color were not a whole world in itself, with all its hues and tints and intensities, reflecting light, absorbing light, changing from morning to afternoon to evening. Still, people like to think that color follows mood, or creates it, that the so-called warm colors advance, stimulate, elevate, that the cool ones recede, bring tranquility, calm the nerves; and that a florid personality reveals itself. Talking about color this way is a kind of astrol
omy, an excuse to talk about ourselves unchallenged by reality or even logic. Why not indulge?

Yellow

Yellow is so often delicious. It is lemons, and also butter. It can be acid and almost cool—the lemons; or, when it moves just a very little along the color wheel toward its neighboring orange, rich enough and yellow—

the butter. Yellow is seldom taken seri
ously, though. It is dismay as cheerful, and therefore rather stupid and naive. That is a shame. Many tints of yellow are among the most elusively beautiful in the spectrum, especially as colors for walls. They are extraordinarily difficult to get right, but when a yellow room is right there is nothing more lyrically elegant. It is truly Apollo's color, of the sun and all the music of stringed instruments.

A different sort of yellow's bad reputation is the use of the pure hue in its maximum saturation with equally terrible, equally strong red and orange in the color scheme called "primary." This combina

tion has been endlessly inflected on those least able to defend themselves, the very

young and the mentally ill, as it splashes over institutional walls, bedding, clothing and
implements. The advent of fast food joints and box stores has now infused the

entire broader landscape, too. In their endless search for the lowest common denominator of taste, the marketing geniuses have figured out that the primary scheme is the most brutally attention-get

A final word about yellow. It is easy now to indulge in the associations with the

forbidden. With the lighter tints of purple, its complement on the traditional color wheel, yellow captures some of the more subtle and sophisticated sins in the Western imagination. Thus The Yellow Book, the fin de siècle magazine illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley. The yellow covers had the connotation of ecstacy, an as

association derived from French novels of the period that were published in yellow wrappers as a warning and an enticement. Wilde speaks of a "yellow" book given by Lord Henry to Dorian Gray, who critcs agree was Huysmans's A Rebours. There, them, is the licentious connection, espe

sibly since Wilde is spectacularly linked with Beardsley by the latter's illustrations for Salome.

Blue

Blue

In many of the attempts to detect inherent links between color and personality, blue has been associated with the masculine. Ask a random group of adult American men of favorite color, and blue wins every time. It's the right answer if you're trying to impress a potential boss or a potential mate. Blue, by its cultural association with cool, has power. The cool of blue has also been applied to sound, thus the blue note. In fact, whole systems of links between colors and sounds have been proposed. Amateur
Van Gogh’s is a dark joy wrested from despair, a pleasure only the saddest souls can alchemize out of their suffering.

passion of their creators and their mystery of the medium more than a century apart in radically different styles yet conveying their respective stories with comparable power.

At each I had a quintessential museum experience. The mere fact of being alone in the intimacy of discovery. It is having fun—not at anyone else’s expense. Pollock’s technique of action painting as a medium, blowing away clichés and visual patterns to almost unrecognizable domestic genre paintings from the Netherlands and rife on their subject matter and visual patterns to almost unrecognizable quasi-abstract, quasi-figurative stylization. Playful, colorful and strangely funny, Miró’s paradoxes of his predecessors have a buoyant insouciance miles removed from the angst of the likes of Pollock and van Gogh. Miró is having fun—not at anyone else’s expense but, like all great innovators, in the interest of creating something fresh, of revitalizing the medium, blowing away the leavings of his own unmistakable mark on the museum wall. Seriously, silly his pictures radiate irreverence.

I must say, though, that Vincent’s gloomy Dunes of 1883, a strict literalist rendering of that rainy wheatfield—filled me with a paradoxical happiness that has outlasted my amazement, possibly because it’s a dark joy wrested at great cost from the jaws of despair—a kind of selfless moment, perhaps the only sadness that can alchemize out of their suffering. How such a more mate- rial object, held behind glass and affixed to the wall and stand in line at an appointed time.)

The Redwood Coast Review
Eating and Writing

Francesca Preston

Before I learned how to form my letters, I had my mother make them for me. She was my scribe, if you will. I would lie on the ground and draw the most essential things I knew (goose, egg, tin can) and she would write the captions as I spoke them. These translated pictographs were promptly sent to her mother—my first love—vessel—in the mail.

"A beautiful cat," my mother writes diligently in quills, underneath a frizzed, hairy, rather remarkable drawing of a cat. Because my grandmother lived far away, and because it was wildly important that I get certain messages to her, I realized at a very young age that established symbols were good things. Slowly, I learned to write my name.

Mastering this first word (the caption that will accompany me for the rest of my life) took time, and a very physical effort. This was not a matter of memorization so much as effort. This was not a matter of memorization so much as because it was wildly important that I get certain messages translated, underneath a frenetic, hairy, rather remarkable drawing. This was not a matter of memorization so much as爱-vessel—in the mail.

Before long it felt like my words had weight, a gravity. I took to writing secret notes and burying them in little holes in the ground, with a few rocks bundled on top, to make a mound. I wasn’t sure who was going to find these notes, but that seemed part of the point. I would never know. My writing always wanted depthness, a burrow, to live in and wait for the right conditions. I was about eight.

