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In Print, Online, In Decline?
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I thought Steve Wasserman’s piece on the decline of book reviewing was stimulating [Fall 2007 Bulletin], and I guess that is the reason I decided to renew my AG membership.

I do have something of a quibble with Wasserman, though. Hell yes, there is a decline in literacy, but was there a golden time in U.S. history where everyone read books, even the working classes? At least during the late 19th and early 20th century there were a few labor colleges and labor temples, where the workers actually read and discussed books and social issues. Now, the non-reading public, including the working class and underclass, get their cultural information from TV. I, myself, help teach, now and then, a course to labor apprentices, “Labor, Our Heritage.” We show a lot of films, as that is what the laborers are used to in this visual culture. But, between the two of us who team-teach this class, we lay out a hell of a good library on the tables during the week for the laborers to borrow, and few of them borrow any books.

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

“Now and again thousands of memories converge, harmonize, arrange themselves around a central idea in a coherent form, and I write a story.”

That is a quotation from a volume entitled The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter, published in 1970. She wrote, “I keep notes and journals only because I write a great deal, and the habit of writing helps me to arrange, annotate, stow away conveniently the references I may need later. Yet when I begin a story, I can never work in any of those promising paragraphs, those apt phrases, those small turns of anecdote I had believed would be so valuable. I must know a story ‘by heart’ and I must write from memory.”

IF AT FIRST: Despite a couple of well-publicized starts, electronic books have not yet taken off with book buyers. Now there are two new devices designed to replace the paper book.

In October, Amazon.com introduced the Kindle, an electronic book reader that wirelessly connects to an e-book store on Amazon’s site. Older e-book devices had to be connected to a computer to download books.

In the fall, Google began charging users for full online access to digital copies of some books in its database. Publishers set the prices for their books and share the revenue with Google.

The New York Times said, “neither offering is expected to carve out immediately a significant piece of the $35-billion-a-year book business. But these new services, from two Internet heavyweights, may help to answer the question of whether consumers are ready to read books on digital screens instead of on processed wood pulp.”

NEW CLASSICS: Adam Gopnik wrote about new versions of Moby-Dick and Vanity Fair in a New Yorker article entitled “The Corrections.” These books have been edited with major cuts by a British publisher so that they are fast, easy reading.

Gopnik read these new versions and concluded: “What makes writing matter is not a story, clearly told, but a voice, however odd or ordinary, and a point of view, however strange or sentimental. Books can be snipped at, and made less melodically muddled, but they lose their overtones, their bass notes, their chesty resonance—the same thing that happens, come to think of it, to human castrati.”

RESEARCH? The plot of his novel got one author into big trouble. Amok by Krystian Bala, published in Poland in 2003, described a victim whose corpse showed torture and signs of starvation. There was a noose around his neck.

The similarities to the body of a businessman fished from the Oder River in 2000 were so remarkable that Bala, 35, was found guilty of planning and directing the killing. He suspected that the victim was hav-

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About the Cover
Kevin Sanchez Walsh is a freelance artist in New York City.
From the President

By ROY BLOUNT JR.

As your president, it is incumbent upon me to keep abreast of the latest word-delivery systems. To that end the Guild has kindly provided me with a Kindle, the new wireless book-downloading device from Amazon. Here is how the Kindle makes me feel: Old.

I’ll tell you what made me feel good, the other day: a beautiful little writing instrument someone handed me in the offices of my publisher. Sleek and keen this instrument was, and self-correcting. With one end of it, I could inscribe tiny little notes on a copyedited manuscript, and when I was not satisfied with my note, a simple operation enabled me to reverse this instrument 180 degrees and use its other end to whisk the note away. Then, step three, the instrument was reversible, allowing me to inscribe, hopefully (this is an unimpeachable use of the word hopefully), a better note. It had been years since I had used, to its full potential, a good number-three pencil.

I am not a Luddite. Yes, I murdered a recalcitrant computer-linked printer once, whang, a single hammer-blow of the fist, and that action did my heart good. But then I had to go out and get another, more expensive printer. So technology won. As it will, if you fight it. I am no more interested, generally, in smashing machines than I am in stomping on snakes. The only thing that upsets me more than the inevitability of some new electronic device is the likelihood that with one false move I will break it. Or send it off into some bizarre realm of hyper-functionality that no one but the twelve-year-old visionaries who designed the device can orient themselves in.

What I am is a late, slow, wary adopter, or adapter. When confronted with a new development in the word-processing field I never feel that I am breasting a tape—coming out ahead—but that I am breasting another wave of innovation: beating on against the current, borne back ceaselessly . . .

Can you imagine Scott Fitzgerald—drunken, neurotic, life-stricken yet warpedly heroic—composing on a gizmo more complex than his complexes? Well, he probably could have screwed up a pencil.

I love the box my Kindle came in. The box is about the size of two copies, side by side, of Chambers Dictionary of Etymology. It is white with lots of letters and symbols—square-root signs, hieroglyphs, single brackets, free-range apostrophes—sprinkled upon it as if tossed by hand. When I disengaged an elastic loop from a neat little metal button, the box opened up into two compartments.

One of the compartments held the two cables required to power up the device and to link it to a computer. So now I have five wires, including the two that connect my laptop to different power sockets and the one that charges my cell phone, tangled up in my briefcase. That compartment also held an instruction book, which of course is no more comprehensively helpful than any other printed set of instructions for an electronic device. To learn how the Kindle works, you have to start working the Kindle.

It’s a good-looking little guy, about the size of a slim trade paperback. If you have a softcover copy of, say, The Compass in Your Nose and Other Astonishing Facts About Humans, by Marc McCutcheon, on your desk, as I do ("Psychotics rarely yawn, and people who are severely ill tend to refrain from yawning until their condition improves. . . . All animals yawn, even fish and reptiles"), you can get a sense of the Kindle’s scale. Unlike The Compass in Your Nose, the Kindle is elegantly tapered at each end. But it doesn’t flex and bend engagingly, as The Compass does, in your hands. And its screen is only slightly larger than the average conventioneer name tag.

A removable sticker told me how to charge the battery and turn the Kindle on. Then I was greeted, rather self-congratulatorially I thought, by the Kindle User’s Guide: "Congratulations! You are reading your first Kindle book." The guide then advised me, "if you haven’t done so already," to follow the instructions on the sticker telling me how to charge the battery and turn the Kindle on. But how could I be reading the user’s guide if I hadn’t already charged the battery and

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The Web Ought to Pay
An Internet Pioneer Changes Tune

BY JARON LANIER

INTERNET idealists like me have long had an easy answer for creative types—like the striking screenwriters in Hollywood—who feel threatened by the unremunerative nature of our new Eden: stop whining and figure out how to join the party!

That's the line I spouted when I was part of the birthing celebrations for the Web. I even wrote a manifesto titled "Piracy Is Your Friend." But I was wrong. We were all wrong.

Like so many in Silicon Valley in the 1990s, I thought the Web would increase business opportunities for writers and artists. Instead they have decreased. Most of the big names in the industry—Google, Facebook, MySpace and increasingly even Apple and Microsoft—are now in the business of assembling content from unpaid Internet users to sell advertising to other Internet users. (Disclosure: I'm the scholar at large for Microsoft Live Labs, and I once was part of a company that Google bought.)

There's an almost religious belief in the Valley that charging for content is bad. The only business plan in sight is ever more advertising. One might ask what will be left to advertise once everyone is aggregated.

How long must creative people wait for the Web's new wealth to find a path to their doors? A decade is a long enough time that idealism and hope are no longer enough. If there's one practice technologists ought to embrace, it is the evaluation of empirical results.

To help writers and artists earn a living online, software engineers and Internet evangelists need to exercise the power they hold as designers. Information is free on the Internet because we created the system to be that way.

We could design information systems so that people can pay for content—so that anyone has the chance of becoming a widely read author and yet can also be paid. Information could be universally accessible but on an affordable instead of an absolutely free basis.

People happily pay for content in certain Internet ecosystems, provided the ecosystems are delightful. People love paying for virtual art, clothing and other items in virtual worlds like Second Life, for instance. Something similar is going on for music within the ecosystem of the iPod. (I am an adviser to Linden Lab, the creator of Second Life.)

Affordable turns out to be much harder than free when it comes to information technology, but we are smart enough to figure it out. We owe it to ourselves and to our creative friends to acknowledge the negative results of our old idealism. We need to grow up.

“I was part of the birthing celebrations for the Web. I even wrote a manifesto titled 'Piracy Is Your Friend.' But I was wrong. We were all wrong.”

—Jaron Lanier, Computer Scientist and Musician

On the other hand . . .

"[O]thers have simply accepted that, for them, music is not a moneymaking business. It's something they do for other reasons, from fun to creative expression. Which, of course, has always been true for most musicians anyway.”

—Chris Anderson, editor in chief of Wired Magazine, in “Free! Why $0.00 Is the Future of Business,” (Wired Magazine, February 25, 2008), explaining how musicians will cope in a world in which things such as music that are distributed online “without an appreciable cost to anyone” will necessarily be free.

