

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



The Treefrog Tattler

from Leapfrog Press

January 2011

In This Issue

[Reading and Reality by
Lev Raphael](#)

[Leapfrog News](#)

[Recent Reviews](#)

[Upcoming Titles](#)

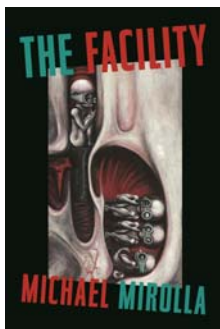
[Fiction Contest](#)



author interview:

Michael Mirolla

Cloning Mussolini: The
Identity of Memory



Michael Mirolla, winner of the 2010 Bressani Literary Prize in Fiction, discusses his latest novel with Leapfrog's Sarah Murphy.

[Writers on Writing](#)

Welcome to *The Treefrog Tattler*, the semi-monthly newsletter of Leapfrog Press. Here you will find information for writers, Leapfrog news, author interviews, and more. To submit an article, writing tip, or news for inclusion in the *Tattler*, email leapfrog@leapfrogpress.com.

Leapfrog Press - www.leapfrogpress.com



Readings and Reality by Lev Raphael

I've been doing readings from my fiction for almost twenty years and whether I'm at a bookstore, library, museum, university, book fair, conference or synagogue, one of the most commonly asked questions afterwards is, "How much of your work is autobiographical?"

In the beginning I was puzzled, but my psychologist partner explained it this way: "They want to know you better. They want to feel closer because you've touched them with what you read."

Maybe that was true in some cases. I suspected, however, that the question was almost a kind of test, as if the quality of my work was being measured by how much truth was in it. Did this betray some kind of suspicion about fiction itself? Was a novel better if less of it was "made up"?

The question was also sometimes offered with an addendum: "Writer X says none of his/her writing is autobiographical." The more I heard that, the more implausible it sounded.

Here's why. Everything I write is autobiographical *because I wrote it*. My autobiography includes everything that happened to me whether I remember it consciously or not; every dream or fantasy I've ever had; everything I've read or observed in the world; and finally everything that's been told to me by others whether it happened after I was born or before.

It's all material. It's all mine.

Of course, now that you've read this essay, *it's yours*, too.

The Darwinian Truth of Good Writing

Michael S. A. Graziano

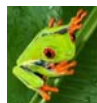
When Aaron Copeland tutored Leonard Bernstein in music composition, he said, in essence, look over what you have written and find the parts that are original, that are *you*. Throw out the rest, even if it is 90% of the composition.

This wise advice could apply to fiction just as well as to music. Write a lot. Publish a little. It sounds like a lot of work down the drain, but it is an excellent prescription. Writing approaches Darwinian natural selection. When twenty or thirty varied halves of stories or quarters of novels, fifty or so first sentences and last paragraphs, fight it out in the privacy of your own home, and the fittest story survives to adulthood, stripped of anything that might slow it down, then it is time to try to publish the survivor.

Trust me, if the stories in your growing brood don't compete ruthlessly in a life-or-death struggle while they are still with you, they will encounter the same competition in the market place and be instantly killed.



Lev Raphael is the author of [The German Money](#), [Secret Anniversaries of the Heart](#) and 17 other books in genres from memoir to mystery. He blogs on books for *The Huffington Post* and writes a review column for the online magazine *Bibliobuffet.com*. [Listen](#) to Lev's latest essay on NPR.



Leapfrog News

Michael Mirolla ([The Facility](#), December 2010) has recently been awarded the [F.G. Bressani Literary Prize](#) in fiction for his novel [Berlin](#) (Leapfrog Press, 2008).

[La bell'America](#), a memoir of immigration by Anthony M. Graziano (Leapfrog Press, 2009), has been chosen to be archived at the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center.

Helen Phillips ([And Yet They Were Happy](#), Leapfrog Press, May 2011) was one of six woman writers in the US to receive the [Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award](#) "in recognition of the special contributions women writers make to our culture and society."

[Listen to a podcast](#) of Li Miao Lovett discuss her book [In the Lap of the Gods](#) (November 2010), and what the recent completion of the Three Gorges Dam means for China, on "New America Now."

Listen to Michael Graziano, author of [God Soul Mind Brain](#) (September 2010), discuss ["Does the Soul Still Matter?"](#) on "To the Best of Our Knowledge."