This abundance wanted to be recorded. How do you keep track of the bundles of grain you’ve stored away? How do you give a receipt to the messenger who will carry your goods to trade? How do you make an IOU? And so we began to use the implements of writing, the Greek and the Egyptians, writing could travel down the left, or top to bottom, and in various ancient cultures, as with the Greek and the Egyptians, writing could travel down the left, or top to bottom, and in various ancient cultures, as with...
Goodbye to Ocean Beach?

Ryder W. Miller

For years now I have been walking on Ocean Beach, which lines the west side of San Francisco for seven miles, looking at the waves, observing the bird life and what washes ashore, and dreaming. One can learn from landscapes. The seashore, the subject of so much visual artwork and drawing so many visitors, has been a successful and inspiring teacher. I have been caught up in the wonder of it regularly and open to the ideas it inspires. The regular visits have also been an exploration of my inner life, but these visits may be coming to an end.

I have put down many of my thoughts in a column, Ocean Beach Diary, for The West Portal Monthly in San Francisco. The column has been part news, part nature writing, part environmental education, and part diary. It was not always clear to me why I would be so interested in having experiences by the sea—that is, to walk through city parks, the nearby woods, or local mountains. On some level these walks at the shore were encounters with the wild, something you cannot experience fully in a manicured urban park. Trails and walkways remind us of our human alteration of the natural environment—a disturbed Nature defined in contrast to technological culture.

Though it is easy to get to Ocean Beach in San Francisco, which is not very dis-at-tached from the city, you cannot know the primeval there. Henry David Thoreau in Cape Cod wrote that when he looked out at the ocean, with his back to the land, he was facing the world. When we look out at the empty sea, at the arriving waves, we can imagine we are somewhere else in time. Though altered by the dumping of sand at the beach, the ocean resembles that same ocean that was here before the dawn of humankind.

When we face the Pacific we remember these dreams. We remember the stories we have heard. The East Coaster who visits Ocean Beach rediscovers the Pacific when they gaze out on the horizon. Ignorant of its deadly rip-currents, sometimes they run into the ocean and drown. Out beyond the waves is Hawaii, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, China, Russia, Australia, India. No British tea times, Spanish bullfights, City of Lights, or bravura. This can be a poetic realization. The massive Pacific still beckons the explorer who may find undiscovered islands and indigenous cultures. There are also the exotic locales which might invite adventurers. There may be the Works Progress Administration—unemployed people, some of them marooned in the desolate stretches of the Great Plains, escaped from the banks of the Mississippi. They might find themselves in San Francisco, which is not very dis-associated from the city.

I have seen lands which I thought I might return to, but the reality of my fears because of the band’s song “Wild Horses” came true. I have started another Ryder. Albert Pinkham Ryder, a Gilded Age painter, painted this same night sky at the turn of the last century. I have revealed here in the star shine, alone, as maybe he did, basking in the sounds of the night waves. But there were also times I felt worried at night. I doubt one could take such a night walk in some of the really big seashore cities in this country because of those who turn to crime. Walking south one can see the street lights shining black over the seashore. After dark I sometimes think of the Dire Straits song “The Tunnel of Love.” The lyrics would run through my mind, an acknowledgment of my fears because of the band’s name. The lights turn black, and all is ready to the trip home: “Girl it looks so pretty to me / Like it always did / Like the Spanish City to me / When we were kids . . .”

It takes me at least an hour to get home on these nights, taking the light rail cars to the Mission District from The Great Highway. I was reading books, mostly science fiction and realistic American literature. I also have collected books written about the ocean, some about the Pacific, books by John Steinbeck, Jack London, Robert Louis Stevenson, Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, and others.

Dead things also sometimes wash ashore at Ocean Beach, but the biggest show, besides the occasional sea lion that looks out at you from the waves, are the birds. One cannot conjure the image of birds at Ocean Beach as one can at other parts of the coast. The birds are always present, finding a home along the shore. Over the years I have seen brown pelicans flying in formation north along the shore. Occasionally they will dive for fish. Though awkward in shape, they are keen fishers. I have seen terns fighting or mating, birds of prey away from the heights above. There is also the night sky by the shore, which can be surprisingly wondrous. One can watch the stars come out at night. Planets like Mars, Jupiter, and Venus are visible early during certain seasons. Sometimes there is the thin crescent of moon in sight. Later one can see Orion and his companions Sirius and Procyon. There is also the Big Dipper and the North Star Polaris in sight.

The ocean and the sky, with his back to the land, he would run through my mind, an acknowledgment of my fears because of the band’s name. The lights turn black, and all is ready to the trip home: “Girl it looks so pretty to me / Like it always did / Like the Spanish City to me / When we were kids . . .”

I wished like Jack London to sail out into this Paradise to see if I could find something better. I was not seeking a muse. Ocean Beach had been my Muse of the Pacific.

I wonder if I need an exit strategy to finish my Ocean Beach Diary. Perhaps global warming will provide one. We should enjoy this seashore while it lasts. Predictions suggest that within 100 years we will be observing the sea from our streets we once sauntered down to get to the shore. One day maybe we will see the ocean as a wilderness. Maybe some homeowners will need to have boats that transport them from their waterside to the wider city. Rather than a backyard some may instead have a standing pond in the back.