Bloggi Blenni Blicci

Losing One’s Virtual Virginity

BY ALISON OWINGS

Usually, I’m not much of an early riser. Only after I know the sun has appeared somewhere in my time zone and the day is unfolding properly do I hazard the beckoning hours, sliding like an omelet onto a plate.

Imagine my surprise, is what I’m trying to say, when I jolted out of bed about five one morning last November and headed immediately to my computer, where in a fury I typed out thoughts that had been gathering heat in my waking and sleeping brain. About two hours later, I leaned back, spent, and stared at the result: a rare (for me) personal essay. I titled it “My Hillary Problem.”

The basic theme was that she and I have much in common—I listed facets of our backgrounds and presumably shared career challenges—and yet for reasons I tried to fathom, she was not my candidate. It was her votes, yes, especially for this horrid war in Iraq, but also a sense of “tsk-tsking from her.” I ended the piece by saying Hillary transcended Womanhood to me, and—this was a late addition—Barack Obama transcended being African-American to my husband, who had just met him.

My last graf was, “I do regret I have a Hillary problem. In ways, she and I were so close.”

Now, what to do with this unexpected morning latte?

Being without benefit of, say, a column in The New York Times, yet too revved to try a round of newspaper or magazine queries and submissions, along with the wait that ensues, one thought stood out.

Blog!

In my freelance editor’s hat, I’d been editing a forthcoming book called Be the Media, about do-it-yourself everything, including blogging, so I knew something about the phenom. In general, however, I didn’t even read blogs, much less had I ever written for one. A proverbial stranger in a strange land was I.

Yet, onward. The few politically-attuned blogs I’d heard of included The Huffington Post, so I wrote it a query, blind.

Whole minutes passed without a response. Then whole hours. (How have I stayed sane while waiting to hear from my agent about her or publishers’ reactions to my book proposals and sample chapters? Does some mental hibernation mode kick in?)

Impatiently, I e-mailed a couple of friends, one of whom dug up a contact at Huffington, named Jessica. I wrote to Jessica. She wrote back promptly. Sure, send it.

I did.

One of many things I did not know: The Huffington Post has an anti-Hillary reputation. That is, upon receiving my query, Jessica presumably did not pound on Ariana Huffington’s door, yelling, “You’ll never guess who just wrote us!” Ariana presumably did not gasp, then recount the enormous buzz in the publishing world that I’m writing a book based on interviews with Native Americans, before Jessica delicately chided her to return to the matter at hand, that I am offering—like a gift, a gift!—a blog.

Jessica, whom I assumed to be 14, guided me through the process, as when I wrote her that all is awesome yet I am so like totally unfamiliar with pay scale.

“I just want to make sure you’re clear that all our bloggers are unpaid. Are you still interested?” she replied. “If you are, send me a short bio and a headshot (attached as a JPEG) and I can get this up.”

So much for blogging for dollars. Jessica also assured me that including my website (compliments of the Authors Guild, I might add), which contains my e-mail address, would probably not swamp me with hate mail.

It did not. Swamped, though, was the blog. Holy smokers, as a Lakota friend says.

Insto-blogging-feedback, I am here to tell those of you who guard your virtual virginity, is not like publishers forwarding packets of readers’ letters.

The blog appeared November 12. Readers’ “comments,” as they are called in a misleading hint of neutrality and civility, started immediately.

The first were lovely.

“Thank you for a beautiful, well-thought-out piece,” wrote MPeter. “You hit the nail on the head,” wrote Curedlib. bluecraven was positive and philosophical. “I think it’s a strong piece of evidence that feminism has made inroads when women like you and me can look at the first truly viable female Presidential candidate and decide that she’s not who we want representing the country because of her policies and prac-

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tices.” mommadona commented, “You are not alone. Thank you.”

Sometimes amid the encomia I got distracted by a particular nom de blog.

My favorite: vistasackvillewesttexas. Meanwhile, the lovefest continued. Katiekat489 thanked me profusely. Ebbside commented that Hillary “has been quite a disappointment to many women. . . . She is operating in that same era, using the

same techniques to herd women in, while at the same time, voting like a Republican,” then ended with, “I love your writing, BTW.”

Hey, this blogging thing is great, I thought.

Then comments about other comments started landing. “I agree so much with this column, Alison,” slc20 wrote. “I also agree with BlueVergin’s post. I very much wish the first female running for prez was someone I could support,” she added, ending with, “I’m embarrassed to be of the same gender as Hillary.” Oh my. I winced.

Something else I didn’t know about blogs: The seduction of numbers. Blogs list how many comments a posting receives, updated in nanoseconds. 30! 74! This was like checking the Amazon sales ranking for my last book, Hey, Waitress! after being on The Diana Rehm Show.

Up the numbers climbed. Past 100! 150! 200!

By now, I had to acknowledge another factor; some comments were negative.

The first was merely risible. From desertdweller: “I’m guessing that you voted for Ralph Nader in 2000.” Then kriisymx jumped in: “You are right desertdwellr! This kind of criticism doesn’t help anyone except the Repubs, especially Rudy”; nevadagirl called me “sexist. I didn’t hear one thing about issues you agree or disagree with. Thanks for the cheesy psychoanalysis.” CosmicRocker scolded “Grow up!! She’s not running to be your mommy; she’s running to lead

this country. jeesee.” noorzhassan seconded CosmicRocker. “Sounds like Ms. Owings may have unresolved childhood issues.” Such as? I wondered, alarmed, as caltech piled on. “So you don’t like her—so what, get over it. There’s no perfect candidate. She’s the dems best bet in 08.” suf66 announced an “Alison problem,” patsynow detected “anote of envy and jealousy” (disputed by disgeorge), while mfarrell got “the distinct ‘feeling’ that our writer here is simply needing to play junior high pajama party night with all her readers. Eeek!”

Readers such as longislandlol salved my ego with, “Brilliant article,” and lamarguerite put me over the top. “You did it! Articulated what I could not figure out for myself. I ditto everything you wrote about Hillary. Women are known for their intuition. In this case, I’ve got to trust mine, and yours. And also the more rational facts you just outlined.” That was slammed by morris1030, who posted pro-Hillary comments about 10 times. (I wondered if morris1030 has other work.)

Serious Hubert entered the fray. “Ms. Owings’s post is an attempt to analyze the ‘vibe’ that Hillary gives off. When she says one thing—such as ‘I care about the middle class’ her body language (especially her facial gestures) say something altogether different. Whether or not we are willing to admit it, emotions play a large role in what we do and how we think . . .”

So there CosmicRocker, suf66, patsynow, and . . .

Now, wait a minute.

I wrote the blog because I felt compelled to. I was trying to get a handle on, yes, my feelings. Why should I be surprised when others expressed theirs? But were they getting more personal toward me than I was toward Hillary? Or was I more thin-skinned than I had realized. And had I disobeyed the childhood rule (one of my “unresolved childhood issues”?) of “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all,” which was boomeranging back? Did Hillary and I now have something else in common?

No time to think much about any of that; the count kept climbing. 250! 275!

Besides getting seduced by numbers, I did a Google ego search. There I learned 1) the phrase “My Hillary Problem” was not orginal with me (giving me the teeniest bit of sympathy for those accused of plagiarism—if no more than three words are involved) and 2) not all my readers were anonymous. Washington Post columnist Howard Kurtz, in a column about people’s “emotional reactions” to the former first lady, wrote, “This Huffington Post essay by Alison Owings

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Guild Survey: 40% of Authors Gather E-Mail Addresses

Two-Thirds Believe Electronic Newsletters Help Sell Books

In January, the Authors Guild conducted an online survey of our members to learn how writers use electronic newsletters to market their work. More than 2100 writers completed the survey, providing us with a detailed picture of their practices—and opinions on—using e-mail on a grand scale. We think their experiences are helpful for writers considering this method of book promotion.

Forty percent of the authors who responded say they use e-mail newsletters or maintain lists of e-mail addresses to publicize their work; more than 500 sent us detailed comments on the benefits and pitfalls of e-mail book promotion. While most—two-thirds—believe sending electronic newsletters or other messages helps to sell their books, the rest simply don’t know whether it makes a difference. As one writer put it, “We all do what we can (you could literally spend all day, every day working on marketing, but then when would you write any books to sell?), but in the end, it feels like shouting into the void, because we have zero idea whether our efforts are actually boosting sales or not.”

Some writers have seen their ratings rise on Amazon.com after sending an e-mail to a particularly large list, but others feel certain that their newsletters are generating few or no sales. Still, bookselling need not be the immediate goal: Tracy Anglada uses her “website and newsletters as a way to provide information, establish a relationship and stay connected with [my] readers.” “I have learned that readers are not interested in just an advertisement, but if a newsletter has value to them personally, then they will enjoy receiving it and will also be kept up to date with new books. . . . To effectively use this tool, don’t think about what you as the author can get out of the arrangement. Consider what you have of value to share with your readers.”

