

AUTHORS GUILD

Fall 2007 **BULLETIN**



FINAL EDITION? A Newspaper Book Reviewer's Lament
The Half-Century Club: Eleven Longtime Guild Members
Remembering Madeleine L'Engle
Roy Blount: Why You've Never Seen Me on "Oprah"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Geeslin: Since you promise that you “can pronounce Mary, Ruth and Fern,” I feel sure that you can learn to spell R-A-venel, not only “an editor at Algonquin” but one of its co-founders. I’d be tickled to know how many of the letters you get correcting your *e* for *a* come from Charleston, S.C., where Ms. Ravenel grew up, and where the name Ravenel is downright revered.

Ms. Ravenel is not the first literary lion in her line. For historians, the Low Country’s early history is invaluable described in *Charleston, the*

The Guild encourages members to write to the Bulletin. Letters should be sent to “Letters to the Editor,” The Authors Guild, 31 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, 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.

Place and the People (1906), by Harriott Horry Ravenel. And don’t ever spell that Harriott “Harriet” or your mailbox will fill up again.

My sympathies,
Martha Bennett Stiles
Lexington, KY

Geeslin answers: “Sorry I messed up. I once got a letter addressed to Kamal G. Slin, and I ought to be more sensitive.”

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

The late **Bernard Malamud** wrote several novels, including *The Fixer* and *The Natural*. In an introductory essay to *The Stories of Bernard Malamud*, the author wrote, “Much occurs in the writing that isn’t expected, including some types you meet and become attached to. Before you know it you’ve collected two or three strangers swearing eternal love and friendship before they begin to make demands that divide and multiply. **Garcia Marquez** will start a fiction with someone pushing a dream around, or running from one, and before you know it he had peopled a small country. Working alone to create stories, despite serious inconveniences, is not a bad way to live our human loneliness.

“And let me say this: Literature, since it values man by describing him, tends toward morality in the same way that **Robert Frost**’s poem is ‘a momentary stay against confusion.’ Art celebrates life and gives us our measure.”

FEAR THERAPY: An interviewer for *The Paris Review* once asked the late **William Styron** if his emotional state had any impact on his work. The author wrote about his fight against depression in *Darkness Visible*.

Styron replied, “I guess like everybody, I’m emotionally fouled up most of the time, but I find I do better when I’m relatively placid. It’s hard to say though. If writers had to wait until their precious psyches were completely serene there wouldn’t be much writing

done. Actually—though I don’t take advantage of the fact as much as I should—I find that I’m simply the happiest, the placidest, *when* I’m writing, and so I suppose that, for me, is the final answer. When I’m writing I find it’s the only time that I feel completely self-possessed, even when the writing itself is not going too well. It’s fine therapy for people who are perpetually scared of nameless threats as I am most of the time—for jittery people.”

HOW HE DID IT: **Sylvia Raphael**, a British academic, translated a collection, *Selected Short Stories*, by **Honore de Balzac**. In her introduction, Raphael pointed out how the famous French writer used his own experience in his fiction.

In a story entitled “Facino Cane,” Balzac’s narrator says, “I had already acquired a power of intuitive observation which penetrated to the soul without ignoring the body, or rather it grasped external details so well that it immediately went beyond them. This power of observation enabled me to live the life of the individual I was watching, allowing me to substitute myself for him. . . .”

SANITY: **Elizabeth Crook** of Austin, Tex., is the author of a novel, *The Night Journal*. She took part in a panel discussion about the disturbed writer and said, “I think there’s a misconception that writers need to be

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