There are also more immediate threats. There is talk of building alternative renewable energy machinery in the waters off Ocean Beach. It is very sad how much free energy we are losing if we don’t set such things up someplace. But ultramodern structures along the shore will detract from our experience and connection with the past there, and with the infinite. Such beauty should be protected.

I could stay on as a columnist and argue against this. There are also a lot of other subjects I could write about. There is the erosion research at Ocean Beach. There is the literature of the Pacific. There is the novel Jack London in Paradise by Paul Malmont, which may have articulated my longings. We are also related to fish, as described in Your Inner Fish by Neil Shubin. Maybe I could write about choosing on some days to go swimming instead of walking. Maybe I could write about taking a cruise someday.

Like the birds of Ocean Beach I could also stay, even though they can fly away. Like the fish I could return. Maybe the ending is not to forget, but like the birds, to visit less often this place of dreams.

Ryder Miller is a freelance writer living in San Francisco. This is his first appearance in the RCR.
some years ago, after my mother died, I found among her things an envelope with two photographs in it which I had never seen before. One is of my mother and a man who might be my father, squatting in the sun as they face the camera. The other is of myself and that same man. I am about three years old, sitting on a tike. The man kneels next to me. We are looking at each other in mutual ex- citation. He is wearing a uniform and some of his buttons and segments of background, a small section of picket fence, a glimpse of a tree. I don’t remember our house or the street we lived in Los Angeles. I have no memory of my father. Why didn’t my mother ever show me these pictures? Why did she want me to forget them? I do remember telling my mother when I and I left Los Angeles and moved back to Toledo to live with Grandpa and Grandma. At some point, I was told that my father was in Heaven and another time, more specifically, that he had had a heart attack, but other than that, my mother rarely mentioned him. I am sure she was never with another man for the remainder of her life.

Sometimes in my dreams a sense I presence I think of as my father, a presence without a face, without form really, just a sense of presence. Is this some primitive form of early memory—I was five when we returned to Toledo—or is the presence merely an unconscious effort to fill a void? I do know where we were living when I was born—the address is on my birth certificate—so when I have to come to Los Angeles for a conference, I decide to visit the old neighborhood.

Even with the GPS on the rental car, I miss the turnoff Sunset and have to work my way back through a maze of twisting streets and small hills in what is called the Sunset Junction district, just west of downtown. My heart leaps over a hill, past a mix of small houses and apartment buildings, the street on which I lived and where I played with friends. I twist idly in my seat, the children on the swings, their parents yelling for them to come inside. I think this has been with this street, distorted and extended in my dreams, but recognizable now as this place in its discrete details—a doorway, the green silver grass in the stone of the old lamp post, a chimney, the very angle and slope of the street. Will some magic happen if by returning to it, I unite and reconcile dream, memory and concrete reality?

I continue down the block. Another apartment building stands at the next intersection, but most of the houses are tiny, small, single story wood frame. Is this how it was when we lived here? There are some details which must have changed since then—steel bars bolted over the windows of some homes, some front lawns torn out and replaced with cement and cement reality?

I start back to my car, in a kind of stupor, but the story of what happened, it turns out, is not quite finished. Eddie has come after me. “Wait a minute,” he says. “There’s something I have to tell you. You’ve been in my mind all day. Life. Kids do such goddamn stupid things. I was at your house. We were in the front, there was a fence around it and a tire, and we were having a lemon fight!”

I had a lemon tree. We were playing the lemons off and throwing them at each other. Why didn’t my mother ever show me these pictures? Whatever happened, what’s this man trying to say to me? It takes a few seconds for what he’s talking about to sink in. Then I say, “You think that’s how the dog got out?”

He nods. “And my father went after it!”

Eddie talks, “That’s Jerry Elkins. You remember. From 201.” The old woman steps into the sunlight, peers at me, studies me for a beat, then says, “My gosh. You look like your father. I can see him in your face.” This is the first time in my life that anyone has said this to me. Eddie says, “Do you mind my asking, why did you come down here?”

“I don’t know,” I say, finally having to put it into words. I might recover the memory, I suppose with therapy I might recover the memory, but I would never know for sure if it was real or a kind of dream.

Across the street, the children on the swings, their energy spent for the moment, twist idly in their bucket chairs. I wonder if at years to come they will dream of their old neighborhood, from how they saw a strange figure who passed through it. And then I am back, just opposite our old address, and as I cross to my car, I wonder how it happened, that any point here in the middle of the street might be the very spot where my father was killed. I have to sit where I get to the curb and catch my breath. The moment passes and I break out in a sweat, a cooling sweat, the kind that sometimes comes when a fever breaks. As I get to my feet, I see the street, the whole block, now transformed, though not as in my dreams. There’s the bright, the skinner, the identity, but not the diminution, the expansion, the suggestion of hidden meaning. The wonder of it is the wonder of the here and now—the shabby apartment building, the rubbish outside Eddie’s house, the children on their swing set.
The Pasha’s Music

Jane Merryman

While the other cast members are acting silly, the Pasha is an ascetic, radiating a severe personal and spiritual discipline.

