



IN BOOKS:
Seasonally
spooky
titles. **E4**

REVIEW: GOOD THEATER'S 'LADY SUSAN' **PAGE E3**

AUDIENCE

Deep Water/**E3**
Scene & Heard/**E6**

Sunday, October 31, 2021

Maine Sunday Telegram

SECTION E

In a paranormal universe

Bellechasse, my friend in Paris, is the only non-medical man I know who keeps a collection of human skulls — nearly a dozen — randomly displayed in the library of his grand apartment overlooking the Quai d'Orsay. One winter evening he poured me a brandy and explained why.

*From "Two Heads are Better than One,"
by Barnaby Conrad III*



Gregory A. Rec/Staff Photographer

Paul Guernsey of Warren has edited a new collection of contemporary ghost stories titled "21st Century Ghost Stories, Volume II."

Paul Guernsey of Warren edits The Ghost Story website and anthologies of contemporary supernatural fiction.

By **BOB KEYES**
Staff Writer

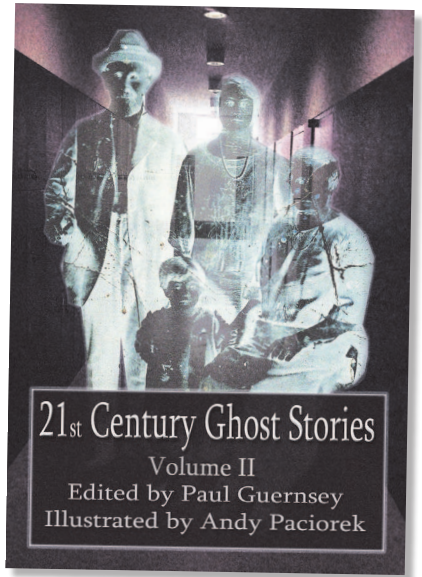
Paul Guernsey has reinvented himself many times across his working life, all based around his love of truth-telling, fish stories and ghost stories.

He's worked across the board as a journalist, early on as a newspaper reporter in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and later for the Associated Press in Caracas, Venezuela, where he reported about the gas industry, and as a travel writer. In a complete shift, during the middle part of his career, he spent several years — perhaps the best years — in his dream job editing a Maine-based fly-fishing magazine, which allowed him to fish "pretty much wherever I wanted and whenever I wanted," and he took full advantage of the opportunity, in search of fish in streams and rivers from Maine to Alaska, in oceans from the Caribbean to the Pacific and to the Kamchatka Peninsula in far-east Russia.

He's published novels and memoirs, winning a 2018 Maine Literary Award in speculative fiction for his novel "American Ghost," and taught creative writing at Unity College in central Maine, until the pandemic halted his teaching career.

These days, he edits The Ghost Story website (theghoststory.com), where he collects and shares ghost stories of all kinds, and for the second time, he has edited an anthology of contemporary supernatural fiction, "21st Century Ghost Stories, Volume II," published by the U.K.-based Wyrd Harvest Press in August. This follows Volume I, which came out in 2018, and precedes Volume III, targeted for 2024.

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"21st Century Ghost Stories, Volume II," edited by Paul Guernsey of Warren.

"Do you have something sharp?" the man asked, squatting by the box and looking up at her with a smile, "like a key?"

"Oh, sure," Lara said. Without thinking she gave him her house key. Later she realized that he never gave it back.

She'd been so intrigued by the box. It was square, sealed up in clear tape, and medium-sized. Yet it appeared to contain everything he owned. As he used the key to cut through the tape, he said, "I never know what's inside." She laughed. In hindsight, though, it was a strange thing to say. Hadn't he packed it?

Lara's basement was a dank, unwelcoming place. The fireplace was plastered over, the window a thin rectangle that looked up through a grate. It had no furniture and little light, and Lara doubted that any person could improve it. But the lodger seemed unbothered. "Trust me," he said, "I've seen much worse."

It was only then that Lara remembered to ask his name. "Since," she said, suddenly shy, "you'll be living here and everything."

"Me? Oh, I'm the Devil."

Lara laughed, and he laughed too.

*From "The Lodger,"
by C.C. Ashmead:*

ART REVIEW

Delve into the mysteries of creation at Maine Jewish Museum

By **JORGE S. ARANGO**

We tend to believe scientific explanations of phenomena as absolutely rational, quantifiable and replicable under certain controlled conditions. Yet two shows from Portland-based artists at the Maine Jewish Museum — Michel Droge's paintings in "Deep Sea" and the experimental objects of the collective PSBL in "Reflectors, Emitters and Diffusers" (both through Nov. 12) — beautifully illustrate the impossibility of leapfrogging over the inherent mystery at the heart of all creation and reality.

