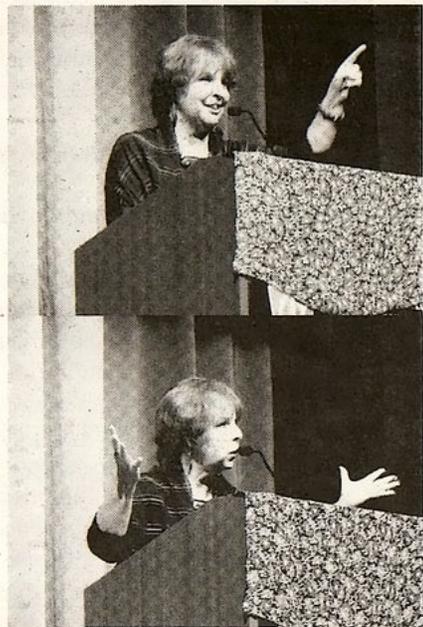


Benitez Speaks in Heginbotham "Possibilities" Lecture Series

By Lauren Berlin-Burns



Sandra Benitez tells stories during her "Possibilities" lecture. Photo by Tim Sailer

On Tuesday, Oct. 28, Concordia was honored by the presence of author Sandra Benitez, best known for her novel *The Weight of all Things*, read by many Concordia students this semester, as well as *Bitter Grounds*, *Night of the Radishes*, *A Place Where the Sea Remembers* and her memoir, *Bag Lady*.

Benitez's visit was part of the "Heginbotham Possibilities Lecture Series" and her words focused on just that: the many possibilities that await us as writers.

The lecture revolved around a simple request: Tell me a story. According to Benitez, that phrase is "...one of the most beguiling sentences."

For Benitez, story-telling is an intricate part of her bi-cultural life, though she has not always been aware of it.

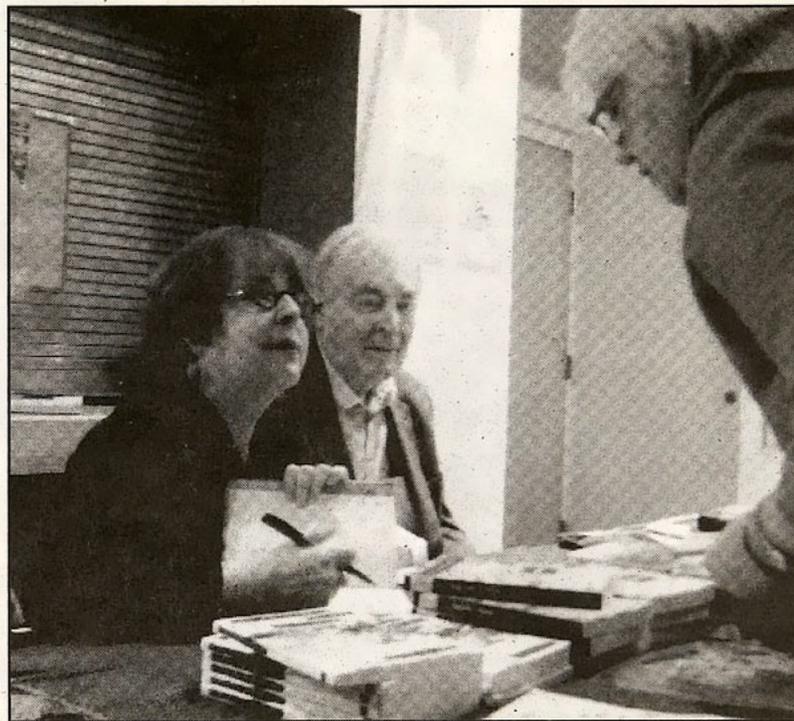
In El Salvador, where Benitez spent the first part of her life, she would hand write letters for the workers of her parents' house. She heard many stories, and later noted how much they affected her—how everyone we meet affects us. Their stories intermingle with ours. For Benitez, even her twin sister, who died shortly after birth, played a deep impact on her.

Benitez later moved to Missouri, and her experience there would play a role in her future novels. Initially, she did not want to leave El Salvador. Missouri was "not even close to the edges [ocean] so that she might escape."

But the new home also held opportunities. She had many "possibilities," such as being the first female altar boy in Missouri, a funny anecdote that she shared with the audience.

For Benitez, the worlds of fiction and real life easily overlap. She told listeners, "We are people living inside our own story." Benitez encouraged writers to search within themselves, finding the stories that have already been "left on our hearts."

Benitez's experiences can also serve as guidance for young writers. She shared with the her attempts to publish her first book. After being invited to the Bread Loaf Writer Conference to have her book reviewed, she believed success was within view. However, her sense of accomplishment was crushed as a published author reviewed her book. She told the audience "...his comment



Sandra Benitez signs one of her novels and talks with a reader. Photo by Tim Sailer

began, 'Well I have to tell you that I read your book.' Then he used a word that starts with 's' and is flushable."

Despite her first novel was "hidden under the bed," Benitez continued to write. It took her thirteen years to be published. She is now a very successful author.

However, Benitez instructed her audience to tell themselves, "Even though it takes me a long time, even though there will be hardships – mountains to climb. I can do this." Benitez also encouraged the writers in the audience: "Don't ever fear the re-writing process,

that is where you will get your material."

Benitez's wisdom was not only for writers. With an amazing and engaging energy, she told the audience that "I see 'possibilities' as things that are possible, likely, probable, that will probably happen." The author encouraged listeners to see possibilities in all things, whether good or bad. In Benitez's own words, we must have "the courage to be – to be who we are. We need to look at all our possibilities, our opportunities."

Spring Courses You Should Know About (perhaps even register to take)

by Rachel Kuhnle

As spring registration nears, professors are in the detail stages of organizing new classes to be offered in the new semester of the New Year! Some are upper level classes, others will satisfy general education requirements and still others will make fun electives.

A **Tai Chi** class will be offered through the Theatre Department for the first time. Combining meditation and physicality through focus, breath control, and smooth, controlled movement, Tai Chi is a Chinese practice intended to increase the *chi*, or life energy, of an individual. Open to all students, the one-credit class will meet Tuesdays from 8-8:50 a.m.

Pilates will be offered for the first half of next semester on Tuesday and Thursdays from 6 – 6:50 p.m. The class is one credit. Contact Sarah Halder with any questions: halders@csp.edu

The Music Department will offer a new general education class to satisfy the fine arts requirement. **Global & Popular Music: Listening to Life**, for 2 credits, will meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-1:50 p.m. It will focus on important and popular folk, art, and contemporary music from around the world and how it conveys human emotions, thoughts, and ideals. The instructor is Tim O'Brien, a musicology student and adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota.

The Theology Department will offer a two-credit **The Gospel According to Mark** class. Lead by Dr. Mark Schuler, the class will take "...an in-depth look at the gospel, its theology, and its focus on the passion of Jesus. Classes will meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 2-2:50 p.m.

The History Department will now offer an **International Studies Minor**. For 20-24 credits, the minor puts an emphasis on studying abroad and working close with HECUA—a Saint Paul organization of 20 liberal arts colleges, universities, and associations that promotes local and global study. For more info, contact History Dept. Chair Dr. David Woodard at woodard@csp.edu.

The Theatre Department will also offer a **Women in Theatre** course, instructed by Kay Robinson, meeting Fridays from 12-1:50 p.m., **One Person Show** course with Mark Rosenwinkel Tuesdays from 10-10:50 a.m., and **Scenic Arts**, a scenic painting course with Dr. James Seemann will meet Mondays from 12-12:50 p.m.