They live in the moment and by their wits. So what do I know of the Pasha since he has no notes? Not even entrance and exit music. Why do I not regard him as a hateful barbarian who collects women and throws around cruel threats? Why is he not the villain of the piece?

In the several productions I have seen, this role has been given to an actor who is tall and thin, austere and controlled. While the other cast members are either rhapsodizing about Love or acting just plain silly, the Pasha is portrayed as an ascetic, radiating a severe personal and spiritual discipline. He speaks few words and all are to the point, none are wasted. He is the only person on stage who behaves in a manner that is rational, normal, sane.

And he is wise. When he catches the others in the act of sneaking out of the seraglio, he threatens them with torture and death. Belmonte pleads for mercy, promising that his wealthy father will pay a hefty ransom. It is here that we learn it was Belmonte’s father who, many years ago, robbed the Pasha of his rightful kingdom and his beloved and drove him into exile. Things haven’t turned out too badly for our Pasha because he now has another kingdom, a new harem, ships, and he has another kingdom, a new harem, ships, and a chorus of faithful retainers who sing his praises. However, he still suffers the pain of the wrong done to him. The Pasha has it in his power to destroy his captives, but no. He states that he despises Belmonte’s father too much to behave in the same manner as his foe. He will not answer evil with more evil—at this point the San Francisco audience broke into spontaneous clapping and cheering—and he pardons his adored Konstanze and her lover, as well as their two servants. Now I have a reason to applaud the Pasha, but long before the third act I believed in his suffering and loneliness, in his humanity.

I keep wondering: why didn’t Mozart give the Pasha any music? One article I read suggested that there were already so many arias in the opera that there wasn’t room for the Pasha. This critic must have been jesting. I find it hard to credit such an argument—too many notes never stopped Mozart. He must have had a reason related to the drama itself. The Pasha’s speaking role sets him apart from the other characters. He is the adult who regulates their silly games before they get completely out of control. Mozart could have made the Pasha a Turkish caricature, much like the fat and crude Osmin, and this is in keeping with how his audience would have viewed someone from the barbaric East. Perhaps the composer’s strategy had to do with the symmetry of the drama: the two noble persons, and so the terse Pasha balances the blustery Osmin. But, still, why no music? I’m no closer to an answer.

If my reaction is any evidence, Mozart succeeds as a dramatist—he captures my heart and mind and creates a character I will not soon forget. The Pasha remains a mystery and has become one of my favorite roles in opera—a role that has no music.

Jane Merryman is a retired librarian residing in Petaluma.
At this critical time in Coast Community Library’s development, our library system was also becoming more centered on community. And learning. As might be expected from someone with their life’s work as a profession. Julia Larke, our director of community engagement, has informed us that the Friends of the Library are taking the time to become an accomplished botanist and a real pain in families is the common thread that unites all of these stories. The title story, “If I Loved You, I Would Tell You This,” is also a masterpiece of shifting perspective. A woman, who has cancer, a husband out of work and a brain-damaged son, has a heartless neighbor who puts up a fence that blocks the woman’s access to her own driveway. She says of the neighbor, “No one can care so little about other people unless they’ve been very badly hurt.” Not necessarily, Sam tells me. Maybe the problem is he’s never been hurt. He can’t imagine real pain because he’s never experienced it.

Real pain in families is the common denominator in all these stories. The mother of the brain-damaged son who suffers from violent rages, says, “It used to seem so simple: you’re young, you go through school, you fall in love, you marry, you get pregnant. And then the road takes a certain kind of curve. Your sense of self can disappear.”

One of the most tender stories is “Immortalizing John Parker,” and here there are multiple losses and harmonies being played at once. Clara paints portraits and she’s asked by an older man’s wife to paint his portrait. Initially she wonders how she will do it as his facial expression is dull. But as the story unfolds, Clara realizes John Parker is in the wake of Alzheimer’s.” “John Parker knows. He sees himself leaning, understanding about time— as she does. What is doing to him. And he is grieving, for himself.” John Parker’s wife wants one gift for herself—a portrait that captures her husband of fifty-one years, before he falls into the pit of memory loss. Clara will do this, though she believes “time makes fools of us all,” particularly as it applies to herself, her lover and her ex-husband. This deft unraveling of intersecting relationships reminds me of Alice Adams.

Most of the stories are about time, how it can ease or intensify pain. “Tableau Vivant” is about a long marriage, and the torments of aging. A wife, who hides her own stress to protect her husband, must readjust as she watches him slip away, mentally and physically. “So what choice did she have but to embrace the differences of love and learn devotion without desire again?” According to the writer’s acknowledgeable pages, these ten stories took eight years to write. I hope we don’t have to wait another eight years for the next collection. The short story, that perfect dollhouse-size prism of life, is a difficult art form to get right. Robin Black definitely gets it right.

Pamela Malone lives in New Jersey and writes from time to time for the RCB.