Listen to Vickie Weaver, author of [Billie Girl](#) (September 2010), discuss her writing on ["Accents."](#)



Recent Reviews

GOD SOUL MIND BRAIN Michael S. A. Graziano (LeapSci, Sept 2010)

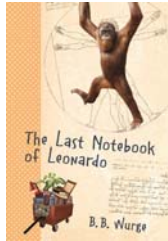
"A brave neuroscientist rushes in where angels fear to tread. A challenging yet accessible, charming and thoroughly enjoyable book." --Robert Sapolsky, author of *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*

"A fine take, very highly recommended for any psychology collection." --*Midwest Book Review*

Read the opening chapter [here](#).

[Read](#) the author's summary of some of the ideas in the book, in an article published by the Templeton Foundation.

[Click to read full reviews](#)



[Click to read full reviews](#)

THE LAST NOTEBOOK OF LEONARDO B. B. Wurge (LeapKids, Oct 2010)

"A fun, light read. . . . Wurge gently instructs young readers not to jump to conclusions based on appearance -- the smartest person you might ever meet could turn out to be an oversized, hairy, orange primate." -- *New York Review of Books*

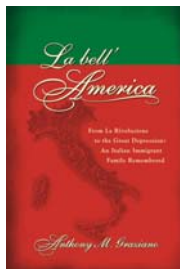
"A funny, unique, wacky story. . . . would be fun to pair with a nonfiction book about da Vinci, or the story could be used as a jumping-off point for a creative writing assignment. This is a delightful book that readers will be unable to put down." -- *School Library Journal*

Read the opening chapter [here](#).

LA BELL'AMERICA Anthony M. Graziano (LeapSci, Dec 2009)

"A delightful, passionate and memorable rendition of a familiar and glorious tale." --Governor Mario M. Cuomo

Read the opening chapter [here](#).



[Click to read full reviews](#)

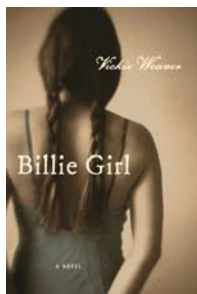
BILLIE GIRL Vickie Weaver (LeapLit, Sep 2010)

"Honestly strange and strangely honest. . . . A stellar achievement--gritty, funny, fresh, and bold. It will make your eyes bug out and your pulse race. And how it *shines*, shines with humanity!" --Sena Jeter Naslund, author of *Ahab's Wife*

"Dark humor, quirky characters, ambitious themes." -- *Library Journal*

"[A] thought provoking and dark novel with its own unique sense of humor, highly recommended." -- *Midwest Book Review*

"A novel in the Southern Gothic style, with death and humor commingling in odd ways." -- *Kirkus Reviews*



[Click to read full reviews](#)

"Southern Gothic to the core, suffused with a humor as dark as the bottom of a Georgia well. . . . Weaver has stepped forward for the benefit of anyone who reads American fiction." --Kirby Gann, author of *Our Napoleon in Rags*

"Savagely funny, wildly ambitious. . . . A bawdy, brutal, and beautiful meditation on identity, sex, and mercy. Weaver has a fiercely distinctive vision." --K.L. Cook, author of *Last Call* and *The Girl from Charnelle*

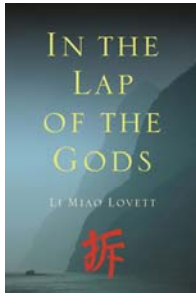
Read the opening chapter [here](#).

IN THE LAP OF THE GODS Li Miao Lovett (LeapLit, Nov 2010)

"An important, even invaluable book, a moving farewell to the old, more humane way of life as China and all the world become technologized and globalized." --Maxine Hong Kingston

"The effects of modernization and the battle between man and nature are the heavy themes Lovett tackles in this powerful first novel set in modern-day China. . . . A moving, compelling read." -- *Booklist* starred review

"Coincidentally with the publication of this very cinematic first novel, the



[Click to read full reviews](#)

Three Gorges Dam in China's Hubei Province reached full capacity. The human and political consequences of this uprooting in the name of progress are at the heart of this novel. . . ." --*Asian Review of Books*

"Lovett's complex tale of displacement and hardship, contrasting modern China with its past, highlights the human spirit's capacity for renewal." --*Publishers Weekly*

"The details of Chinese life shine through. . . . An affecting story of massive change, told in small moments." -- *The Barnes & Noble Review*

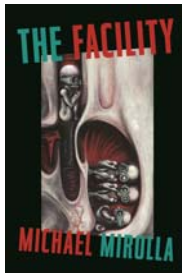
Read the opening chapter [here](#).