Charlene Ann Baumbich agrees that a newsletter should be entertaining for the recipients, rather than focused on self-promotion: “Think about it: no editors, no safety net, no interference between you and your audience. EXCITING! Edgy. And if you make your newsletter fun and interesting (and occasionally hold a drawing to give something away), your recipients pass it along to their friends.”

Most respondents, however, reported that the main reason for maintaining e-mail lists and sending newsletters is to announce new books or promote appearances. Strategically timing a well-written, entertaining e-mail can result in a spike in visits to a website that sells the book, or even lure people out the door and into their local bookstore.

Using mass e-mails or a newsletter to promote a reading is a welcome update to a time-consuming post-card mailing, while authors interested in feedback from their readers—or even suggestions for new projects—find newsletters invaluable. Historian Rex A. Knight writes that his “readers tend to enjoy sharing directly . . . their personal evaluations of [my] work, and especially so if they have a personal relationship with the story. . . . These contacts, both by e-mail and snail mail, keep my readers and me on a true level of equality, allowing them to know that I not only value them as readers but that I also covet their opinions and critiques, giving them a true sense of importance to my own success.”

The greatest concern expressed throughout the respondents’ comments was that the author would become a “pest” to readers. One respondent who does not use e-mail newsletters explained why in plain terms: “I would never send e-mail to anyone who didn’t ask to receive it, and . . . I don’t send e-mails unless I have something to announce that I really think people might be interested in.” Wary of “bombarding” or “overburdening” recipients with a “flood” of irrelevant messages—often based on their own experiences with unwanted e-mail “in our spam-saturated, hyper-marketed age”—respondents described the most successful newsletter as unobtrusive, personable, and relevant to the recipient.

Some writers have seen their ratings rise on Amazon after sending an e-mail; others believe their newsletters are generating few or no sales.

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Crossover Dreams

Turning Free Web Work Into Real Book Sales

BY MOTOKO RICH

Three years ago Diary of a Wimpy Kid, a children’s novel illustrated with cartoons, was published online, where anyone could read it free. To this day anyone still can, at Funbrain.com, an educational website.

Despite laments about youngsters spending too much time surfing the web and not enough time reading, it turns out that many of them still want the format of old-fashioned paper stuck between two covers. Since an edited form of Diary of a Wimpy Kid was published as a traditional book in April by Amulet, an imprint of Harry N. Abrams, it has sold 147,000 copies, according to Nielsen BookScan, which tracks 50 percent to 70 percent of retail sales. The book, written and drawn by Jeff Kinney, has spent 33 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list. This Sunday [Dec. 16], it will be No. 1 on the Children’s Chapter Books list.

That a book derived from free online content has sold so well may allay some fears that giving something away means nobody will want to pay for it. It also encourages publishers who increasingly scour the Internet for talent, hoping to capitalize on the audiences that a popular website can deliver.

“I think books are still things, thank goodness, that people want to own,” said Michael Jacobs, chief executive of Abrams. “The package of the book and the way it feels is something apart and separate from being able to read it online.”

Other works that have moved successfully from the Internet into print include the series of books based on postsecret.blogspot.com (among them Post Secret: Extraordinary Confessions From Ordinary Lives and My Secret), a Web-based project created by Frank Warren on which anonymous contributors confess their deepest secrets on postcards; I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell, a collection of apparently autobiographical stories, more than half of which first appeared on the blog of the author, Tucker Max (tuckermax.com); and Julie & Julia, Julie Powell’s memoir of racing to cook every recipe in Julia Child’s Mastering the Art of French Cooking, which grew out of her Salon.com blog.

But there is no clear alchemy that turns a popular website into a bestseller, and several books based on blogs or other Internet material have flopped. “I don’t think there is a formula,” Mr. Warren said, “There is a bit of magic there that can’t be replicated.”

Lawrence Lessig, a professor at Stanford Law School who has published three of his four books online as well as on paper, said book sales depended on whether the number of people who discover the book online and then buy a hard copy outweighs “the number of people who would have bought the book and now won’t because it’s free.”

Hyperion recently made a leap of faith when it reportedly paid $6.7 million to acquire the rights to Last Lecture, a book to be based on a talk given at Carnegie Mellon University by Randy Pausch, a 47-year-old computer-science professor who has terminal pancreatic cancer. Videos of the lecture—or parts of it—on YouTube and elsewhere on the web have been viewed more than six million times.

Robert Miller, president of Hyperion, said he believed the book would sell even though prospective readers can see the core of its message online. “A book has a chance to have a timeless quality that’s different from a speech given in real time,” Mr. Miller said.

In the case of Wimpy Kid, it appears that word of mouth is driving sales as much as readers first finding the novel online. “I am getting boys and their parents coming in saying, ‘My friend told me about this book,’” said Jan Dundon, children’s coordinator at Anderson’s Bookshop in Naperville, Ill. “I’m not hearing kids going, ‘Oh, there’s this cool website.’”

Mr. Kinney, a design director at Family Education Network, a unit of Pearson that operates Funbrain, where Wimpy Kid first appeared, spent 10 years writing the book and always intended to publish it in print form. But after discussing it with his boss, Jess Brallier, the publisher of the Family Education Network, Mr. Kinney decided to serialize his book on Funbrain.com in part to attract children to the site during the summer. As an unknown author, he figured he might gain more exposure if he published the book—which looks as if it could be a handwritten diary of a mischievous middle-school boy—on a website with thousands of daily visitors in his target market.

Mr. Kinney, who once wanted to be a newspaper cartoonist, knew it was a risk. “I was afraid that by publishing it online, it might cheapen the work and make it harder for me to get published,” he said.

The serialized diary, with its perfectly pitched wit and believably self-centered hero, became one of Funbrain’s most popular features. Mr. Brallier estimated

that parts of the book’s roughly 1,300 online pages have been viewed 50 million times.

After Mr. Kinney signed a three-book deal with Abrams for a five-figure advance, he worked with his editor, Charles Kochman, to sharpen plot lines and divide the online text into three volumes, the first of which is just 217 pages. (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*, the second volume, will be published as a book in February.)

The publisher decided to keep the longer version online, even at the risk of cannibalizing sales. Kochman said that children were likely to have restricted time to use the web. The two versions, he said, “can comfortably co-exist.”

Taking down free material can be controversial. When Scott Adams, the “Dilbert” comic strip artist, removed the archives from his blog, dilbertblog.typepad.com, after Portfolia, an imprint of Penguin Group, published *Stick to Drawing Comics, Monkey Brain!* in October, some readers balked.

Mr. Adams said he never expected that people who had already read the book’s content online would want to buy the book. But, he said, he hoped that they would recommend it or buy it as a gift. What he misjudged, he said, was “the fact that people want their stuff for free.”

The authors of *Shooting War*, a graphic novel that grew out of a web comic (shootingwar.com), purposely limited the amount of material they put up online. Anthony Lappé, the writer, and Dan Goldman, the illustrator, always knew they wanted a book deal, and posted only 11 chapters on a web magazine, smithmag.net.

They reworked that material, changed an important plot point and added 110 more pages for the book, a hard-hitting satirical story about a left-wing video blogger who ends up working for a sensationalist news network while embedded with an Army unit in Baghdad in the year 2011. The book was released last month by Grand Central Publishing; it’s too early to see if it will follow the trajectory of *Wimpy Kid*.

Some readers are already catching on. Mel Odom, a writer and father of five in Moore, Okla., ordered a copy of *Shooting War*, because he “wanted something I could put on my shelf.” Mr. Odom, who also bought his youngest son a copy of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* after he read the entire thing online, added: “There’s nothing like holding the weight and smelling the paper.” ♦

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**Appellate Court Blocks Freelance Settlement**

**BY ANITA FORE**

On November 29, we received the surprising and disappointing news that the Second Circuit Court of Appeals had reversed the approval of the settlement reached in the Guild’s freelance class action copyright infringement lawsuit against various electronic database companies. The decision threatens to unravel years of hard-fought negotiations to reach a resolution of *The Authors Guild, et al. v. Dialog Corporation, et al.* and *The Authors Guild, et al. v. The New York Times*, lawsuits we filed in October 2000 and July 2001 respectively. These suits were combined with other similar actions under the name *In re: Literary Works in Electronic Databases Copyright Litigation* and settled after a prolonged series of complex mediations. The district court granted final approval in September 2005.

The settlement, valued at up to $18 million, was to resolve the copyright infringement claims of freelance writers against The New York Times, numerous magazines, and database companies such as Dow Jones and Lexis-Nexis that had made digital use of the writers’ articles without permission. A complete list of defendants and publications is available at the official settlement website, www.copyrightclassaction.com. We applauded the settlement as a vindication of the rights of freelancers to control and be compensated for the use of their work by others in the electronic marketplace. The large profits from such uses should not be hoarded by big media; they should be shared with the creators.

Shortly after the final approval in 2005, many freelancers followed the procedures required to claim their fair share of the $18 million. Unfortunately, that process was brought to a halt when several freelance writers appealed the final settlement in late October 2005. The hearing on the appeal took place in March 2007, and the Second Circuit issued its 2–1 decision to overturn the settlement in November.

