HoCoPoLitSo’s plot thickens with new chapters

By Susan Thornton Hobby
HoCoPoLitSo Recording Secretary

This year, HoCoPoLitSo is invoking the Greek god Janus. With one face that looks to the past, and one face that looks to the future, Janus was called upon to bless beginnings and endings.

At the start of this organization’s forty-fourth season, HoCoPoLitSo will finish a few chapters and begin some new ones.

CHAPTER 1

More than a thousand books, well-thumbed and annotated by founder Ellen Conroy Kennedy in her years of steering HoCoPoLitSo, or read and recommended by Padraic Kennedy, are becoming the Kennedy Collection. This precious set of literary books, many of which are signed by internationally famous writers like Seamus Heaney, Langston Hughes, and Gwendolyn Brooks, are being carefully restored, cataloged and shelved in the Howard Community College Library. University librarians would give their eye teeth for this kind of collection, but the Kennedys decided to keep their books in Howard County.

CHAPTER 2

HoCoPoLitSo’s trove of archival television talk shows featuring writers talking with writers – from the word acrobatics of Tyehimba Jess and the raspy readings of Stanley Kunitz to Gwendolyn Brooks’ recitation of “We Real Cool” – is almost fully digitized. Thirty-three years of The Writing Life episodes are now available worldwide (www.youtube.com/hocopolitso). More than 400,000 times, someone has watched one of the 109 videos available.

So many authors that HoCoPoLitSo has hosted are now passed away, but their memories are preserved in the amber of YouTube – we can still watch talks with Donald Hall, Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Frank McCourt, Richard Wilbur, Grace Paley, and our own Lucille Clifton.

HoCoPoLitSo is nostalgic about our history, yes, but we are also anticipating our future.

CHAPTER 3

Looking forward, HoCoPoLitSo is investigating starting a podcast using the sound presciently recorded at readings and waiting digitally, its ones and zeroes quivering, eager to reach literary ears.

And somewhere, a young author is finding a book that a HoCoPoLitSo board member handed them in the tumult of their high school senior awards ceremony. Cole Lahmann, a senior who graduated from Glenelg last year and earned two collections of Robert Pinksy’s poems, wrote a thank-you note: “The book award has both inspired me to experiment more with my writing and encouraged me to continue practicing and pushing my literary ventures. I hope to one day present my own work to the society … .”

We hope so, too, Cole. Thanks Janus.
Season Highlights
July 2017 – June 2018

HoCoPoLitSo opened its season with Life, Death, and Social Media: Staying Human in the Digital Age with Laurie Frankel in collaboration with Howard County Book Connection; a partnership between Howard Community College (HCC), and Howard County Public Library System, on Wednesday, November 1, 2017, with an afternoon reading at HCC and an evening event at Howard County Library, Miller Branch.

The 40th Evening of Irish Music and Poetry featured Mike McCormack, whose latest novel, Solar Bones, a tour-de-force in a single sentence, won the 2016 Goldsmith’s prize, given to fiction with “qualities of creative daring.” His reading was followed by a farewell concert of traditional Irish music with Narrowbacks Linda Hickman, Eileen Korn Estes, Dominick Murray, Jesse and Terence Winch and step dancers from the Calkin School. Harpist Jared Denhard provided a prelude. Art depicting Ireland was exhibited by Denny Lynch and Katherine Farrell.

HoCoPoLitSo is honored to have recently appointed Irish Ambassador Daniel Mulhall open the evening.

Collaborations
In November 2017, HoCoPoLitSo and Howard Community College’s World Languages department presented Literature: The Global Language as part of the college’s International Diversity Week. The event included a series of brief clips from HoCoPoLitSo’s The Writing Life, in which writers discuss poems and fiction about Israeli war and peace, Japanese internment, Latin immigrants, African-American history, and translation. Board members and volunteers also read poetry in a variety of languages.