Droge's work, according to their artist statement, "engages with the environment and the human condition in an era of uncertainty. Inspired by the landscape, mapping, and environmental research, their large-scale abstract

paintings unravel existing grids and structures and make way for emerging ones." In many of their paintings, nets are torn asunder as a bright effulgence of color arises from profound depths beyond the canvas and pushes unstoppably through them. Form, except for the nets themselves, has generally been absent amid these fields of abstract color.

In "Deep Sea," Droge literally takes a dive into a new body of work that responds to conversations they have had with Beth Orcutt, a senior research scientist at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay. Orcutt studies "microbial life in deep-sea environments, as well as the effects of deep-sea mining on the ocean's ecosystems."

The sea affects every aspect of human life — generating oxygen, moderating climate, feeding us,

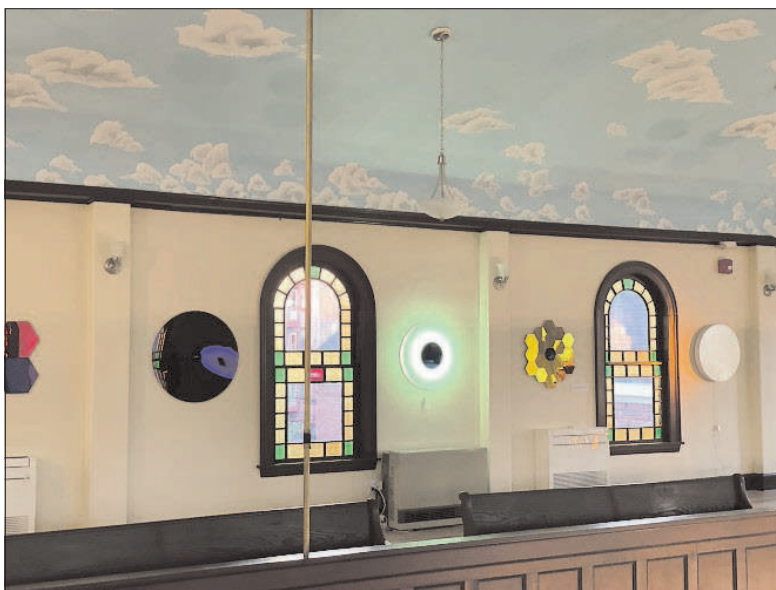


Photo courtesy of Zero Station Gallery

Installation of PSBL's "Reflectors, Emitters and Diffusers" at Maine Jewish Museum.

providing source material for medicines, affecting weather patterns, and so on. But it is also, according to a current debate in scientific circles, possibly the origin of life. The "primordial soup" theory (that we emerged as organisms generated in swamps) is now being challenged by the hypothesis that human life actually arose out of hydrothermal vents deep in the ocean.

Some paintings, such as "Heart of Dynamene" and "Amphitrite's Balm," seem to depict the hydrothermal vents themselves, with their orangey red eruptions and vaporous gray fogs amid cerulean blue grounds. We can feel the heat (temperatures at these vents can reach 700 degrees) coming from the ocean's watery depths. The names of many of

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GUERNSEY

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In a recent plug, the Boston Globe described the book as “strange and smart and upends ideas of what a ghost story is, and expands, with verve and unsettling bizarrity, what it can be.”

All the stories were winners or honorable mentions in the Ghost Story Supernatural Fiction Award contest or the Screw Turn Flash Fiction Competition, which Guernsey administers through his website from his home in Warren. To celebrate Halloween, he will announce the fall Supernatural Fiction Award winners Sunday on his website.

He launched his first contest in 2015, out of demand. Ghost stories, speculative fiction and magic realism have been interests since college, and over time, he became aware of many other writers who enjoyed writing those kinds of stories but struggled to publish them.

“I knew before I started this, there were a lot of people – serious writers, published writers, awarded writers – who liked to write this kind of story but once having written it, there wasn’t much in the way of markets for it. If you know the literary magazines, some will publish a sort of magic realist story from time to time, but that is not what they are generally looking for. That is the exception more than the rule, so there are not a lot of markets for this, especially paying markets,” Guernsey said during an interview at a Brunswick pub.