The objectors attacked the settlement based on their belief that it failed to allot sufficient funds to the claims of authors of unregistered works. But if the Second Circuit’s decision stands, such claims will be shut out

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CENSORSHIP WATCH

I'm in ur case, suing ur doodz: Freedom of Speech Prevails On "Teh Internets"? So, maybe this is a victory for freedom of speech on the Internet? Then again, maybe not so much.

If you know enough to immediately know who Perez Hilton is (no cheating with Wikipedia) then you probably know enough to know that he's been named as a defendant in more than one lawsuit brought in response to the photographs—sometimes scribbled on, sometimes not, more often on than not—and the slap offs [insults] and the stick figure scrawls posted at his monstrously popular gossip blog, PerezHilton.com.

If you know enough to immediately know who Samantha Ronson is and the role she's played in the still unspooling soap opera that is Lindsay Lohan's personal life (again, no cheating with Wikipedia) then you're probably spending bagloads of time at Perez Hilton.com, browsing and maybe even commenting. C'mon. Tell the truth.

Mario Lavandeira, who has rechristened himself Perez Hilton and anointed himself "Queen of All Media," runs a blog dedicated to daily and virulently negative posts about Hollywood celebrities and their attention-seeking hangers-on. Hilton, who is completely unrelated to the Hilton Hotel Hiltons, and who chose the name for its sound-alike quality to Paris Hilton—who is one of the HHH's—and someone he's said to consider a kindred spirit (explaining yet another self-inflicted appellation—"the trashtastic Cuban cousin of Paris and Nicky"), delights in grabbing sometimes copyright-protected photographs from other websites and scribbling cocaine dots, fetuses and other unmentionable effluvia on the faces and bodies of the celebrities and wannabes pictured. Favorite targets include Britney Spears, Nicole Richie, Jessica Simpson, Lindsay Lohan and anyone else deemed unpalatable or unpretty in Hilton's world.

Early in 2007, as any gossip junkie worth her salt knows, Lindsay Lohan crashed her Mercedes Benz convertible into a curb, fled the scene, then later resurfaced with minor injuries. The same junkie will be able to tell you that this was Lohan's Memorial Day weekend accident (not to be confused with the July 24 arrest), that police found a white substance believed to be cocaine in her car, and that Lohan has been in and out of rehab for drug and alcohol abuse three times this year. Shortly after the incident, PerezHilton.com commented on the shenanigans and speculated that Lohan's friend, Samantha Ronson—you know . . . Samantha? The DJ? Lindsay's alleged lesbian lover? Mark Ronson's sister? Mark Ronson? The other DJ?—owned the cocaine-y powder found in Lohan's car.

Repeating a conspiracy theory posted at another gossip website, Hilton suggested that Ronson, a passenger in Lohan's car at the time of the accident, planted the drugs and called the paparazzi shortly after the wreck. Hilton supposedly owns a sweatshirt that reads "Blame Samantha" and his website characterized Ronson as a "toxic" frenemy (noun. someone who pretends to be a friend but who is really an enemy; friend + enemy = frenemy) informant who hoped to be paid in exchange for tipping off the photographers to a juicy photo op.

Ronson sued Hilton and the operators of Celebrity Babylon.com, the original source of the rumor, for libel, demanding $20 million in damages. She filed a declaration that she's never used drugs, never handled cocaine, and never ever contracted with anyone at any time to tip off anybody about Lindsay Lohan's whereabouts, ever. So there. Although the other defendants settled with Ronson for an undisclosed amount, Hilton pressed on. And in November 2007, a Los Angeles county court granted Hilton's motion to strike Ronson's lawsuit on the grounds that Ronson hadn't produced enough evidence to establish that she was likely to win her case. The outcome was celebrated at Perez Hilton.com under the breathless headline, "Victory! Freedom of Speech Prevails!"

Rather than crafting a decision based on the theory that no reasonable person could possibly believe that any of the cartoon-dotted speculations and gleefully vulgar musing at PerezHilton.com represents anything other than baseless, groundless opinions, not actual facts subject to libel complaints, the judge held that that celebrity drug use is a topic of public interest, that PerezHilton.com is a public forum, and that Ronson—a fame-seeker, would-be spotlight-grabber and alleged aspirant to BFF status in Lohan's circle—should be considered a public figure. (BFF? Best friend forever, of course.) Once the law crowns you with the "public figure" label, you're operating on different ground from normal, everyday folks. Statements made about public figures aren't considered libelous in California (and many other states) unless they're made with malice. In order to win, Ronson was supposed to enter some evidence showing that Hilton knew he was telling big fat lies or recklessly failed to investigate whether he was telling big fat lies. Her contribution? Nothing. Instead, Hilton submitted a statement swear-

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CONTRACTS Q&A

BY MARK L. LEVINE

Q. My contract for a medical how-to book has a clause which grants me full cover approval. I designed the cover, which includes powerful back cover endorsements from prominent doctors. When it came out in paperback, a year after the first hardcover run, the publisher had changed all the cover endorsements to industry praise as opposed to those I had included. They did this without my permission or knowledge. Is there any recourse? Can I sue them?

This same publisher allowed a foreign language house that bought Spanish-language rights for Mexico and Central America to edit the book to within 1/4 of its original content, thereby making it dangerous to the public. While this hack job was underway, they deliberately did not let me know since they knew I would not agree.

The foreign language house was told to “tear covers.” They then reprinted the same butchered book two years later, with another title slapped on it. They have been selling it in the United States, not their territory, and I have not been getting proper royalties. I have been phoning, emailing and faxing my publisher about this for 10 years ... to no avail. Can I sue my publisher and the foreign one?

A. One of the first things law students learn in law school is that the proper question is not “Can I sue?” but “Can I win?” Virtually anyone can sue. Just have a lawyer draft the proper papers (or—not recommended—do it yourself) and pay the relatively low court filing fee.

Even though the proper question contains the same three words as yours and the law student’s, the answer is far from simple. And even if a columnist, friend or your lawyer says, “Yes, you can win,” it doesn’t mean that you will. Though people wanting to sue often refuse to believe it (I’m not saying that this is the case in your situation), there are frequently good factual or legal arguments on both sides of the issue and, even if you or your lawyer think you have the better case, a judge or jury could well side with your opponent in any dispute about the facts of the case (often depending on “he said/she said” testimony), the judge could find your opponent’s legal arguments more persuasive, or the lawyer for the other side could just do a better, more persuasive and effective job than the lawyer (s) you have hired. Even when you have citations to previous, analogous cases that appear to sup-
port your position, there may be one or two facts in your situation that differ somewhat from those in the case(s) you and your lawyer are relying on, or facts in that case that are missing from your situation or that exist in your situation but are not in the case you are relying on. These differing fact patterns could suffice from a legal viewpoint to distinguish your case from the ones you are relying on, enough to give a judge sufficient reason not to rely on the precedents you cite.

The cost of lawyers and related expenses, the amount of time it will take for the case to get to trial and through any possible appeals, the emotional toll and inconvenience of being involved in litigation, the possibility of the publisher filing counterclaims or related lawsuits against you in retaliation, and what you will win if victorious are all factors you need to consider in deciding whether to bring a lawsuit. You will also need to consider the effect that bringing a lawsuit will likely have on the publisher — its analysis for itself of the same factors listed above and such other factors as its reputation, the amount of management time the litigation will take up, the distraction the case might cause for the publisher, and the likelihood of it staunchly opposing the suit or deciding it’s better to settle and at what point in the process it might do so.

People often significantly underestimate the cost of litigation. To lawyers or sophisticated businesspeople, it is not surprising that lawsuits that non-lawyers think are “simple” can end up costing a plaintiff $100,000 or so in legal fees if the company being sued has its own lawyer (or can afford to hire one), decides to contest the suit vigorously, and the case goes to trial and is appealed. Even without realizing this, expense-conscious individuals considering a lawsuit often ask lawyers if they will represent them on a contingency basis. The reality is that virtually no knowledgeable lawyer who has a for-profit practice will take a publishing case or similar litigation on a contingency basis. The results in most of those cases are uncertain, the time and cost in properly preparing a case significant, and the amount on which the contingency percentage would be based likely much too small.

That being said, I would love it if someone with the funds, top-notch lawyers, perseverance, intelligence and emotional stamina would sue publishers like the ones you describe (and even some more reputable) who often ignore provisions in their author-publisher contracts because they assume that authors won’t have the money, lawyers or fortitude to sue and the amount apt to be won by the author not worth the investment involved.


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Variations on a Popular Theme

John F. Dunn v. Dan Brown
U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts


In evaluating the copyright infringement claim, the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts noted that Dunn’s Vatican Boys revolved around a multimillion-dollar bank fraud arranged by the Catholic organization Opus Dei. In Vatican Boys, the lead female character, Catherine Turrell, was a recovering drug addict who double-crossed Opus Dei and emerged as the center of the fraud. In addition, Vatican Boys featured a back-story that focused on a search for a sacred cloth, which, when combined with an additional cloth, would lead to the “Second Coming.” The court noted that it was “fair to characterize” Vatican Boys as “supportive of orthodox Catholicism.”