To hell with the Hobby Shop and the Wellness Center. My only “interests” are excellence, And learning. Same as they always were, from early on. And well-earned pleasure in the lyre, the dance; A few old-timey hymns, as well, To keep my heart in harmony with noble friends. —WALTER MARTIN

THEOGNIS
Elegies 783-9

Retirement

Patrons and volunteers were despondent after losing Terra Black, who served as the branch manager for seven years. She was a tone of graciousness and helpfulness that fostered a happy, welcoming library culture. When Julia Larke was dispatched from the Fort Bragg Library to fill the position, the turn out to be a transition for the County Library. Julia loves reading and libraries, as well as working in service to her fellow human beings. Julia holds Master’s degrees in both botany and library science, which made her the perfect sense for someone who seeks adventures of the mind. Following her muse, she earned her Master’s in library science at the University of Texas. While working in the larger, more science library, she lost botanists who seemed to find enhanced living doing field work. She understands how people doing field work in disciplines like botany, geology and paleontology tend to be very satisfied with their lives. The University of Texas happened to have a botany department that stressed outdoor work.

Lauded by the wonders of the great outdoors, Julia pursued a Master’s in botany and worked for natural resources agencies in Texas and Louisiana. Her life was rich with adventure and discovery among wild plants and places. In addition to tramping through pristine wetland habitats, Julia also found the time to become an accomplished botanical illustrator.

When she moved to Northern California, Julia decided to focus on her indigenous plants for fun, rather than professionally. The science of botany was still becoming more centered on laboratory work, so she decided to return to librarianship. She has worked at the Fort Bragg Library since 2001.

Julia’s many interests have informed her work, and Fort Bragg Library has been treated to programs and displays on rocks and minerals—another of Julia’s passions. She takes up new specialties with gusto, like making videos of local events and doing Tai Chi.

As might be expected from someone with her natural sciences background, Julia has an active interest in the California Native Plant Society. She has edited the local chapter’s newsletter and written articles on invasive weeds for local newspapers. Sharing her life with two dogs, a cat and a parrot of chickens gives scope to her interest in animal behavior. If she were to take up beecaking her friends would not be surprised. Our community library is full of some interesting special displays and maybe programs from the new branch.

Coast Community has a high level of volunteer involvement, out of necessity. Not intimidated by this, Julia is delighted to get to know our diverse crew of workers, saying, “It’s a pleasure to work with such helpful and dedicated volunteers.” Our Friends’ board of directors welcomes Julia with an additional volunteer training. We are very lucky to have Julia here, and look forward to a working partnership of mutual benefit and joy.

JOIN OUR TEAM
COAST COMMUNITY LIBRARY
wants you. Volunteer.

Come to 225 Main Street.
(707) 824-1124.
Write to CPL PO Box 808,
Point Arena, CA 95468.

PRÉSIDENT’S DESK
Holding Our Own
Alix Levine

About two years ago, Mendocino County notified Friends of Coast Community Library that it wanted to make revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by which the library operates as part of the County Library system. After negotiations, and with some reservations, the MOU was presented and sent to be signed by the County. A few months later, our Board was told that a few problems had arisen with some of the elements of the MOU that the County had recently become concerned with, and that we would have to wait to see how County wished these to be resolved before signing a revised MOU.

While we were waiting, our longtime Library Associate, Terra Black, resigned. Since County was obliged by the MOU still in operation to supply 52 hours per week of professional staff, a replacement was needed. In October when the County Librarian met with the Library Administrators and Directors she informed us that in one week she would be recommending to the Board of Supervisors that the duties indicate that the position is terminated, and that she could not hire a permanent staff person for Coast Community Library because of ongoing budget shortfalls in the coming fiscal years meant that there could be no funded positions.

Thanks to a massive show of support by our community and coverage of the issue by local media, the Board of Supervisors decided to keep the position filled. This did not terminate our MOU and directed that funds already allocated for CCL’s staff position for the remainder of the fiscal year be used to employ a replacement until the next fiscal year next July [see Library Lines, this page].

Members of our board met with county counsel and county librarian in November and discussed the feasibility of various approaches to solving the issues of liability and assuring that Coast Community Library stays part of the system even in the event of being reduced to little or no staffing. Lack of staff would in effect terminate the MOU, since CCL does not operate within the system without professional county staff.

What we were told by the counsel is that the Friends will be taking on new liability insurance costs, continuing to pay for certain supplies and new materials previously covered by the County in richer days, and very likely assuming other new expense in an effort to keep ourselves part of our County’s library system. It seems likely we will suffer a reduction in operating hours from the previous agreed-to 40 hours a week. We are now open.

Julia Larke
HERON from page 1

process learn to shed myself of prejudices, stereotypes, and blockages.

Just last week my daughter Erica and granddaughter, Emilia, were staying with us for a weekend. Friends, including Emi’s best friend from preschool, Zunia, and two of her grandparents were also vacationing near Point Arena and she invited them to visit our home and later on to have pizza down at the wharf.

Zunia’s grandmother initially struck me as someone I would have trouble getting close to. I’ve been able to catch myself having false first impressions, but the impulse is always there. He is a big man and likes he has a sandbag underneath his shirt. We went out to visit my study. It was just after a heavy rain and there were muddy tire tracks in front of the door.

