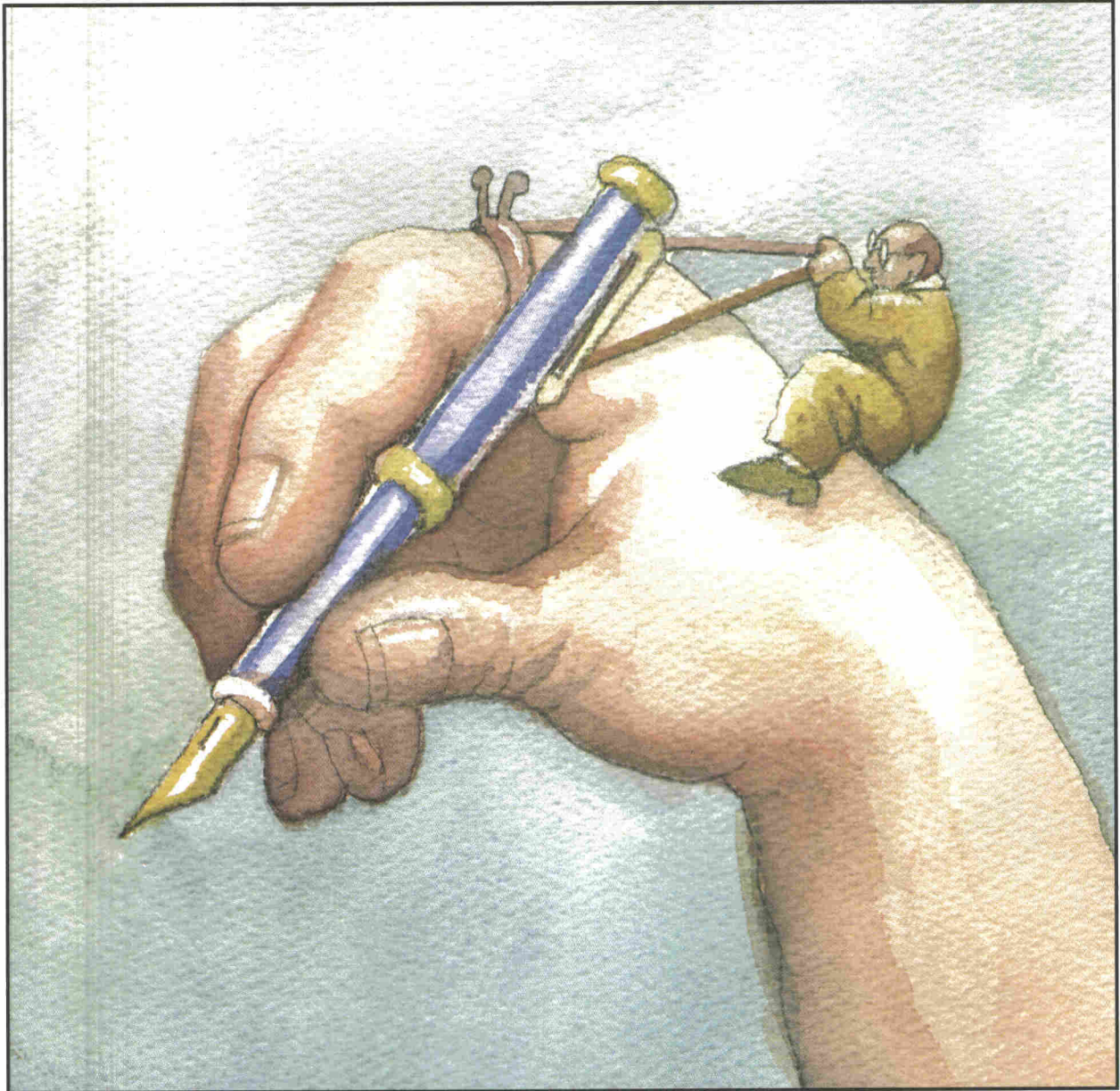


AUTHORS GUILD

Spring 2005

BULLETIN



Foundation Symposium:
The Rewards and Pitfalls of Collaboration
Fear Peer-to-Peer? The Debate over Grokster
Making FOIA Work
Elizabeth Janeway Remembered

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In your Winter '05 issue, under the heading OUCH, you reprint various comments, some erroneous, some just unenlightened, concerning the 2004 National Book Award for fiction. I think your readers are entitled to know the following:

It isn't true that four of the finalists (i.e. all except Kate Walbert) had sold under 900 copies before the announcement of the finalists was made. Lily Tuck's *The News from Paraguay*, which eventually won the award, had reached new sales (i.e. sales after returns) of 3,800 before the list of finalists was reported. That is not a very high sale, but it is over 400 percent more than what The New York Times reported (and which then got parroted elsewhere).

It isn't true that only books by mainstream authors (whatever that means—was Faulkner really a mainstream author?) sell when singled out for an NBA. When *The News from Paraguay* won the award, its pub-

The Guild encourages members to write to the Bulletin. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Authors Guild, 31 East 28th Street, New York, NY 10016. They can also be faxed to (212) 564-5363, or sent via e-mail to staff@authorsguild.org (type "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line). Letters may be edited for length, grammar and clarity.

lisher, HarperCollins, reported 14,000 additional hard-cover sales. The book has since appeared as a trade paperback, and has reached 87,500 copies after four printings (of 15,000; 65,000; 5,000; and 2,500). The paperback edition is, as of this writing, #8 on the Boston Globe bestseller list. The NBA has added more than 100,000 sales to the pre-announcement figure, a very healthy figure, which surely is helping the book business. In addition, as a result of the award, a good number of foreign editions are now under contract.

—Georges Borchardt
New York, NY

Georges Borchardt is Lily Tuck's literary agent.

Continued on page 44

ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

The endless extension of a book contract is disappearing. According to **Jonathan Mahler** in The New York Times Book Review, "Literary agents tend to blame the bottom line-obsessed conglomerates that have been gobbling up once empathetic independent publishing houses. But while it may be endangered, the albatross book is by no means extinct."

Mahler names **Fran Lebowitz** as "America's most legendarily blocked writer." Her last work (except for a children's book) was published in 1981. Then a book by Lebowitz entitled *Progress* was listed in Knopf's fall 2003 catalog, but it failed to appear. Last October's issue of *Vanity Fair* featured an excerpt which suggests that a book may be on the way.

In the early 1980s **Victor Navasky** began a short book on the role of opinion journals. He was editor of *The Nation*, and he expected he'd need only a year for his "meditation." Finally, last fall, Navasky delivered a 550-page manuscript, *A Matter of Opinion*, which is a memoir of his career in the world of opinion journalism. It will be published this spring. The book followed its acquiring editor, **Elisabeth Sifton**, from Viking to Knopf to Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

ADVICE: **Vladimir Nabokov** told his students: "You have to saturate yourself with English poetry in order to compose English prose . . . You must study the poets."

HERO: **Kate Atkinson's** new novel is *Case Histories*. Her first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, won the Whitbread Award.

Atkinson told Publishers Weekly, "I thought it was time to try to write a man who wasn't a wimp or dead. I wanted to write a good man but with a darkness at his core, a world-weary kind of hero. I think it's difficult for writers to get into the psyche of the opposite gender."

This new hero is named Jackson Brodie, and Atkinson was asked if there will be more of him in future books. She said, "I'm just finishing a book called *Good Luck*. After that there's a novel called *17 Billion Monkeys*, and after that *Jackson in Paris*, which I think is a fairly self-explanatory title. Even after that I have a lot more plans for Jackson. A good man is hard to find."

Continued on page 30