In regard to The Da Vinci Code, the court noted that the book was deeply skeptical of orthodox Catholicism in its portrayal of the Catholic Church as having concealed the purported fact that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and bore children whose descendants live to the present day. The plot of The Da Vinci Code followed an unraveling series of clues by Professor Robert Langdon, the main character, which led to the revelation of this supposed historical reality and to the “fact” that the book’s central female character, Sophie Neveu, was a direct descendant of Christ. While Opus Dei does appear in the novel, it is highlighted as a dupe of the villain, Leigh Teabing, who is willing to go to any lengths, including multiple murders, to unmask the Catholic Church’s campaign to defame Mary Magdalene in order to cover up her secret role as the coveted Holy Grail.

To evaluate Dunn’s copyright infringement claim, the court had to first discern whether Dunn had a valid copyright in the Vatican Boys, and if he did, to consider whether there was copying of “constituent elements of the work that were original.” After noting that Dunn’s copyright ownership in Vatican Boys was not at issue, the court focused on whether The Da Vinci Code contained constituent elements of Vatican Boys that were original. The court noted that there is a two-part process involved in evaluating wrongful copying. First, the plaintiff must offer proof that “as a factual matter, the defendant copied plaintiff’s copyright protected material.” Next, the plaintiff must demonstrate that “the copying of the copyrighted material was so extensive that it rendered the infringing and copyrighted works substantially similar.”

While Brown denied any copying, he based his motion to dismiss on the second step, i.e., the fact that the two works lacked any substantial similarity. To prove substantial similarity, Dunn had to show that the “original, protected, expressive elements” reappeared in The Da Vinci Code in a manner that was “so substantially similar to Vatican Boys that it rendered The Da Vinci Code a ‘wrongful appropriation of expression.’” In making its determination, the court initially noted that neither ideas nor facts can be copyrighted, only the expression of such. Likewise, the copyright doctrine of “scenes a faire” denies copyright protection to unoriginal elements of recurring stock scenes, such as a church setting.

Keeping these notions in mind, the court pointed out that the central characters of the books were completely different. Brown’s main character, Robert Langdon, was a likable Harvard professor, as evidenced by the female lead falling in love with him at the end of the story. In contrast, Dunn’s main charac-

Give Them an Inch and When You’re Not Looking, They’ll Run Off 1.2 Million Copies:
Jon Krakauer Sues Houghton Mifflin and RR Donnelley

On October 1, 2007, Jon Krakauer filed suit against Houghton Mifflin Co. and RR Donnelley & Sons Co. for allegedly infringing his copyright in his best-selling novel Into Thin Air. In the suit, Krakauer claimed that while he had agreed to allow the publishers to reprint 40,000 copies of an excerpt from Into Thin Air in a ninth-grade textbook, The Language of Literature, the publishers actually reproduced over 1.2 million “unauthorized and impermissible” reproductions of the agreed upon excerpt. These allegations are yet another reminder that licenses are always subject to abuse, and all authors should attempt to monitor their own licensing activity.
Beware of Whales

Jonathan E Smith v. NBC Universal,
MG Perin, Inc. & Universal Television Networks
U.S. District Court for the
Southern District of New York

Throughout the mid-1980s, Jonathan E. Smith worked as an animal trainer, performing in live shows with orca whales at Sea World in San Diego, California. On March 4, 1987, Smith was attacked by several orcas that worked with him during the live show. The incident was reported in the news, and an audience member, Chiang Shek, videotaped the attack with his camcorder. On March 12, 1987, Shek visited Smith in the hospital and gave him a copy of the video he had taken of the orcas attacking Smith. Shek also assigned the copyright in the video to Smith, who, in turn, registered it with the copyright office.

Soon after, Smith licensed the orca attack video to Channel 39, a local ABC affiliate in San Diego, which broadcast the video. Smith received a $300 licensing fee. He also granted an interview to Channel 39 regarding the attacks.

In 1988, Smith licensed the video to Fox Broadcasting Company’s Current Affairs program for a fee of $500. Smith was interviewed by Fox but did not obtain copyright in the interview.

Legal Services Scorecard

From October 4, 2007 through January 10, 2008, the Authors Guild Legal Service Department handled 363 legal inquiries. Included were:

- 45 book contract reviews
- 10 agency contract reviews
- 36 reversion of rights inquiries
- 34 inquiries on copyright law, including infringement, registration, duration and fair use
- 20 inquiries regarding securing permissions and privacy releases
- 14 electronic rights inquiries
- 10 First Amendment inquiries
- 194 other inquiries (including literary estates, contract disputes, periodical and multimedia contracts, movie and television options, Internet piracy, liability insurance, finding an agent, and attorney referrals)

Soon after, Showboat Productions PTY Ltd. produced a television series called The Extraordinary, which was exclusively distributed domestically by MG Perin, Inc. As part of an episode that addressed orca attacks, Showboat included several portions of the Fox interview and 37 seconds of video, during which Smith was identified by name and was clearly identifiable in the Fox interview excerpts. In 1994, MG Perin syndicated The Extraordinary to Fox.

In 1996, Smith filed a lawsuit against Fox and MG Perin in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California alleging copyright infringement as well as several state law claims. On September 16, 1996, the action was settled pursuant to an agreement under which Fox and MG Perin “agreed never to duplicate, display, distribute or perform” the video and to refrain from showing any portion of the video again without a license from Smith.

On August 19, 2003, MG Perin violated its settlement agreement with Smith when it granted UTN (Universal Television Network) a license to broadcast 10 episodes of The Extraordinary, including the episode containing Smith’s orca attack footage and his interview with Fox. Neither MG Perin nor UTN had authorization to air the video owned by Smith. MG Perin

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Book Reviews: In Print, Online, and In Decline?

The power of book reviews—and who reads them in what form and forum—was the subject of a panel discussion sponsored by the Authors Guild Foundation at Scandinavia House in Manhattan on September 24. Guild president Roy Blount Jr. served as moderator for a panel that included Jane Ciabattari, an award-winning fiction writer, author of the story collection Steal the Fire and two books of nonfiction as well as vice president of the National Book Critics Circle and a regular contributor to the Books Critics Circle blog Critical Mass; Sara Nelson, editor-in-chief of Publishers Weekly, former columnist for the New York Post and the New York Observer, and the founding editor of the media website Inside.com; Lizzie Skurnick—aka the blogger “Old Hag”—who has written reviews for The New York Times Book Review and The Washington Post, among other publications; and Sam Tanenhaus, editor of The New York Times Book Review and the author of Whittaker Chambers, A Biography.

JANE CIABATTARI: I’m happy to talk to you as an author who’s been reviewed, as a book critic, as a National Book Critics Circle vice president of membership, and as a blogger. But I have to warn you, we have nearly 800 members of the Book Critics Circle (NBCC) and they have more than 800 strongly held opinions. So anything I say cannot be construed as meaning that I speak for every one of them. I am speaking then not for the NBCC but as a critic and writer who cares passionately about books.

That said, let me tell you about some recent activities of the National Critics Circle, which incidentally includes people who write for print, people who write for radio, as well as people who write for literary blogs; we cover the waterfront. Since April we’ve been running a campaign to save book reviewing. You can learn about it on the National Critics Circle board’s blog, Critical Mass. We’ve run dozens of blog posts about the questions we’re facing as the book culture in this country changes. As an example, when the Atlanta Journal-Constitution lost its book editor, the NBCC campaigned to help save the book editor’s position. We had an online petition signed by nearly 6,000 people, from Salman Rushdie to the librarian in that community. Mr. Rushdie, by the way, went on the Stephen Colbert show on our behalf to discuss the value of book reviews.

We are at a kind of tipping point, a transition in book culture. Most of the major metropolitan newspapers in the country have gone through some kind of shift in their coverage of books, mainly reduction in coverage. In some cases it’s been the elimination of stand-alone book reviews. In others, the stand-alone book review has been folded into another section of the paper, or the number of pages has been cut back. Book reviews are not the only element newspapers are eliminating or reducing—they’re cutting back a lot of other things too, including their international coverage, which I care a lot about as well. We’re seeing a shift of some of the major book coverage to online coverage. The New York Times Book Review, for instance, already has multimedia online coverage and it has a blog, as do the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune. Beginning this month, the Audit Bureau of Circulation will combine print and online circulation of newspapers, which I believe will show the fuller picture of what has been going on in the U.S., as many newspaper readers are reading online.
“There should be a ‘good review’ blog that would post one favorable review for every book. If you’re the author, you’d be barred from writing that review yourself, but you could keep looking until you found someone who admitted to liking your book . . . something for the sweet-natured demographic . . . who like to read a review and go, ‘Awww.’”

—Roy Blount Jr.

I think we’re going to see a gradual shift, with people getting information about what to read from book reviews in print and online, as well as through listening to NPR, and Oprah and some literary bloggers. David Kipen, a former NBCC board member, is on the road right now directing the NEA’s Big Read program. He is visiting Peoria and Wichita and other cities, where hundreds of people are gathering in movie theaters and community centers to talk about books. They are reading and discussing Zora Neale Hurston, and Cynthia Ozick, and Marilynne Robinson, and I think that’s thrilling.