While everyone else came into the study he called me aside and pointed into the mud. “A bobcat was here last night—look at the tracks.” I looked at the mud earlier in the day and all I saw was tire tracks. He saw bobcats, raccoon prints, and many other creatures of the night in the mud. I wanted to know more about him, how he knew all of that and at dinner I found out that he was an environmental biologist, recently retired from the Army Corps of Engineers, who had worked on marsh restoration after Hurricane Katrina.

At dinner we talked and I got to know his wife as well. She worked for FEMA after natural disasters. There was a nobility about them in the following way:

Known as the “Live Music Show Capital of the World,” Branson, MO, is truly a one-of-a-kind family vacation destination—and an incredible value—with more than 50 live performance theaters, three pristine lakes, 12 championship golf courses, an international award-winning theme park, dozens of attractions and museums, an Historic Downtown district, shopping galore, a full range of dining options, and a host of hotels, motels, resorts, RV parks, campgrounds and meeting and conference facilities.

What this masks is that it is also a white haven, supporting conservative family values, and manifesting covert racism—but why should we go? The music can be extraordinary, while people can relax and enjoy themselves without the pressure of worrying about race and immigration. There are always strange and hostile worlds that have their pleasures, and I’m tempted to spend a weekend there with them. My wife, Judy, and I will never do it, but there are invitations you have to be grateful for even if it is against the moral grain of your life. You never can tell what you might learn.

But back to the lessons of the night. Respect for the night is respect for the invisible world that surrounds us, influences us, haunts us, and we passages to the not yet known. I saw the heron flash by as I was writing this, couldn’t tell if a goldfish was involved. But as the sun came up this morning I saw the most beautiful ballet I have been privi-

Herbert Kohl is the author of many books and the recent recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He lives in Point Arena.

Some Recent Arrivals @ Coast Community Library

Rosenthal, Roger. Making toast: a family story
Sanford, John. Bad blood
Slaughter, Karin. Broken
Unger, Lisa. Fragile
Votre, Luis A. La hija de la chuparosa.

Garcia, Angela. The seven spiritual laws of success: a jump-start guide to the path from fleece to rug
Chopra, Deepak. The seven Spiritual Laws of Success
Roget’s Thesaurus.

Jung, C. G. Psychology and the soul

Fisman, David. The chicken of the family
Sarton, May. Ceremonies of the Pomo Indians

Vance, John. Dethroning the corporate aristocracy

Bass, William. Death of a leader: inside the legendary forensics lab that BODY Farm where love, death, madness and the creation of the Rogers Thesaurus
Sarton, May. Journal of a solitude

Biography

Castro, Fidel. Fidel Castro: my life: a spoken autobiography
Fish, Carrie. Winful drinking
Kendall, Joshua. The man who makes lists of love, death, madness and the creation of Roger’s Thesaurus
Sarton, May. Journal of a solitude

May, Jonathan. Empire Falls

DVD

All creatures great and small (complete series 1, 2, 3)
Chocolat

Clear and present danger
Complete walking with dinosaurs collection
Everybody loves Raymond (complete 1st season)

Empire Falls

Janet Austen Book Club
Rivers of a lost coast – narrated by Tom Sisk
San of Rambo

The thing from another world

Books on CD

Freeman, Richard. More than Mozart
Grafton, Sue. T is for Treamps
Hillman, Tom. The first eagle
Meyer, Stephanie. Breaking dawn

Young Adult

Clare, Cassandra. City of glass
Collins, Suzanne. The hunger games

Dawson, James. The maze runner
Evanson, Janet. Troublemaker book one: a Barnaby and Hooker graphic novel
Fleischman, Paul. Breakout
Jones, Sabrina. Isadora Duncan: a graphic biography

Miami, China. Un Lun Dun
Meyer, Stephanie. Breaking dawn

Ottomo, Katshiro. Akira. Book three
Paulini, Christopher. Briggs

Pratchett, Terry. Only you can save mankind

Reich, Catherine. Ernest Hemingway: a writer’s life
Westfer, Scott. Extras

Juvenile Items

Amato, Mary. The chicken of the family
Bar, Annie. Ivy + bean bound to be bad
Capceci, Anne. The giant gerrn
DeCamillo, Kate. BMI & Guille

DiTerlizzi, Tony. Son of Rambow

More than Mozart

Garbage land: on the edge of the ocean

Gach, Michael Reed. Anam cara: a book of Indans

Jones, Sabrina. Fidel Castro: my life: a spoken autobiography

Fischler, Fisher. Winful drinking

Kendall, Joshua. The man who makes lists

Meyer, Stephenie. Breaking dawn

Nando, Don. Storm surge: the science of hurricanes

Nardo, Don. Storm surge: the science of hurricanes

Paratore, Colleen. The wedding planner’s do-it-yourself guide

Riordan, Rick. The maze of bones

Root, Phyllis. Creak: said the bad Suyah, Lewis. Sixth grade secrets

Schreiber, Anne. Shanks!