In September 2017, HoCoPoLitSo co-chair Tara Hart was interviewed by Dragon Digital Radio and discussed HoCoPoLitSo, the Blackbird Poetry Festival, and creative writing.

In collaboration with Blossoms of Hope, Columbia Art Center and Volunteer Center Serving Howard County, HoCoPoLitSo coordinated an art and literary show. Visual artists were asked to select a poem from a selection of local authors’ work and create art based on the theme of Dancing for Claudia. More than 70 artists contributed to this show, which was exhibited in April 2018.

During the Columbia Festival of the Arts’ LakeFest, HoCoPoLitSo staffed an activity and information table offering opportunities for aspiring writers to talk to published authors at the Writers’ Perch, and for kids and adults to make poetry and literary crafts.

HoCoPoLitSo in the Schools
Sponsored by HoCoPoLitSo, in partnership with Howard County Public Schools, poet Joelle Biele and playwright Daniel Johnston led workshops with more than 50 teachers during the system’s Professional Development Day in August 2017.

From October to March Joelle Biele served as featured writers read followed by the opportunity for audience members to read from their own work. This series, held on second Tuesdays from September to June, is coordinated by local poets Ann Bracken, Linda Joy Burke, Faye McCraye and Laura Shovan. Twenty writers were featured: Rafael Alvarez, Edward Balfar, Dorrit Carrol, Harry Crawford, Clarinda Harriss, Susan Thornton Hobby, Rocky Jones, Alan King, Beth Konkoski, Hiram Larew, Debbie Mack, Deanna Nikkiado, Ann S. Phillips, Michael Saleman, Lynne Silverman, Susan Sonde, Michael Tims, Patricia Valdata, Jennifer Wallace, and Sally Whitney.

On Thursday, April 26, 2018, the Blackbird Poetry Festival was held in collaboration with HCC’s departments of English and World Languages and Student Life. Morning workshops with students were hosted by featured poet Marilyn Chin and Joseph Ross. Sunbird and evening Nightbird readings took place in Smith Theatre. High school students Alex Berland, winner of Wilde Lake High School’s 2018 Poetry Out Loud competition, and Eunice Braimoh, winner of a 2018 Howard County Arts Council Scholarship, opened the evening program with a brief recitation and reading.

Wilde Readings
HoCoPoLitSo continued support for Wilde Readings, a free monthly reading and open mic session held at the Columbia Arts Center. Two

Board members Laura Too, left, and Susan Thornton Hobby, right, with novelist and volunteer Laurie Loewenstein staff the booth at the Columbia Festival of the Arts.

HoCoPoLitSo’s 26th writer-in-residence visiting seven county high schools, Homewood Center and HCC, engaging more than 360 students in workshops and discussions.

HoCoPoLitSo held its 37th All-County Writing Competition for high school students. This year’s submissions were read by a team lead by board member Nancy Czarnecki. The nine creative writing winners were: Samuel Nitkin (Mt. Hebron), Asha Taylor (Mt. Hebron), and Lorin Rocheleau (Mt. Hebron), in the personal essay category; Danielle Wendt (Mt. Hebron), Jennie Hardman (Mt. Hebron), and Kate Hammond (Mt. Hebron), in the poetry category; Amy Blanchard (River Hill), Catherine Du (River Hill) and Shay Showunn (Oakland Mills), in the short story category.

In addition, 25 students were chosen by their English departments to receive HoCoPoLitSo’s Promise and Achievement Award in Language Arts. The honorees were: Nickie Giglio and Nico Greenwalt (Atholton), Emily Przybyla and James Townsend (Centennial), Cole Laumann and Isolde Moyen (Gleneagles), Ina O’Ryan and Benjamin Yodzis (Hammond), Brynne Learman and Logan Burge (Home wood Center), Elizabeth Blandford and Micah Johnson (Howard), Michael Godfrey and Alia Shields (Long Reach), Theodore Crawford and Joshua Varghese (Marriotts Ridge), Kathleen Jacob and Samuel Nitkin (Mt. Hebron), Poala Midaigo-Reyes and Dominic Picolo (Oakland Mills), Gwen Kubina and Keara Walker (Reservoir), Naomi Hess and Craig Selbrede (River Hill), and Alexander Berland (Wilde Lake).