The NBCC’s Campaign to Save Book Reviewing essentially favors all forms of literary criticism and book reviewing; we just want to make sure that as many forms as possible are maintained. We also are concerned about recent cutbacks by academic libraries. This year most academic libraries eliminated print publications, including literary quarterlies, from library shelves in favor of electronic databases. Primarily this was done because scientific publications could cost up to $80,000 a year. But librarians also cut back on literary magazines, one of the few places where literary fiction and poetry are reviewed. We’re very concerned about that. We’ve had panels about it, we’ve had posts on our blog, and some of the librarians are responding to the protests and putting literary publications back on the shelves.

A couple of final points: First-time authors really need book reviews. They’re very important. Without that initial interest, many books don’t go too far. And established writers need them as well. Lee Smith sent a contribution to the NBCC board blog from North Carolina, noting that she was troubled when her latest book, On Agate Hill, came out last fall. “It was getting pretty good reviews, though fewer reviews,” she wrote. “Then I got one really unfavorable review by an influential critic in a major city, which was reprinted in about 20 other newspapers that had cut back on their local coverage and were using syndicated book reviews. I was talking to my husband about all those bad reviews the book got, this was my own negative experience, my feeling about it, and he said, ‘Wait a minute, it got one bad review, carried in twenty papers.’” (Her husband, by the way, is Hal Crowther, a recent finalist for the NBCC award for criticism.)

Also, librarians need two book reviews to justify book purchases for libraries. The content of much of the cultural programming on radio, from the Leonard Lopate Show to Terri Gross’s Fresh Air to WAMC’s book groups, begins with book reviews. As does content for The Stephen Colbert Show, his producer, Emily Lazar, told an NBCC-sponsored panel last week.

Bottom line, I’m in favor of continuing the diversity of opinions and preserving for all authors the option of having many voices address their work.

ROY BLOUNT: There should be a “good review” blog that would post one favorable review for every book. If you’re the author, you’d be barred from writing that review yourself, but you could keep looking until you found someone who admitted to liking your book, and you could send that to the good review blog so a larger audience could enjoy it. Something for the sweet-natured demographic, people who like to read a review and go, “Awww.”

I actually do not read book reviews online. Well, I
started today. One of them is called “Grumpy Old Bookman.” Is that a well-known blogger? He wrote something about Sara Nelson. “Her chief point is that it’s been recognized for decades that publishing has been commercialized (presumably from some imagined virgin state in which it was pure and devoted only to the search for a ‘great novelist’). . . . Editors are no longer concerned with finding promising writers. What they want now is exploitable, fashionable, glamorous young people (often women) who can act as the chat-show front person for a product which is actually just bolted together in smoky back rooms by old men with warts.”

SARA NELSON: I think I do know who the Grumpy Old Bookman is. I like the young and beautiful part. I have written and talked a lot about this whole issue—of book reviews and print versus online. But before I say anything about it, I want to say that at PW we are in a slightly different position. Uncharacteristically, I’m going to put it right down the middle here, because we review for the trade. We are a business-to-business publication and our reviews are intended for booksellers and also, to some extent, for other media, to get a sense of what’s coming out. So our reviews tend to be very plot driven—you know, This happens, this character went here, this character went there, and then a line or two of criticism, in the sense of, this plot device works, this one doesn’t, the writing is good, the writing is not good, whatever. So it’s kind of a hybrid. It’s not an Amazon review—‘Why should I read this book about France because I’ve never been to France?’ But it’s also not literary criticism in the sense that the New York Review of Books is.

I have been paying a lot of attention to the crisis in book reviewing and to the way book reviews have to change and have been changing. I got into a little trouble in a column I wrote after a panel like this at Book Expo, in which I said that I thought that part of the problem was that book reviews had gotten so stodgy and that people want a different kind of book review. The good news, it seems to me, is that sometimes you want steak and sometimes you want hamburger. One is not inherently better than the other. Sometimes you just want to know what you should pick up and take with you on vacation, and that’s when you go to Amazon or you go to a blog. I’m not saying that Amazon reviews are not intelligent; often they are, and often they are not. But sometimes you want a review that will place a book in the literary landscape, that will give you a sense of why this book matters, if it matters, and where it fits in with the other books that this author has published, etcetera. Sometimes you just want to know if you should take it on the train. I think those are both legitimate ways of talking about books. I also think that pretty much anything that gets
you talking about books is a good thing. I published a
book a couple of years ago and I got some reviews that
were terrifying. As Roy said, I could quote them, and
sometimes they just quote themselves to me in the
middle of the night. A good review feels good whether
it comes from an Amazon reviewer or The New York
Times, and a bad review feels bad no matter who it
comes from.

But I think that there is room for both kinds of book
reviewing—not meaning good and bad, though that
too. There is room for the serious literary criticism and
there is room for the “just cut to the chase” review—is
it good, is it not good, do I want it? I don’t agree with
publications that give books stars or grades, although
that was one of the suggestions that somebody gave
me when I started at PW. The thought of summing up
a book and giving it a B+ is very disturbing to me as a
reviewer, as a journalist, and certainly as an author.
But we have, in a way, the toughest audience because
librarians and booksellers are reading this and saying,
Should I buy this book and let it take up valuable shelf
space? Should I stock this book in my store? I could
buy three copies of this or I could buy eight copies of
the other one and is it worth it? In that sense our re-
views are very important. But I also think that very of-
ten, and I think you’ll probably hear this a lot tonight,
that while an author remembers every bad word that
was ever said about her book—and probably can’t re-
member the good words—the average reader, the con-
sumer, often doesn’t remember what you said, they
just know that you said it. They just know that a book
was talked about. Oh, I’ve heard about that book. So I
think there’s a lot to be said for reviews that tell the
truth, but there are negative reviews that make you
want to read the book anyway. They’re called selling
reviews—the negative review that’s so provocative it
makes you want to read the book. A review is a sub-
jective opinion. Sometimes somebody can write a pos-
itive, laudatory, almost reverent review of a book that
makes you want to go to sleep.

So I think that what our obligation as reviewers is
to give the book a fair shake and write about it in as
lively and interesting a way as possible, whether what
you want to say about it is good or bad. I think that’s
the thing that unites all kinds of reviews, whether
they’re on the web or in print. And a long delightful
review is ten times better than a long boring review.
And a short, fast, straight to it negative review can tell
you everything you need to know.

BLOUNT: Our next panelist has a website called “Old
Hag.” Since, as you can see, the reasons are not at all
obvious, I would like her to explain why she would
call it that. I would like to caution the audience that if
you go to oldhag.com you get the wrong thing. You
get a site that’s devoted to senior citizen sluts. Took me
a while to figure that out. But you should go to theold-
hag.com. She suggested that to me. I speak of Lizzie
Skurnick, who’s not only Old Hag at theoldhag.com.
She’s also written for The New York Times Book Re-

LIZZIE SKURNICK: Thank you. I don’t know why I
called it Old Hag. I just think I was preparing for the
future. But I guess it’s interesting. I’ve been blogging
now for about four years. A lot of people don’t know
this about bloggers, but when blogging about books
first started—and I can say this with great authority
because I was one of the eight people that did—it—we
did not know our blogs were ever going to be read by
anyone else. It was simply that there were about eight
of us who wanted to have a conversation about books.
And it happened we lived in other parts of the coun-
try. It was actually very surprising to us when the
blogs became known at all. And another thing I think
that people don’t usually know about bloggers is that
we weren’t just discussing books; we were really dis-
cussing reviewers. I think we were the only people dis-
cussing book reviews at the time. I think that’s the
cause of the friction between so-called bloggers and
so-called book reviewers that still exists, because book
reviewers are really used to issuing ratings, but they
are not really used to being rated.

I too lament the decline in print reviewing, al-
though I want to say that I think we shouldn’t really
see the decline of newspaper reviewing as a universal
decline in print reviewing because I see print review as
booming elsewhere. Every magazine, from The Atlan-
tic Monthly to Glamour and People, devotes what I
consider really healthy key real estate to books. Re-
views in general are thriving. The Stephen Colbert
Show and the Daily Show both give ten minutes to a
book every night.

But the decline of newspaper reviewing makes
things difficult for bloggers too, because what do we
talk about on our blogs but the reviews that we read
in the paper? That’s why many people say that blog-
gers are like scavengers. I thought they should send us
a thank-you for making book reviewers seem relevant
at all, which hadn’t been true for a very long time.

I think the question is, Where does the market go? I
know we’ll be discussing that a bit more in the evening,
but I think what Sam has done is really wonderful, tak-
ing advantage of all of the multimedia options that the
web offers, taking advantage of the space options that
the web gives to run an excerpt and to feature authors
in all of their media. What I’m most interested in is how
bloggers are now being treated. I didn’t start out re-
viewing books; I was asked to review books, and now I must receive five books a day to review. Publicists write to me all the time, people write and ask if I'll run excerpts. I can write something for a print book review and I'll hear from one person, but if I write something for my blog I hear from 20 people and the author immediately. In the case where I said in a short review on my blog that a transvestite in the book was a hermaphrodite, I heard from the author in the next half hour asking, very politely, for me to correct that.