Scott, Ann. Someday rider

Sierra, B. The farm book: story and pictures

Spieer, Peter. We the people: the constitution of the United States

Stein, David Ezra. Interrupting chicken

Williams, Mo. City dog, country frog

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LIBRARY HOURS

MONDAY 12 noon - 6 pm
TUESDAY 10am - 8 pm
WEDNESDAY 10am - 8 pm
THURSDAY 12 noon - 8 pm
FRIDAY 12 noon - 6 pm
SATURDAY 12 noon - 5 pm

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"A bobcat was here last night—look at the tracks."
I

geng, and in the cultural anxiety spawned of illiteracy and imitation, help create and sustain a by-now-ubiquitous brand of identity

In the 1920s and 1930s, when he was a young man—to detective stories, for example, to the gaucho to the culture of Franz Kafka's Prague and to H. G. Wells's culture of science fiction.

In his Introduction to On Argentina, editor Alfred MacAdam describes Borges's heroic efforts to create a vital, living Argentinian culture. He also places Borges in the context of Argentina's wars, civil wars, coups d'etat, dictators and revolutions. He notes that at survival was a testament to his ability to use the combination of weapons — "silence, exile, and cunning" — and that readings were "audacious experiments that the history of science fiction."

Borges's essays on writing, on Argentina, and on mysticism provide a record of his own held experiments with language. The 1927 essay "An Investigation of the Word" is one of the most playful in his work. Beginning with the statement that "there is nothing more human than grammar," he goes on to analyze in detail the operation of the language of Franz Kafka's Prague, and then defines the word "word" in a "wondrous" way. Borges's concluding thoughts are as startling as they are autobiographical. "Language is nourished not by original situations," he wrote. "But by variations, happenstance, mischief." Few 20th century writers in any language were as mischievous as he, and very few authors made mischief with more of a sense of ethical responsibility to the readers of the world. Moreover, as a blind writer he joined the elite company of Homer and John Milton, and it's not surprising to hear Borges say, "Being blind has its advantages."

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Borges was a modernist—an Argentinian modernist at that—and writing and reading seemed as natural to him as breathing. No doubt, Borges the reader, the writer, and the librarian would be fascinated by the technological transformations of our own age that threaten to unnerve the universe ushered in by Gutenberg and his printing press. Born in 1899 in Buenos Aires, Borges lived in Europe, and cast under the spell of European culture, Borges wrote in almost every genre and category: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, literary history, and theory. From 1953 to 1973 he served as the Director of the Argentine National Library. The position was both honorific and symbolic. By 1955, he had written much of his best work. Moreover, by middle age he had lost much of his sight—by his own account. His reading was no longer possible without the help of a reader. Some authors he seems to have read for several decades with unease, and to have understood himself never met the mark—"What the subject, he couldn't help but write poetically."

His brief—just four-and-one-half-page—1969 essay on Whitman and Leaves of Grass pays homage to a "man of genius" who "carried out the most wide-ranging and audacious experiments that the history of literature records, and with happy results." Borges's essays on writing, on Argentina, and on mysticism provide a record of his own held experiments with language. The 1927 essay "An Investigation of the Word" is one of the most playful in his work. Beginning with the statement that "there is nothing more human than grammar," he goes on to analyze in detail the operation of the language of Franz Kafka's Prague, and then defines the word "word" in a "wondrous" way. Borges's concluding thoughts are as startling as they are autobiographical. "Language is nourished not by original situations," he wrote. "But by variations, happenstance, mischief." Few 20th century writers in any language were as mischievous as he, and very few authors made mischief with more of a sense of ethical responsibility to the readers of the world. Moreover, as a blind writer he joined the elite company of Homer and John Milton, and it's not surprising to hear Borges say, "Being blind has its advantages."

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synthesis is fun, but people who actually experience cross-sensory reactions report widely varying matches among sounds, shapes, and colors and temperatures. Still, black in most of its moods is perennially desirable for those times and places when we wish to be, or project, calm, whether it is the calm of certainty or of repose. The blue and white bedroom, the blue and white beach house, are classics, and for good reason. Blue used in these settings is comforting, and thus, in a way, warm. So is the blue-green of turquoise and of aquamarine, at least by its associations with tropical seas. Finally, very few colors achieve the sheen and delicacy of the palest blues, colors of the sky.

Eumie: What a pretty blue jacket.
Stella: It's a li'l played.
Blanche: You're both mistaken. It's Stella's Roxie blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madame pictures.

In that jacket the violated and broken heroine of Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire poses so calmly and serenely that we seem to lose our breath. The same thing happens when Pina Bausch includes the jacket has to be blue, however fragile and tenuous its claim to that hue.

**Purple**

Purple, in its deepest shades, is still sometimes remembered as the color of royalty. The ancient purple dye made from an extract of shellfish is known as Tyrian purple because of its association with the Empire of Tyre. It was known to the Minoans even earlier, around 2000 BCE. The difficulty of the dyeing process and the rarity of the resulting cloth account for the association of the color with the status of its wearers. In fact, dyeing has always been a recombining process, and often the most dangerous one, employing toxic substances like arsenic even into modern times. The word “drug” in English derives from dyeing: the dyeurs’ guilds of the Middle Ages came to include pharmacists and doctors because of the special knowledge the two trades shared.