Guernsey pays \$1,500 to winners of the fiction award, which involves short stories of between 1,500 and 10,000 words, and \$1,000 to flash-fiction winners, with short-short stories of 250-1,000 words. He added the flash fiction contest in 2016 and runs each twice a year – and receives hundreds of submissions from around the world for both. He pays the winners and runners-up with entry fees, which are \$20 for the longer stories and \$15 for the shorter ones.

Ghost stories, and their many manifestations, have a long tradition in English literature and have remained popular because of their ability to transport readers and writers to a place other than everyday reality, Guernsey said. “The thing about them that is most intriguing to serious writers, or to me or most people who contribute to the contest, there can be a deeper level to a ghost story. Someone can read the story and say the ghost or ghostly or supernatural element, whatever that may be, is frightening, but

at the deepest level, the ghost or supernatural element is a metaphor for something else going on in a protagonist’s life – a problem they are having or a struggle with a memory. Another big one is regret. A lot of ghost stories, at the bottom of them is a lot of regret.”

Guernsey became involved with Wyrld Harvest Press through social media. A friend had connected him with a U.K.-based folk horror revival group, and he approached the administrator about publishing poetry with supernatural themes. The administrator, Andy Paciorek, also published books, and invited Guernsey to submit his poems. They ended up in Wyrld Harvest’s anthology of haunting poetry, “Folk Horror Revival: Corpse Roads.” In a volume that included

“poetry of dead” by Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Robert Burns and William Butler Yeats, Guernsey had his own section with more than a dozen poems.

An artist and collaborator, Paciorek began illustrating the stories that Guernsey had selected for his website. Soon enough, Guernsey suggested that Wyrld Harvest publish the ghost stories he had collected through his contest in an anthology of contemporary ghost stories. The first volume came out in 2018, giving Guernsey a sense of accomplishment. “It’s nice to publish these people online and give them money, but for a lot of people, a print publication is still the gold standard,” he said. “There is something magical about having a book that has your story in it, and you can show someone, ‘I am in this book.’”

Massachusetts writer Lesley Bannatyne’s nonfiction books on the history and folklore of Halloween have earned her recognition as an authority on the subject. She also writes fiction, and with her background in Halloween she naturally gravitated toward writing stories with supernatural themes.

Guernsey selected her short story “Corpse Walks Into a Bar” as the winner of a 2020 contest and included it in the anthology. As its title implies, Bannatyne’s



Photo by Elaina Mortali
Lara Tupper wrote “The Mission Bell” with the Eagles in mind.



Courtesy of Lesley Bannatyne
Lesley Bannatyne helped judge the current round of ghost stories.

She helped select the current winners, to be announced on Halloween.

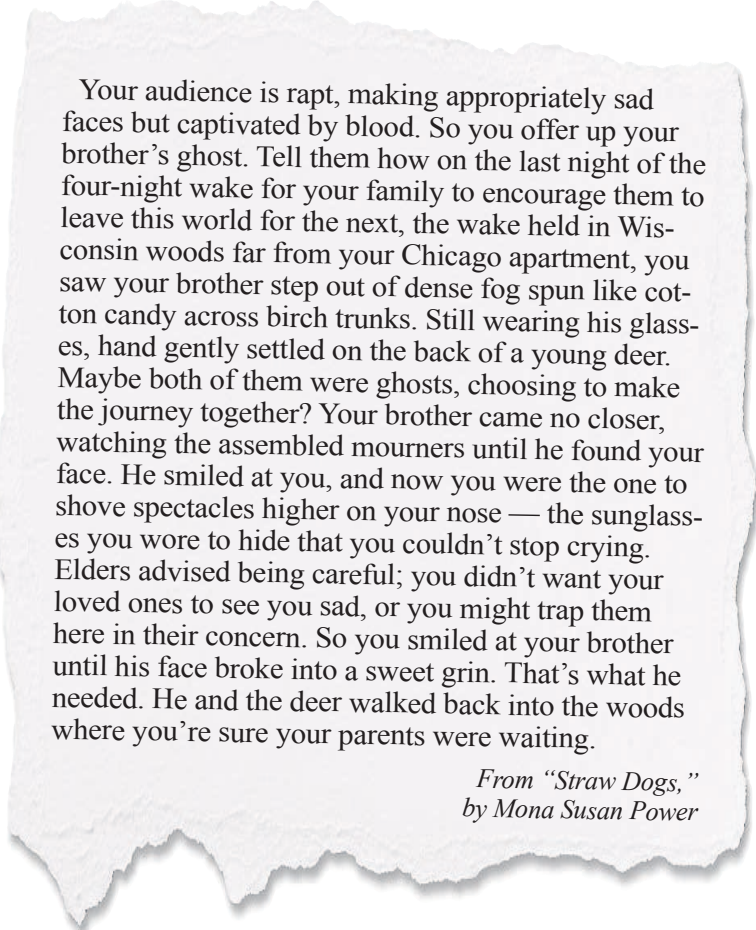
“It was fascinating to do, and something I have always wanted to do,” said Bannatyne, who lives in Somerville. “I submit a lot of stories as a fiction writer – you get them out wherever you can. This was an opportunity to see how writing contests really work.”

