



the *Library Insider*

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One City, One Story

2013

A hard-working committee of local citizens has selected *The Age of Miracles* as the book to read for Pasadena's 11th One City, One Story program that culminates in March 2013.

Hailed by an NPR book critic in July as "a pensive page-turner," the debut novel by Karen Thompson Walker enjoyed a six-week run on the public radio network's bestseller list (compiled weekly with the American Booksellers Association) and appeared 10 weeks on the *Los Angeles Times* list.

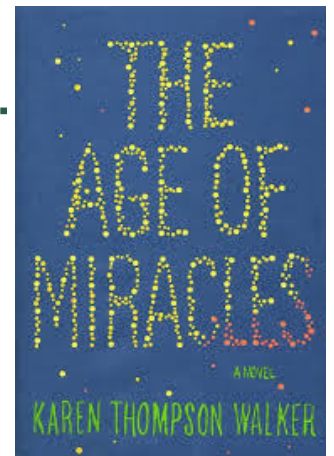
Set in suburban Southern California, a 20-something narrator named Julia reflects upon a time when the rotation of the Earth slows, disrupting everyday life. Against this backdrop, called "the slowing," she tells a coming-of-age story, largely from the perspective of a sensitive 11-year-old.

"Both the Earth's environment and young Julia are in the throes of seismic upheaval," said Maureen Corrigan, the Georgetown University lecturer and 2012 Pulitzer Prize judge who reviewed *The Age of Miracles* for NPR's "Fresh Air." Continued Corrigan: "You would expect that the most ominous words in this novel would be 'the slowing,' but they're not; the most ominous words—spoken by preteen Julia—are these: '[N]o force on Earth could slow the forward march of sixth grade. And so, in spite of everything, that year was also the year of the dance party.'"

Calling the book "a precocious debut," *New York Times* critic Michiko Kakutani wrote in a (June 18, 2012) review: "Ms. Walker never explains the science of 'the slowing,' but she does a credible job of charting the avalanche of consequences. To preserve order the government asks people to remain on the 24-hour clock, even though that would mean falling

out of sync with the sun: 'Light would be unhooked from day, darkness unchained from night.' Sales of blackout curtains and sleeping pills spike, and some people take to sleeping in their basements."

What do you think? Read *The Age of Miracles* and look for future announcements of the discussion groups or related events that will take place in March. One City, One Story is designed to broaden and enhance the community's appreciation of literature and reading. *The Friends* are delighted to serve, once again, as a major sponsor of the program in Pasadena.



Meet the Author

For One City, One Story participants, it's an annual treat to greet the author who inspires a community to read a selected book. In Pasadena, the author-related events in March may be all the more celebratory, as Karen Thompson Walker is a native of Southern California.

Raised in Del Mar, Walker attended its public schools and graduated from Torrey Pines High School. At UCLA, she studied English and creative writing and contributed articles to *The Daily Bruin*. In a July 2, 2012 feature article, the *Del Mar Times* noted that Walker worked for that newspaper as a reporter before moving to New York to study fiction writing at Columbia University in its Master of Fine Arts program. She then joined the publishing industry, working at Scribner before moving to Simon & Schuster in 2007. She worked on *The Age of Miracles* in the mornings before commuting from

(continued page 2)

What's on Your Nightstand?

Looking for a throng of lively readers in Pasadena? On October 25, nearly 100 were milling in the stately rooms of Castle Green for "WitFest," a clever event staged to raise funds for LitFest Pasadena 2013 (set for May 11 in the city's Central Park).

Larry Wilson, the *Pasadena Star-News* public editor and LitFest co-founder, shared the WitFest emcee duties with performance artist and commentator Sandra Tsing Loh. They posed questions to six panelists, including Patt Morrison, the *Los Angeles Times* columnist and consummate 89.3-KPCC interviewer. Later, *The Insider* asked a few participants to describe the books they're reading.