So in a sense, the market is already pushing us toward the future, because bloggers are already being asked to be repeat publications, whether they want to or not, whether they started out that way or not. Which is to say—and any of you who are authors know this—authors are desperate. They want reviews and they want space, and they're going where there is space. So I too am very interested in where the future is going because it seems to be happening to me as well.

BLOUNT: Our next speaker is in charge of a major institution of book reviewing. He is the author of a biography of a freakishly fascinating person, Whittaker Chambers, which as far as I know was universally praised for its salience and even-handedness. He also, however, this week—and I don't know why heads haven't rolled—had to run this little correction in the paper. "Because of an editing error, an essay on August 12 about Ernest Hemingway misidentified the man with whom Hemingway once had a fistfight in Bimini. He was Joseph F. Knapp, not his father Joseph P. Knapp." How can you hold your head up?

SAM TANENHAUS: None of us can.

BLOUNT: Who complained? Must have been the grandson.

TANENHAUS: Well, that's how we know we're being read. At the Times we're kind of in a curious position because obviously we are a print publication but we also have a strong presence online. We're very widely read online and I think the numbers of readers are pretty close now between those who read the newspaper in print and those who read it online, and that's also true of the Book Review. So the byword at the Times is "web integration," and that means you try to make the online edition and the print edition of equal quality and seriousness. As Lizzie pointed out, one of the advantages of the web is you can do a lot more than you can do in print because you have unlimited space. You can reproduce first chapters of novels, for instance. We can link to all the previous reviews of an author's work, and when the reviewed author is an Updike or a Joyce Carol Oates, that's a lot of reviews.

Something else we do is a podcast. I knew that the brave new world had dawed a year and a half ago when we met with John Landman, a great editor at the Times who is supervising all the web transformations, and at the end of the meeting he said, "Well, I guess we're ready for the soft launch of the podcast."

—Sam Tanenhaus

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smaller. We just got an issue out last week that’s 44 pages. Our normal issue is somewhere around 32 to 36. When I started editing the section in the spring of 2004, because of the benevolence of my bosses we were allowed to double the number of open pages in the section—that is, the number of pages that have no ads on them—from five to 10. We’ve maintained that number principally because advertising has been there for us. That’s good news for us; it’s not so great for book reviewing as a whole, because it means that book publishers are not advertising in a lot of other book sections, and that’s one reason those sections are drying up. It’s great for us too that we’ve attracted a lot of web advertising, but we still don’t have the space to review all the books we might, nor can we do justice to as many as we’d like. So that’s a concern. But as Lizzie and others have said, the future is online, and we all must adjust. That’s where the Times is going to be. And it’s where the Book Review increasingly is.

What’s not clear to me, and I’d like to hear what anyone else has to say about this, panelists and audience, is how all this will affect the style and mode of criticism. In some ways we’re quite old-fashioned. I see in the next-to-last row here the great journalist David Margolick, who wrote the cover review of our relaunch issue. He reviewed Jeffrey Toobin’s book on the Supreme Court. David wrote what, 2,500 words or something like that, very carefully done. The essay grew out of conversations—some about the controversial areas we both knew he’d run into because we had discussed some of his ideas previously. That kind of cultivation of an idea, and finding a first-rate writer to provide it for you, with the understanding that many, many readers will see it, is something we can do in print. Will that be an option online? I hope so. There are a lot of really gifted people writing online. They write in a different atmosphere or climate, I think, than those of us who work in print. I hope we can figure all that out together.

BLOUNT: Newspapers are changing generally. A friend of mine said, I read something the other day on the Times.

I’m curious about what blogs you people read. The Times has a very good blog. But I really don’t know much about the blogosphere. So can anybody recommend any good ones?

CIABBATTARI: I read a batch of literary blogs on a regular basis. Some of them are by NBCC members. I read Lizzie’s blog. I read Bookslut.com, which was founded by Jessa Crispin. It is a monthly online magazine that has book reviews, interviews, and Jessa’s blog. I look at the Guardian Online regularly. I see that as kind of the dream literary blog—it has an international read-

ership in the millions, including a lot of American readers, lots of reviews, interviews, book groups, excerpts, and a lively blog. When I write for The Guardian I get instant reaction, a lot of times from Americans. It’s easy to navigate; the design is great. You go to the home page of The Guardian, click on “Books,” you go to “Books,” you get the blog. It’s very simple. With many American newspapers, clicking through to the book section is really complicated. You can do it in the Times, and The Washington Post. But if you try The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, it takes you up to eighteen clicks. James Marcus has a wonderful blog called House of Mirth. Mark Sarvas does The Elegant Variation. I read these on a regular basis. And of course I’m a little partial to our NBCC board blog, Critical Mass. We’re going to a new beta version that Lizzie is putting together for us. I’m a born-again blogger. I started out in print and I started blogging and it’s fast. And there’s no copy editing bureaucracy to flatten out your tone or your voice. And you get reaction quickly. I love the form.

“I’m a born-again blogger. . . . there’s no copy editing bureaucracy to flatten out your tone or your voice. And you get reaction quickly. I love the form.”

—Jane Ciabattari

Authors Guild Bulletin
tures, I can take little videos and post them. It's a very exciting form. Dwight Garner, who blogs for The New York Times Book Review, was on a NBCC panel a week ago. He said blogging was like sticking your hand in an electric socket. It's very dynamic. And you have to keep feeding the blog. On the other hand, you don't necessarily find the 4,000-word long-form book review on a blog because no one's going to read 4,000 words online. It's hard to do.

BLOUNT: So if I reviewed Lizzie's site, we'd have a review of a review of reviewers? Maybe a first.

SKURNICK: People do that. There are all these lists of "my favorite blogs."

BLOUNT: Well, we'll review them. Anybody else want to recommend some other blogs?

SKURNICK: I think what Jane said about Dwight saying that it's like sticking your finger in an electric socket is interesting because I actually don't read blogs anymore. Hardly at all. I read our blog, and the Critical Mass blog report. But I really did burn out on them and now I read the actual magazines; I read the paper. I'm not speaking for every blogger here, but I've been doing this now for four years, and a lot of my friends who used to blog, around the three- or four-year mark, right when the world started blogging, we all kind of stopped. There's sort of a joke on the blogosphere about how people don't post except to post to put up excuses for why they're not posting. I read Alex Ross's blog, The Rest Is Noise.

I know the Atlantic Monthly has rolled out a huge group of blogs and all the journalists blogging for them seem to be excited about it. I want to see if in four years, the journalists can still keep up with putting down their occasional thoughts, putting down their impressions, because as novel as it seems at first, the minute you're talking to a thousand people you're thinking, I actually don't want to talk to a thousand people about what I just read in the bathroom. I had no idea that many people were reading. So I think that's also something to be cautious about—that now, like the culture at large, we're experiencing what people who are bored at their jobs used to experience. I'm not sure whether it's going to be possible to sustain it—because it's much harder to do than radio, frankly.

TANENHAUS: Can I make an old fogyish comment here? First of all, Dwight Garner's blog, which appears in the Book Review online, is a revelation to me—just the sheer amount of labor that goes into it. He posts twice a day and he has a couple of regular features he does each week. On Wednesday he has something called the Play List, where he goes to authors, prominent ones, and asks them to list the music they're listening to. It's a good idea, and other bloggers have done it too because writers have this sneaking desire to be fashionable. It makes writers feel cool if they can list obscure records. He also does something on Friday, where he asks authors a series of prepared questions. Editing Dwight Garner means looking at it and saying, "Gee, that's great," then hitting the button that sends it online. At any given moment he has half a dozen or more works in progress that are not ready to be posted, which means he is generating a tremendous volume of material. And just in terms of the hours he puts in, it's labor-intensive. And the good ones are those who work at it.

But the more old fogyish comment I want to make is that we talk in generalized ways about the blogs we like and the voices we like and such, but we know it's not the kind of writing that forms the basis of our critical tradition. When we look back at the history of criticism—William Hazlitt and Samuel Johnson to Samuel Coleridge and Matthew Arnold and up through the
great Americans, Edmund Wilson and Lionel Trilling and Mary McCarthy—we know something is missing. I’m referring to the actual content of the individual thing they’re writing. What’s not clear to me is, if one is producing at this tremendous rate, day after day, that you get the kind of criticism that you do from, say, a James Wood, or a Louis Menand, who’s writing in a much different kind of tone and style, with a different approach to what a book does, what the culture does. So my question is, assuming that at least some of us still prize that, how will that survive in this new post-literary universe we’ve created? I have no clue, and if anybody else does please enlighten me.