Guernsey did the first round of reading and sent Bannatyne the stories he thought were contenders. She read a couple of dozen stories, and struggled to pick a winner. As a judge, she learned that writing contests come down to personal tastes. “The ones that stick with you and sink down inside you and give that wonderful feeling of ‘wow!’ those rose to the top,” she said. “But they were all so good. One is not better than another. Half at least could have won the contest, and they were all good in different ways. It was fascinating to see the breadth of what supernatural fiction is all about.”

Lara Tupper, who lives in the Berkshires of Massachusetts and grew up in Boothbay Harbor, won an honorable mention for her story “The Mission Bell” in a 2019 contest, and it’s also in the anthology. Hers is a subtle supernatural story, all based around the lyrics of the song “Hotel

story is about a corpse that walks into a bar in Dorchester – and asks to be buried. It’s based on an old Irish ballad, and Bannatyne was drawn to both the macabre humor and the idea of a guy carrying around a talking corpse in search of a proper resting place. It’s a funny story, full of local flavor, about the things we carry, and how and when we choose to put them down.

“Corpse Walks Into a Bar” also will be the first in a collection of Bannatyne’s short stories under the title “Unaccustomed to Grace” that Texas-based Kallisto Gaia Press will publish in March 2022. After she won the Ghost Story contest last year, Bannatyne asked Guernsey if he wanted help judging, and he took her up on the offer.



From “Straw Dogs,”
by Mona Susan Power

California” by the rock band the Eagles. She uses the mystery and eerie nature of the song (“Last thing I remember, I was running for the door / I had to find the passage back to the place I was before”) to tell the larger story of Lucy, who is walking on a dark, desert highway with a dead cell phone, a broken-down car behind her, and a flashing motel sign in the distance. It’s a small, surreal story about Lucy’s experience in the hotel.

In addition to being part of the “21st Century Ghost Stories” anthology, “The Mission Bell” was included in Tupper’s collection of short stories, “Amphibians,” published this past March by Leap Frog Press. It is her third book, following “Off Island,” in which she imagines Paul Gauguin painting on Monhegan instead of Tahiti, and “A Thousand and One Nights,” about her life as a cruise ship singer.

It was during that career at sea and as a lounge singer at overseas hotels that she got the idea of using “Hotel California” in her writing.

“‘Hotel California’ was requested wherever I ended up,” she said. “That was a very popular song – that and the song from ‘Titanic,’ ‘My Heart Will Go On’ by Celine Dion. I couldn’t quite hit the high notes that Celine Dion manages so effortlessly, but I could do a decent version of ‘Hotel California.’ I sang that song so many times, the lyrics became ingrained, but I had no idea what

the song was about. None. “When it came time to write, she broke down the song line by line and built her story up around it.

She appreciates Guernsey’s wide-open approach. “It’s a wonderful literary site that Paul maintains, and I love his vision for including these very different kinds of ghost stories in the anthology. He does not have a narrow view of what constitutes a ghost story. Mine is subtle, so I appreciate he has this wide definition of what constitutes the supernatural,” she said.

For his part, Guernsey appreciates where writing has taken him, from Connecticut to South America to Warren, and various places around the globe. Now 66 and no longer teaching, he has more time for his own writing and travels, which is exactly what he aspired to back in his early days and what he has managed to do throughout his career.

This coming winter, he plans explore Argentina to further develop his long-held interest in magic realism, which has roots in Latin America and that he began exploring in his college years – and to fish. “All through South America, there’s a lot of mythology,” Guernsey said, “and what Argentina has that most South American countries do not have is trout fishing.”