THE FACILITY Michael Mirolla (LeapLit, Dec 2010)

"[A]n awesome though strange head trip of a book. . . a fascinating, thought-provoking novel. If you like quirky, mind bending books, this one is for you!" --*Geekscribe*

"Mixes theology, cloning, and Beckettlike absurdist alienation. Mirolla's fractured narrative. . . parallels the division between mind and body, between technology and nature, and between what we can do and what we should do." --*Publishers Weekly*

Read the opening chapter [here](#).



[Click to read full reviews](#)



Upcoming Titles

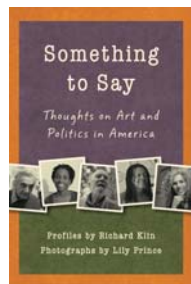
SOMETHING TO SAY
Thoughts on Art and Politics in America
profiles by Richard Klin · photographs by Lily Prince
(LeapSci, April 2011)

The fusion of art and politics in America: Fifteen creative forces discuss art in the service of social justice.

Profiles:

The late Howard Zinn · Pete Seeger · Yoko Ono · Quincy Troupe · John Yau. . . [read more](#)

Read the Howard Zinn profile in *The Bloomsbury Review*, Spring 2010
Read the Quincy Troupe profile in *Rain Taxi*, Spring 2011 (forthcoming).



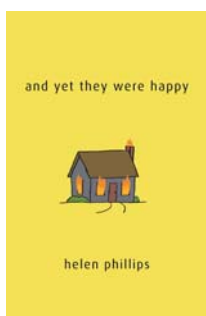
AND YET THEY WERE HAPPY
Helen Phillips (LeapLit, May 2011)

A young couple comes of age in a surreal world of apocalypse, delight, longing, and magic.

"Brilliant miniatures. . . . [Helen Phillips'] quietly elegant sentences are as clear as spring water, haunting as our own childhood memories." --Michael Dirda

[Read more](#)

-



2011 Fiction Contest

The 2011 Leapfrog Fiction Contest opened for entries on January 15 and closes on May 1. This is an exciting time of year for Leapfrog; yes, we do enjoy reading hundreds of manuscripts from all over the world, and each year we are impressed with the high quality of entries.

Author Marge Piercy will join us again as finalist judge, along with Leapfrog's editors. The contest is for adult book-length fiction (novels, novellas, short-story collections), minimum length 22,000 words. Details are at leapfrogpress.com/contest.

The 2010 contest brought in just over 600 manuscripts from 22 countries, with the US, UK, Australia, and Canada topping the list. We are looking forward to the same diversity this year.



Cloning Mussolini: An Interview with Michael Mirolla

by Sarah Murphy

Canadian author Michael Mirolla explores a world of Mussolini clones in his latest book, *The Facility*, published in December 2010.

He started writing the book in 1998, inspired by the idea of what might transpire if a famous person of well-known deeds were cloned. "I wanted the ideas to play out through a story that turned them into human relationships, getting or not getting along with others and the attitude to life that such characters would develop," he said.

For Michael, speculative fiction offers a certain freedom, and the opportunity to philosophize in a way that isn't possible in realist fiction. "It is the last refuge of the novel of ideas. I want the reader, after reading *The Facility*, to take away this cauldron of ideas, that is hopefully bubbling nicely, and then figure out ways to adapt them to his or her life.

"I also hope the book will provide readers with a hope for the future and a belief that one way or another, the Earth and the human race can rejuvenate one another, no matter how drastic the measures needed for this to happen."

He added that he wants readers to develop a love-hate relationship with the main character, and see themselves in him.

Michael's literary influences include Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Samuel Beckett, in addition to the Eastern European writers he was introduced to in the 1960s while studying at the University of British Columbia.

"I'm basically an existentialist," he said. "My favorite image of all time is that of Vladimir and Estragon beneath the tiny, bent-over tree on which they try to hang themselves!"

Michael has received many accolades for his work, most recently the F.G. Bressani Literary Prize in fiction, which was recently bestowed to his 2008 novel *Berlin*, also published by Leapfrog. The award recognizes the best novel or collection of short stories written by an Italian-Canadian over the previous two years.

For Michael, writing is more than a passion; it's something that has defined him since childhood. "I cannot imagine existing without writing. It is me. There is no me without it."

The Facility, he says, is his way of examining what it is to be human, and how one defines identity in a world where cloning allows the physical body to potentially live forever.

Michael is also co-owner of the Canadian press [Guernica Editions](#).

We welcome news from our authors and contest winners. Please let us know of your upcoming book events, new reviews, publication news, and anything else writing related.

Leapfrog Press
www.leapfrogpress.com

[Forward email](#)



This email was sent to leapfrog@leapfrogpress.com by leapfrog@leapfrogpress.com | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Leapfrog Press | PO Box 2110 | Teaticket | MA | 02536