Books by authors including Carrie Brown, John Gregory Brown, Colum McCann, Emma Donoghue, Ria Dove, Donald Hall and Robert Bly were presented at each school’s award ceremony by board members. Copies of HoCoPoLitSo’s anthology, Twenty Years, Twenty Poets, Vol 2, were given to introduce students to a variety of contemporary authors.

B O A R D  O F  D I R E C T O R S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neikan Akpan</th>
<th>Catherine McLoughlin-Hayes</th>
<th>Kathleen Larson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David H. Barrett</td>
<td>Susan Thornton Hobby</td>
<td>Andrea Martinez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Czarnecki</td>
<td>Ellen Conroy Kennedy</td>
<td>Tim Singleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Hart</td>
<td>Padraic Kennedy</td>
<td>Laura Yoo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H O C O P O L I T S O  S T A F F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pamela Simonson</th>
<th>Kathy Stowe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10901 Little Patuxent Parkway, Horowitz Center 200, Columbia, Md 21044</td>
<td>443.518.4568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.HoCoPoLitSo.org">www.HoCoPoLitSo.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.facebook.com/HoCoPoLitSo">www.facebook.com/HoCoPoLitSo</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.twitter.com/HoCoPoLitSo">www.twitter.com/HoCoPoLitSo</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HoCoPoLitSo is grateful to all who support our programs and mission. This list includes cash and major in-kind contributions. Serial gifts by the same contributor are merged. Every effort has been made to include all names and to spell them correctly. Please let us know if there are errors or omissions. (** in honor and sponsorship of 40th Irish Evening)

**ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORS**

**PLATINUM BENEFACTORS $10,000 and above**
- Howard County Arts Council through a gift from John Howard County Government

**GOLD BENEFACTORS $5,000 to $9,999**
- Maryland Arts Council, through the State of MD and NEA

**SILVER BENEFACTORS $2,500 to $4,999**
- Columbia Film Society
- Community Foundation of Howard County
- Howard County College-English/World Languages
- Vaught, Office of Student Life
- Padraic & Ellen C. Kennedy **

**BRONZE BENEFACTORS $1,000 to $2,499**
- Howard County Public School System
- Ken & Elizabeth Lundeen **
- Sabina Taj & Kyle Reis
- Jean & Bob Moon in honor of Tim Singleton

**BENEFACTORS $500 to $999**
- Katherine Farrell **
- Tara Hart
- In honor of HoCoPoLitSo staff
- Susan Thornton Hobby
- Howard Hughes Corporation **

**Sponsors $250 to $499**
- Alpha Platinium Fraternity, Inc.
- Anne V. Barker **
- David H. Barrett
- Jack Fick & Nancy Colburn
- Nancy Czarnecki
- Michael & Carolyn Kelemen **
- Barbara Lawson
- Ruth Penn
- Anne Rez
- Steven Sachs **
- Kathy & Lloyd Stowe
- Laura & Frank Yoo **

**PATRONS $100 to $249**
- Carol Kellen Askin **
- In honor of retired HCPSS English teachers
- Liz Bobo
- Kathleen O. Bowen
- Ann Bracken
- Mike & Lois Clark

**DONORS $50 to $99**
- Mary Ellen Duncan
- Claudia Friend
- In memory of Joseph Friend
- Timothy Gillen

**ENDOWMENT GIFTS**

**Ensure HoCoPoLitSo’s FUTURE. Gifts and pledges to the HoCoPoLitSo Fund at the Community Foundation of Howard County from February 1, 2015 to October 15, 2018.**

**References to Endowment Gifts**
- Gifts and pledges to the HoCoPoLitSo Fund
- Contributions to the Community Foundation of Howard County from February 1996-October 2018.