Morrison (WitFest's high-scorer) said she's reading *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson. It is "a perfect science book for non-scientists like me. Love it," she said. Amid the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, she is reading two books for a second time: Adam Goodheart's *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, and Jay Winik's *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*. Morrison is also reading *Back to Blood*, Tom Wolfe's latest book. "I would read that man's grocery list, he's such a paragon," she declared.



Patt Morrison

Wilson said, "My nightstand is a big one, fortunately—a bookshelf behind our bed. So it lets me read too much all at once. No wonder more books are midstream than finished!" Wilson—who serves on the selection committee for Pasadena's One City, One Story project—detailed his reading list shortly after *The Age of Miracles* was announced as the 2013 title. That novel, he said, is "outstanding as story, as coming of age, as science fiction for literary types who don't want too much highfalutin' SF in theirs. I mean, the Earth slows down, and the consequences are devastating but life goes on. It's way outside any genre, as the book is about people and a young family, not intergalactic invaders. Karen Thompson Walker's book being set in North County San Diego adds a certain something for us, too."

The newspaper editor is reading *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* by Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt "for a discussion group of guys who get together for dinner four or five times a year." Wilson likens the book to Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization* or Mark Kurlansky's *Salt: A World History*—books that in his view, "go a bit overboard perhaps in claiming for its subject the continuation of human knowledge at some, well, 'tipping point.' In this case, as in the Irish case, making sure that books made it through during the age of

having to copy them by hand," Wilson said of the plot. Nonetheless, "I'm learning a lot."

"My fun book that I wouldn't miss -- not that I ever miss one of his novels -- is Michael Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue*, about a record store on the Oakland/Berkeley border in the mid-1990s and its struggle to survive," Wilson continued. In his view, Chabon "gets Berkeley life among all its classes down pat, and in a funny way, it's very similar to Pasadena's. . . I don't think there's an American writer today who does conversation



Larry Wilson

better, who is more conversant in popular culture without writing like a fan boy. He's our greatest still-youngish novelist."

Wilson concluded with a request. "As a former poet who is getting back into writing and publishing poetry, can I recommend the best poetry book I've read this year? Katherine Larson's *Radial Symmetry*, which I keep dipping back into for its marvelous stories in verse about the natural world observed." Caltechers should take note, he advised. "Kate is a molecular biologist and field ecologist at the University of Arizona as a day job, and this book shows the twain of real science and real literature can meet. Don't let the poetry part put you off. Give this book to your scientist spouse for Christmas."

—Katie Harris

Meet the Author

(continued from p

Brooklyn to her Manhattan editing job. In 2011, she won a Ship for her novel in progress. Random House published the

Walker, now a fulltime writer, is at work on a second novel. she moved from New York City to the University of Iowa with Casey Walker, who has enrolled in the Writers' Workshop in too, is a California native and UCLA grad; he recently earned English literature from Princeton University.)

"There's nowhere in the MFA world quite as storied as the Workshop," she told the *Des Moines Register*. "So I'll just be I'm excited to get to know it and the town. It'll be a big change Brooklyn."



6th Annual Festival of California Poets

Three California poets drew an appreciative audience at Central Library on October 12, as the Annual Festival of California Poets was staged for the first time during Art-

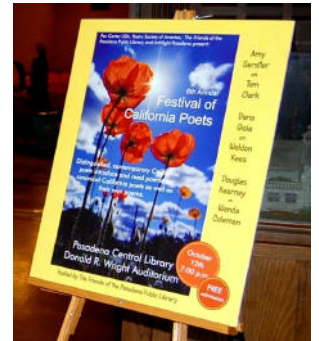
Night Pasadena. Dana Gioia, Douglas Kearney and Amy Gerstler read selections from their own works and paid tribute to three California poets they admire.

Dana Gioia, the Judge Widney Professor of Poetry and Public Culture at USC, is the author of *Interrogations at Noon*, winner of the 2002 American Book Award (bestowed by the Before Columbus Foundation). He is also a former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Gioia spoke about Weldon Kees, the multi-talented poet and artist who lived in the San Francisco Bay area from 1950 until his 1955 disappearance.