Although the manufacture of modern synthetic dyes still presents serious environmental problems, color has become cheap. *New York Times* style writer Guy Trebay, commenting on the wildly colorful costumes designed by David Strick for Tadashi Aida’s *Cherry Blossoms,* said, “If you add green to the expanses of those Roman courts, it’s all effect. It’s all the fume of that name inspired by a huge pink diamond. Pink is the purple pinks of raspberry and the orange pinks of straw butternut. Pink is pink,” he said. In the 1940s and 1950s, the color was frequently to the RCR. Perhaps that is why so many of the “earth tones” do so badly in their adaptations for interior use. They are colors stolen from the outdoors, from the changing weather. Inside: they are mostly dull. I would call them “muddy” except that even mud is often beautiful outdoors, when a silvery spring sun shines on it. No, they are just dull. An exception: One of the printing paper companies, back in the early 1970s, asked a designer to come up with “earth tones” colors for a blue of recycled paper, one of the first. They expected the usual mud and muck. Instead they were shown papers in a riot of brilliant color, the colors of parrots, orchids, birds of paradise, the Caribbean sea. “Those are natural, aren’t they?” the designer challenged. I wish I knew who he was.

If you add green to the expanses of those Roman walls—the soft green of the tall Roman pines with their canopied leaves, the green of the undersides of olive leaves when the wind blows through them—as against those ochre walls, you have what designers like to call a color scheme. Designers will indeed scheme to make a room, even an outdoor room, imitate the glow and shadow of a Roman afternoon, ochre and green and silver. Alas, most of our scheming is in vain; but I sometimes think that as long as we keep our eyes open, and our indoor colors in front of our inner eye, we will come closer.

**Black and White**

Black and white is most interesting when it is in fact all black. There is no other color of which so much can be said about the blinding white. But the blinding white is stunning. That’s the problem: it’s all effect. It’s all the beautiful, important black-and-white marble and ceramic (and marble is the literal sheet) floors that are almost as iconic as red carpets. They announce important passages of important people. Black and white parties: almost as iconic as red carpets. They announce important (and, inevitably, linoleum tile and vinyl sheet) floors that are purple are the longest, the bass note of the spectrum. Purple, in its deepest shades, is still sometimes remembered as the color of royalty. The ancient purple dye made from an extract of shellfish is known as Tyrian purple because of its association with the Empire of Tyre. It was known to the Minoans even earlier, around 2000 BCE. The difficulty of the dyeing process and the rarity of the resulting cloth account for the association of the color with the status of its wearers. In fact, dyeing has always been a recombining process, and often the most dangerous one, employing toxic substances like arsenic even into modern times. The word “drug” in English derives from dyeing: the dyeurs’ guilds of the Middle Ages came to include pharmacists and doctors because of the special knowledge the two trades shared.

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**Red**

Red is the complementary color of green on the color wheel, but psychologically it lies in direct opposition to blue. If blue is cool, red is the hottest, except perhaps for its marvelous neighbor, orange. If blue is masculine, red is female. It is passionate and out of control. Red is the color of cuts, not only the red tabby cats, but all of Alsatian Red’s cats, who, in his poem “Catsody,” “love too much, are irresponsible, are changeable . . . nine-lived and contradictory.” Red is the color of blood, which is both life and death. Red cats remind us “that dying is what the living do, that dying is what the living do, to live, each has to do.”

I love red in most of its shades. There are the reds called Venetian, and they are the richest colors of all in some way, dark, mysterious, living and dashing—those cats. They are perhaps best in velvet, whose cut pile allows them the most reflection. More a little further into all the wine reds, probably at their best as—wine, in the glass, held up to the light. Capturing those reds in paint and fabric is very, very hard. Most of what passes for “burgundy” is as bad as in the boxed wines that also masquerade under the name. There are the lipstick reds, the “true” reds, that love only the smooth lips of young women. How cruelly fine is the line between alluring and pitiable in the life of a woman who loves red lipstick, and red shoes, and red satin dresses! Then there is cerise, or cerise. Cerise is impossible to take seriously; that is its great virtue. It has a giddy lightness, with almost a hint of mockery, a touch of coolness imparted by the hint of blue in it. This is pure, selfish, careless beauty. How different from the ebullient beauty of the cherry flowers that precede it, that the sort of beauty we often call heartbreakingly, nowhere captured more poignantly than in a movie called *Cherry Blossoms,* by the Zen-inspired German director Doris Dorrie. In this film, the celebratory time of the cherry blossoms in Tokyo is made to evoke the most terrible losses—of a wife, of a mother—in the lives of a middle-aged German man and a very young Japanese butch dancer.

Nevertheless, pink is most often a color of easy delight: the purple pinks of raspberry and the orange pinks of straw- berry, and the bright-bright pink called “shocking,” after the shock the dressing designed by the great Elsa Schiaparelli for a perfume of that name inspired by a huge pink diamond. Pink is a good color to bring indoors. It has its hazards, to be sure. But it is light and it’s truly idiotic—bubble gum. Too pure and too pale and it’s baby. But it gives it right and it’s the inspiration for everything delicate and elegant, the original shell, the rocaille of tocoo. It’s Mozart.

So, then, pick a color, any color. Start with a tree, or a patch of water, or a fruit, or a flower. Surround yourself with it, only it. Sit in the tree, bathe in the sea or the pond. Pick up the plums in a big bowl, or cut them up for jam. Indulge yourself in an enormous bouquet of one kind of flower. Spend some time.