**NOBEL CIRCLE $20,000 and up**
- Padraic & Ellen Kennedy
- Jean & Bob Moon
- In memory of Beatrice Harris Flansburg
- Patty Rouse

**LITERARY LIONS $10,000 – $19,999**
- Hamel Family Fund
- Peter & Beth Horowitz
- Michael Moore
- In honor of Jean Moon
- The Columbia Foundation

**LAUREATE CIRCLE $1,000 – $9,999**
- Alpha Phi Alpha
- Barbara Lawson
- Harry “Chip” Landry
- Pam & Steve Mack
- Donald & Brigitte Manckin
- In honor of Ellen Conroy Kennedy
- Lanny Morrison & Lynne Nemeth
- Morris & Edie Range

**PULITZER CIRCLE $250-$999**
- Ann Barney & Steve Van Order
- David Barrett
- Saundra Barrett

**PATRONS $100 to $249**
- Lucille Clifton
- Dianne M. Connely
- Frank & Margaret Lee Conroy
- Minto D. Davis
- In honor of Ellen Conroy Kennedy
- Paula & Franco Einsohn
- In honor of Padraic and Ellen Kennedy
- Sandra B. Goolsby
- Floyd & Cassandra Grayson
- Dan & Mary Margaret
- Kerman
- In honor of Pearl Tobin
- Hiram Larew
- Gordon Mumpower
- Linda Odum
- Fred & Virginia Pausch
- Lawrence Pomcray
- In memory of Maria Kennedy Pomcray
- Jim & Patty Rouse Charitable Foundation
- Tim & Beth Singleton
- Allan & Mary Singleton
- Marvin & Marcia Thomas
- Emerson & Celonia Walden

**SUSTAINER $100-$249**
- Anne & George Barker
- Virginia Bates
- Frederick & Catherine Chicone
- Edward & Joan Cochran
- Mary Domonkos
- Philip & Barbara Gallagher
- Douglas Heinichs & Diane Marshall
- Susan Thornton Hobby
- Michael & Carolyn Kelemen
- Linda & Robert Keller
- Janice Kinser
- Donna Helfer
- Richard & Mary Louise McCally
- Catherine McLaughlin-Hayes
- Helen & Joe Mitchell
- Ruth Penn
- Evergreen Porter
- Carol S. Rodricht
- Hanne Skov
- Hilary Thun
**PARTICIPANT Up to $99**
- Ann Augustine
- In honor of Robert M. Vacelli
- Ann Barney
- In memory of Joseph G. Barlow
- Claudia Birdsong
- Mr. & Mrs. John Buck
- Susan & Jeremy Clayton
- Eileen Clegg
- Daphne D. Comegys
- Richard Dowling
- Naomi Hayman
- Jacob Kheel
- Jack Knox
- Kathleen B. Larson
- Joan Greenberg & Barbara Lawson
- In memory of Fredericka Clifton
- Thomas & Mary Lorson
- Virgie Mason
- Sylvia Padow
- Russell (Joan) Philippi
- Michael & Louise Riemer
- Mrs. & Mr. Stanley Rodbell
- Dora Scanlan
- Lawrence & Patricia Taubman
- Margot Treitel
- In memory of Raphael Treitel
- Bayard Waterbury
- Terence Winch