Douglas Kearney, who grew up in Altadena, teaches at California Institute of the Arts and Antioch University. His second manuscript, *The Black Automaton*, was chosen by Catherine Wagner for the National Poetry Series and was a finalist for the PEN Center USA Award in 2010. Kearney saluted Los Angeles native Wanda Coleman, who in recent years has been a highly regarded nominee for California Poet Laureate and in 2008 published a second volume of short stories, *Jazz and Twelve O'Clock Tales*.

Amy Gerstler, whose recent books of poetry include *Dearest Creature*, *Ghost Girl*, *Medicine*, and *Crown of Weeds*, teaches in the Masters of Professional Writing program at USC and the Bennington Writing

Seminars Program at Bennington College in Vermont. She paid tribute to Tom Clark, who taught poetics for two decades at the New College of California before that institution closed in 2008. Clark was *The Paris Review's* poetry editor from 1963 to 1973. Best known for poems about sports, Clark is also a prolific non-fiction writer who has authored biographies of Jack Kerouac and Damon Runyon, among others.



Photos by Molly Kennington

For the sixth consecutive year, the festival was hosted by The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library, in concert with PEN Center USA and the Poetry Society of America. "I really liked the program," said Sue Donaldson, a new member of *The Friends'* board who worked on the event.

"Listening to the poets' backgrounds and presentations of the poems was a unique and inspirational experience. It was a treat and I left the auditorium with a smile."



(from left) Poets Douglas Kearney, Amy Gerstler and Dana Gioia address Central Library audience

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The Friends through their voice mail at 626.744.4680 or
email at friendspppl@yahoo.com



“Nightstand”

Recommendations of 2012

As winter holidays approach, you might wish to recall, read, or gift-wrap a book mentioned earlier in the year by avid readers and contributors to *The Insider*. Below, we list the titles and authors of books featured in the “What’s on Your Nightstand?” columns of 2012. Some titles—but by no means all—are found on the “new book” shelf. The topics are tantalizingly diverse!

- *1861: The Civil War Awakening* by Adam Goodheart
- *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson
- *A World on Fire: Britain’s Crucial Role in the American Civil War* by Amanda Foreman
- *And I Shall Have Some Peace There: Trading in the Fast Lane for My Own Dirt Road* by Margaret Roach
- *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* by Jay Winik
- *Back to Blood* by Tom Wolfe
- *Be Excellent at Anything: The Four Keys to Transforming the Way We Work and Live* by Tony Schwartz, Jean Gomes and Catherine McCarthy
- *Buddha’s Little Instruction Book* by Jack Kornfield
- *Carrots Love Tomatoes: Secrets of Companion Planting for Successful Gardening* by Louise Riotte
- *Death with Interruptions* by Jose Saramago
- *Ed King* by David Guterson
- *Homer’s Odyssey* by Gwen Cooper
- *Inventing L.A.: The Chandlers and Their Times* by Bill Boyarsky, based on the award-winning 2009 documentary film by Peter Jones
- *Jane Austen Made Me Do It: Original Stories Inspired by Literature’s Most Astute Observer of the Human Heart* by Laurel Ann Nattress
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen
- *Radial Symmetry* by Katherine Larson
- *Richter’s Scale: Measure of an Earthquake, Measure of a Man* by Susan Elizabeth Hough
- *Rightsizing Your Life: Simplifying Your Surroundings While Keeping What Matters Most* by Ciji Ware
- *Rin Tin Tin: The Life and the Legend* by Susan Orlean
- *Scorpions: The Battles and Triumphs of FDR’s Great Supreme Court Justices* by Noah Feldman
- *Telegraph Avenue* by Michael Chabon
- *The Age of Miracles* by Karen Thompson Walker
- *The History of Love* by Nicole Krauss
- *The Honourable Schoolboy* by John le Carré
- *The Seat of the Soul* by Gary Zukav
- *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* by Stephen Greenblatt
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *U is for Undertow* by Sue Grafton
- *Vegan’s Daily Companion: 365 Days of Inspiration for Cooking, Eating, and Living Compassionately* by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau
- *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë
- *World War Z* by Max Brooks

