

AUTHORS GUILD

Winter 2006 **BULLETIN**



BATTLE IN THE STACKS: Does Google Need a License?

Symposium: Debate at the New York Public Library

The Guild's Congressional Testimony on Fair Use and Google

Poet Laureate Daniel Hoffman on the Rights of Authors

Jung's Meddlesome Heirs

The Authors Guild Interview: Sarah Vowell

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I strongly support Nick Taylor's position on the Google swindle. Back in my dissolute youth, when I was writing a lot for magazines, I realized that my work was acting as bait to attract readers to advertisements for goods I often deplored. I made a choice, aware of the implications.

There is, however, absolutely no reason why I should allow my work similarly to be used by Google, once again as bait to attract people to their advertisements, not only without payment, but without my permission or, possibly, even knowledge.

One of the points of copyright is to give the creator of the work control of it. Google is denying me that right.

James Lincoln Collier
New York, NY

In his interview with Isabel Howe in the Fall 2005 Bulletin, Oscar Hijuelos misrepresents our contract with him for his first novel, *Our House in the Last*

The Guild encourages members to write to the Bulletin. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Authors Guild, 116 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011. 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.

World, mentioning a low advance and "disadvantageous royalties." He insinuates that we took advantage of his inexperience, and the fact that he was not represented by a literary agent. This is simply untrue. I would like to present the facts to your readers so that they can judge for themselves.

In 1980 Oscar wasn't a Pulitzer Prize-winning author of many novels. He "turned up at our door"—as he says in his own Afterword to the 2002 edition of *Our House in the Last World*—"with several thousand pages of fragments and chapters stuffed into several shopping bags." We read all those pages, and we gave him a contract. The terms were as follows: a \$4,000 advance against standard hardcover royalties escalating at standard intervals from 10% to 12.5% to 15% and paperback royalties that begin at 6% and escalate to 7.5%.

We then spent many months working with Oscar,

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

The headline in The Wall Street Journal told the story: "Authors Take Aliases To Cover Up Flops: With Stores Tracking Sales, One Bad Book Is Poison."

Reed Farrel Coleman had published six mystery novels, but his sales were declining. As sales drop, the chain bookstores reduce their orders until they don't carry a writer's books at all. Coleman's agent suggested that he try a pseudonym, and when *Hose Monkey* is published next October his name will be Tony Spinosa.

Agent Richard Pine told The Wall Street Journal, "You're only as good as your last book's sales to much of the retail market."

Dean James runs a Houston bookstore and has published seven novels and six nonfiction books. His next, *Flamingo Fatale*, is about a woman who lives in a trailer park. James's pseudonym will be Jimmie Ruth Evans. The author said, "I knew I'd have a better chance under a different name because I know how the book business works."

William P. Kennedy wrote military thrillers, but they weren't selling well. He changed his name to

Diana Diamond. His third Diamond novel, *The Good Sister*, became a bestseller. Terrill Lee Lankford's agency wanted him to use a pseudonym for *Blonde Lightning* because an earlier book, *Earthquake Weather*, was not a big seller. Lankford refused. He said, "Just to defeat the computers at Barnes & Noble and Borders isn't a good reason for doing this."

Barry Martin, co-owner of a bookstore in South Pasadena, Calif., agreed that this new practice is deceitful and said, "Publishers will do anything to sell a book."

OPINIONS: E. L. Doctorow's new novel, *The March*, is about Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's scorching march through the South.

The author said that he intended this book to bear the relationship to reality that a Van Gogh painting might have to a real landscape. "Among other things, a novel is a system of opinions," he told The New York Times.

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