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Destined for ubiquity, Timothée Chalamet earns a turn in the spotlight

Called the Leonardo DiCaprio of his generation, the 25-year-old makes a big-screen splash this fall as an interplanetary messiah in ‘Dune’ and a fiery revolutionary in ‘The French Dispatch.’

By SONIA RAO

The Washington Post

Turn your head in any direction and you’ll spot him: a lanky young man with a head of floppy curls, a mischievous smile and a jawline so angular it may well have been crafted using a protractor. A few years ago, you would have been in good company had you forgotten how to say his name or mixed him up with another “Internet Boy-friend.” But now? There’s no mistaking Timothée Chalamet.

Simply put, the 25-year-old actor is everywhere. He is to Hollywood what Bella Hadid is to the modeling industry, a genial talent who has attracted comparisons to predecessors – in Chalamet’s case, Leonardo DiCaprio – but tucked enough notable work under his belt to evade some of the professional pitfalls of “It Boy” status. He currently appears in a pair of hit films, Denis Villeneuve’s “Dune” and Wes Anderson’s “The French Dispatch,” both released this

month, and is in the midst of shooting a Willy Wonka prequel. Whether the world actually needs another version of Wonka is beside the point, because enough important people deemed Chalamet’s take worthy of an audience.

Plenty of actors his age have their days in the sun, often boosted by savviness on social media (which applies to him as well). But few are entrusted with carrying a blockbuster film the same weekend they figure into another star-studded ensemble cast, assembled by an esteemed indie filmmaker.

The comparisons to a young DiCaprio go beyond their shared cheekiness



Timothée Chalamet plays Paul Atreides in Denis Villeneuve’s “Dune.”

Warner Bros. Pictures/
Legendary

and youthful gangliness. Chalamet is also on track to reach DiCaprio’s level of movie stardom, in possession of what “Dune” producer Mary Parent recently described as “that intangible thing that doesn’t come along very often.” Box-office returns on the sci-fi epic support the notion; although it may not be Chalamet’s “Titanic,” “Dune” opened to an encouraging \$40 million stateside, even with a simultaneous streaming release.

Chalamet’s intangible quality has arguably made selective appearances on screen, often apparent when he riffs off his established persona. “Lady Bird” director Greta Gerwig recognized as much, exaggerating him into the too-cool guy onto whom Lady Bird projects her heart’s desires. It wasn’t too far a stretch for Kyle to be played by an immensely popular celebrity whose fans used to beg him to run them over with a truck.

Anderson similarly pokes fun at a game Chalamet in “The French Dispatch,” casting him as a fiery young revolutionary. Even if the actor falters at times with the precise, witty tone mastered by Anderson’s most trusted players, it

works in his favor – the character, too, is a bit unsure of his abilities. Chalamet leans into that naivete and Zeffirelli comes off a certified charmer, bashful about his “new muscles.” Perhaps Chalamet was destined for ubiquity. He has always exhibited the zeal of a theater kid, likely a product of his time at LaGuardia, the famous New York performing arts high school. When he isn’t playing an alt-universe version of himself, his stronger performances still tap into that earnestness.

Such is true of the precocious, lovestruck teenager he portrays in “Call Me By Your Name,” which made him, then 22, the third-youngest person to earn an Oscar nomination for best actor. Though he carries the conviction differently, the same goes for Paul Atreides in “Dune”; the mysterious messiah is forced to shed his reluctance toward taking on a lead role in the war over a treacherous desert planet.

Some critics found Chalamet’s performance effective; Justin Chang of the Los Angeles Times wrote that the actor is “always good at suggesting both youthful callowness and limitless potential,” making

him an ideal person to play Paul, “both a coddled heir and an intriguingly unknown quantity.” (The assessment would also explain why he was cast as a Shakespearean hero in “The King.”) But others, such as the New Yorker’s Richard Brody, took issue with how “Dune” handled the Chalamet of it all.

“Chalamet, whose theatrical specificity is both an art and a liability, is onscreen for much of the film and yet reduced to a mask of his own appearance,” Brody wrote. “Stuck with a script that denies his character variety and complexity, he delivers a performance that never gets to take shape. What he can do with the role in a second installment may be the biggest cliff-hanger of all.”

We’ll get to find out eventually. The sequel to “Dune” was greenlit last week – as Chalamet shared Tuesday on Instagram with three blushing emoji – and is set to hit theaters two years from now, just months after audiences will be treated (or subjected) to a Wonka-fied version of him.

It would appear another Chalamet season is already underway.

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