**GIFTS IN HONOR OF ELLEN CONROY KENNEDY**
- Judith Adams
- Steve Alpern
- Virginia Bates
- Kathleen O. Bowen
- Ann Bracken
- Patricia & Judith Clancy
- Eileen Clegg
- Mary Anne Cole
- Dianne M. Connelly
- Joan Corhran
- Helen Rosalind Cowie
- Joetta Cramm
- Daedalus Books
- Gimmy D’Astolfo
- Bonnie S. Daniel
- William Dowse
- John Farrell
- Dr. Catherine Gira
- Mary T. Gould
- John Harding
- Dr. Tara Hart
- Ken Jennings
- Hazel Swann Jones
- Mary M. Kerman
- Chaya Kaplan
- Kathleen Larson
- Pearl D. Lauter
- Barbara Lawson
- Alexander Leak
- Adele K. Levine
- Anne R. Maass
- Virgie A. S. Markham
- Russell & Mary Louise McCally
- Jean M. Mesel
- Barbara Merke
- Helen Russ Mitchell
- Gail Moore
- Lanny Morrison & Lynne Nemeth
- Essex & Ralph Paradiso
- Lawrence Pomcray
- Carol S. Rodricht Foundation
- Barbara Pomeroy
- Russell & Mary Louise McCally
- Mary Ruth & Henry Seidel
- Tim & Beth Singleton
- Hanne Skov
- Hilary Thun
- Marvin & Marka Thomas
- Venita Weston-Study
- Melissa A. Wilkins
THE WRITING LIFE

Produced at HCC-TV, The Writing Life, HoCoPoLitSo’s writer-to-writer talk show, airs encore and debut editions on Maryland educational cable stations, throughout the year and on YouTube, with 109 editions accessible worldwide. Three new editions were produced between July 2017 and June 2018: Laurie Frankel hosted by Sandra Beasley; Mike McCormack hosted by Cóilín Parsons, and Marilyn Chin hosted by Joseph Ross.

The Writing Life airs Mondays at 7 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Fridays at 4 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 8 p.m.; and Sundays at 3 p.m. on Verizon 96 and Comcast 41; and on demand on YouTube.com/HoCoPoLitSo.

Down the Writing Rabbit Hole

When young adult bestselling author Jason Reynolds heard that HoCoPoLitSo’s archive of The Writing Life shows featured episodes with Amiri Baraka and Lucille Clifton, he shook his head in wonder. When he heard that HoCoPoLitSo’s web site had more than one hundred taped shows with literature’s rock stars, he said, “Oh, I’m going down that rabbit hole!”

And indeed, YouTube has offered scholars, readers, and writers an amazing opportunity – to learn about craft from contemporary literature’s greatest writers. Since 1985, HoCoPoLitSo has been preserving on video a series of half-hour conversations between diverse authors. Many of those writers have recently gone to afterlife rooms of one’s own: Baraka, Clifton, Richard Wilbur, Donald Hall, Gwendolyn Brooks, Frank McCourt.

No one needs to set their DVR to catch the cable replays of these shows – just log onto YouTube.com/hocopolitso anytime. In place of the schedules we’ve offered here for years, now we’ll offer highlights and tell you what’s new on the channel. HoCoPoLitSo has spent more than ten years digitizing the brittle and fragile archival tapes to preserve those shows. The YouTube channel has garnered more than 1,100 subscribers and 400,000 views.

This fiscal year, HoCoPoLitSo has uploaded newly produced shows featuring Marilyn Chin interviewed by Joseph Ross, novelist Mike McCormack interviewed by Cóilín Parsons, and novelist Laurie Frankel interviewed by poet and memoirist Sandra Beasley. Archival shows uploaded feature poet Mona Van Duyn, musician and poet Terence Winch, environmental author William Warner, fiction writer Edna O’Brien, and poets Michael Longley, Ann Darr, Anne Caston, Roland Flint, and Ciaran Carson.

So dive down that rabbit hole. Here’s a carrot from novelist Mike McCormack to lure you below: “Rural Ireland is ripe for experimental fiction. … I need this solid ground under my feet, because it’s going to get weird after this. It’s the pull in the steering of my pen. Once it’s bedded down there in the rites, the rhythms, the rituals, the fields, the skies, the bog, the sea of Louisburgh, then anything can happen – dystopian penal experiments, ghosts, and the last thing I wrote was about a clone from Louisburgh.”

Susan Thornton Hobby
Executive producer of The Writing Life