Central Library 626.744.4066

285 East Walnut Street
Mon - Th 9:00 am - 9:00 pm
Fri and Sat 9:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

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1130 South Marengo
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Hastings Branch 626.744.7262

3325 E. Orange Grove Blvd.
Mon - Thurs 10am - 9pm
Fri & Sat 10am - 6pm

Hill Avenue Branch 626.744.7264

55 South Hill Ave.
Mon - Thurs 10am - 6pm
Sat 10am - 6pm

La Pintaresca Branch 626.744.7268

1355 North Raymond Ave.
M - Th 10am - 7pm
F-Sat 10am - 6pm

Lamanda Park Branch 626.744.7266

140 South Altadena Dr.
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Wed 1 - 9pm, Thurs & Sat 10am - 6pm

Linda Vista Branch 626.744.7278

1281 Bryant Street
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San Rafael Branch 626.744.7270

1260 Nithsdale Road
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm

Santa Catalina Branch 626.744.7272

999 E. Washington Blvd.
Mon - Thurs & Sat 10 am - 6 pm

Villa Parke Branch 626.744.6510

363 E. Villa Street
Mon - Fri 10 am - 6 pm



The Friends Welcome New and Renewing Members

In late October, The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library celebrated the 7th annual National Friends of Libraries Week by greeting library patrons and explaining *The Friends'* role in supporting Central and its nine branch libraries.

In essence, we support local library programs, special services and cultural events, primarily through membership donations and book sales. At Central, our volunteers operate *The Friends'* book store and have also revived the Wednesday afternoon film program. We host the annual Festival of California Poets, and we're one of the top sponsors of the annual One City, One Story project.

The Friends fund children's programs at Central and its nine branches. Last year, we allocated 85 percent of our program expenditures to children's and teen's activities.

If you are already a *Friend*, you'll soon receive a letter asking you to renew your annual membership. You'll receive our new brochure detailing *The Friends'* mission, benefits and ways to participate. Please help by renewing your membership. We will be most grateful for your continued support.



Board member Janet Lundblad greets a Pasadena patron during National Friends of Libraries Week

If you are not yet on our electronic mailing list, be sure to fill out the form on your renewal envelope, or mail the back-page coupon of this newsletter or visit our website at www.friendspppl.org. As occasions arise, we want to tell our friends, new and old, about special events!

—John Price
Membership Chairman

Volunteers to the Rescue

A chipper woman opens the gates to *The Friends'* book store, shelves some new arrivals, and starts a bit of Mozart on the CD player.

An energetic organizer begins helping patrons fill out the forms for their free flu shots.

A fearless technology-user readies the digital projection equipment in Wright Auditorium and previews the opening scene of Wednesday afternoon's Family Film.

And, out by the loading dock, a small army of book-lovers sorts a mountain of used books, which will join thousands of others at the Saturday morning book sale.

What do these people have in common? They are Very Important Volunteers, recruited by The Friends of the Pasadena Public Library. Vital and valued, they deserve their V.I.P. nickname, as they fill jobs vacated by tight library budgets or work to expand new services to Pasadena patrons.

If V.I.P.-ing intrigues you, contact Jan-Leanne Price, *The Friends'* volunteer coordinator. Let Jan know your areas of interest at 626-744-4680 or friendspppl@yahoo.com. Learn how you might help at your favorite branch library, or at magnificent Central!



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The mission of *The Friends* is to support the library's programs, special services and cultural events. Priority is given to projects that instill the excitement of discovery and the love reading in library patrons of all ages.

The Friends' Upcoming Book Sales

Saturdays
December 8,
January 12 &
February 9

Central Library's East Patio

If you wish to donate books to *The Friends'* monthly sales to help raise funds for library programs, you may deposit books in the Book Drop container on the loading dock next to Central Library's north entrance. Donations may also be left inside at the Circulation Desk or in *The Friends'* book store during store hours (11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday).

Need help with your donation?
Call us at 626.744.4680

All donations are tax-deductible.
Request a receipt in *The Friends'* book store or at the Circulation Desk.

The Friends thank you!

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sign up a friend or make a special gift.*

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