CIABATTARI: I’d differentiate between blogging and online reviewing, because I do think there’s a big difference. Sam just used some words that are not often associated with blogs when he said, “I edit.” But a lot of blogs are not edited. I’m not saying that that makes them not good, but it’s the flip side or the downside of it being involved in this sort of immediate “put your finger in the socket” kind of exercise—you’re writing and all you have to do is push a button and have a thousand people or more out there hear what you have to say. It’s both heady and terrifying. And sometimes you—any of us—would benefit from having a Times editor, or somebody else, take a look at it and ask, Is this really what you meant? That’s why Paper Cuts is a blog technically, because it’s in Dwight Garner’s voice and it’s his commentary. But there are all kinds of blogs, and those of his that I’ve read tend to be more reportage than impressionistic. They’re editorials really. I mean we’re talking about blogging but we’re really talking about reviewing; they’re different things. When Jim Atlas reviews a book, whether it’s online or it’s in the Book Review, it’s the same voice, it’s just in a different format. But I think there’s another type of reviewing that has grown up in the blogosphere because of the nature of the technology.

TANENHAUS: So what happens to the older ones? I think of what Sidney [Sidney Offit, Authors Guild Foundation President] pointed out earlier, the distinction I was also taught in college, between criticism and reviewing. Where does criticism thrive? Is there real criticism in the blogosphere? Lizzie, do you find it?

SKURNICK: It does exist, to a certain extent. I don’t tend to read it but there’s NBCC’s Critical Mass, which Jane mentioned earlier, and a place called The Valve that aggregates reviews—some of which are online-only reviews. But it’s really difficult to read a long piece online. That said, all kinds of publications run online-only pieces: The New Republic is running online-only pieces, Slate has been running book reviews for years as well as very long-form pieces. I think the only worry is that when people read something long online they worry they’re going to ruin their eyes. Because I’m over 30, I of course print it out. Maybe what we’re really asking is, Do young people pay attention? And if that’s the problem, we can never solve it.

CIABATTARI: They’re reading Harry Potter. All the Harry Potter books.

One of the things that’s going on right now with book critics is we’re trying to figure out ways to add to the voices in the cultural discussion of books. We’re starting to think about a syndicated book review that would be from the NBCC, and made available online. We’re also collaborating with Powell’s Review a Day to recommend one review by a NBCC member per week. It goes to all of the Powell’s Review a Day subscribers and is published at the Powell’s website, which gets a lot of traffic. We’re considering an anthology of reviews, just to bring attention to the form. And we’re sponsoring a lot of programs, from panels on the changes in academic libraries to an upcoming panel on Edmund Wilson, in collaboration with the Library of America, which is publishing new editions of Wilson’s critical classics.

Harper’s continues to run 4,000-word book reviews in print; The New Yorker has expanded its print coverage; Bookforum is expanding exponentially online. They’re going to be doing dozens of reviews online in the 2,000- to 5,000-word category. And I think a lot of people will print those out. But the distribution is instant and inexpensive; there’s no added cost of gas spent trucking it to a place. A lot of distributors have gone out of business, including the one that did a lot of deliveries of literary magazines to the Barnes & Nobles of the world.

I think we’re in a transition period, and I think there will continue to be a rich mix of reviews—though not necessarily the same ones we’re used to now. I personally am very fond of going into a library and seeing a stand-alone book section like The New York Times Book Review. I grew up in a little town in the Midwest and I could get The New York Times Book Review in my local library. I was at a library on Mulberry Street last week, and there between two beautiful plastic sheets to protect it was The New York Times Book Review. I know what it’s like to be in the mountains in a thunderstorm; you lose your electricity. I can’t imagine losing print.

NELSON: We’re talking about reviews of books for people who are used to picking something up and turning pages. There’s a lot of discussion about the fact that young people aren’t doing that so much, but as publishers we have all the same issues that every other publication has about what should be online; should
we put the whole magazine online and what should be behind the pay wall? Maybe we’re backward, but there does seem to be a sense in the book community that the print thing is still very valuable. A searchable database of reviews would be nice. We’re working on it. But the readers of Publishers Weekly are people who want to pick something up and take it on the train. And I have to say, there is something of an age divide. When I go out and talk to publishing people about what they want to read, and which format they want to read it in, there is a sense that there are a lot of people 35 and under, or 30 and under, who are starting out in the business and who are very, very interested in reading it on the web. But there are still lots and lots of people who say they want to see it in a magazine.

One of the things that continues to dog me in the three years I’ve been at PW—and we go back and forth on this—is the sense that if it’s not on paper it doesn’t exist. In the beginning, when I would say to people, we’re going to review this book but we’re going to review it online and not in the magazine there was the sense that, Well, we’re not getting the real review. But that has changed somewhat too. Now sometimes people say, Well, aren’t you going to put it in the daily tomorrow? And also, Aren’t you going to put it online right away? Because they want it on there. Really what they want is to have it in both places. The conundrum for me is to figure out how to do that, and I’m not just talking about reviews here; I’m talking about news stories as well, because you don’t want to put exactly the same stuff in the magazine that you’re going to put online, because then people will stop subscribing to the magazine. Maybe this is just wishful thinking on my part, but more so than in other businesses, in ours, readers are readers and they like to hold something in their hands and turn the pages.

BLOUNT: Let’s see what the audience might want to know more about.

Q: What can an author do about the fact that just a few reviewers are reviewing books in new media and they’re getting more vicious?

TANENHAUS: Do you mean the reviews themselves are getting more vicious? Is that what you meant?

Q: I write novels for young adults, and one magazine said my book was perfect—perfectly dreadful. So... definitely sarcasm.

BLOUNT: Maybe young adults have started writing the reviews.

NELSON: One of the things that is disturbing, and it relates to what we’ve been talking about, is that one reviewer you look to in order to see if he gave it a star before you give it a star. We don’t do that. The great thing about being so far in advance pre-pub is you can go out on a limb, and the scary thing is you’re out on a limb by yourself for a while. I’m happy to be brave and be out there, but I’m also happy when somebody else tends to agree with me—not me personally but with the magazine. In terms of complaining about reviews—you know, people complain about their reviews all the time.

TANENHAUS: Look at our letters page.

NELSON: Yes, and those are the ones that they can print.

BLOUNT: There was actually a letter in the Times Book Review complaining about how many letters you run by authors complaining.

NELSON: I think a nasty, sarcastic review certainly doesn’t serve an author very well. I also think it’s probably easier to write a smart, snarky, negative

"I think a nasty, sarcastic review certainly doesn’t serve an author very well. I also think it’s probably easier to write a smart, snarky, negative review than to write a decent, thoughtful, negative review.”

—Sara Nelson
review than to write a decent, thoughtful, negative review. And I think people sometimes mistake snarkiness for style. It's really hard to receive a bad review. And once you've had one, it's a lot harder to write one. But what we're talking about is intelligent reviewing, where you say, This works and this doesn't work and this fits in here with the writer's other work or with the genre or whatever. That's not all going to be positive, but I think that's what most reasonable people strive to do.

**BLOUNT:** I always think the best letters to the editor complaining about a review are the ones that say, "I really appreciate how much your reviewer loved my book, but there's one little thing . . ." "I appreciate the great review but . . ."

**Q:** I'd like to hear what you think about the state of children's books.

**TANENHAUS:** May I make a general pious remark, which is that I hope people realize this is one of the golden ages of children's and young adult publishing. Everybody's tired of hearing about J. K. Rowling, but she is the great literary phenomenon of this era. She's the Beatles of literature. I have a 15-year-old who was breathlessly waiting for the last novel and then, when it came out, was afraid she was unworthy of reading it because she had had doubts about the sixth novel and felt disloyal. There were sections of it she didn't like. Those are responses that Dickens once got, that now only YA novels and children's books get. And I hope you notice that we now separate YA from children's books. That was the idea of our children's books editor, Julie Just, because they are an extraordinarily vibrant phenomenon.

I mention my daughter again. When I was 15, I was reading—it always sounds pornographic—adult fiction. But she still reads YA books. She's reading The Book Thief now. She's a very serious, careful, devoted reader. She reads with that attentiveness with which I read Stendhal at her age. It is a great moment. And it's astonishing to me that these books are not covered more widely because we talk about the decline in fiction or the death of the novel and here's a place where it's actually thriving in a most remarkable way. We live in a winner-take-all culture, so except for Rowling or Philip Pullman or Louis Sachar, attention isn't being paid to a genre that is vastly, and uniformly, better than it was before. It's interesting to me that it hasn't been the subject of a serious cultural essay or something. Maybe that has something to do with the blogosphere. But at any rate, more power to you. I'm amazed there are only five places that review YA novels. Is that true?

**Q:** I've had books favorably reviewed in the Times, but I've never been asked to review. How does one get to review for the Times?

**TANENHAUS:** That happened to me too. I had a book published about 10 years ago, very favorably reviewed, and I sort of sat by the phone and waited for it to ring and it doesn't happen. You can send me a note to remind me who you are. Remind me about the review; if you have clips send them in. It's really just a matter of swimming into our consciousness. As the editor of the section, one doesn't remember every book that was reviewed, partly because we're doing them so far in advance. We're sending the books out months in advance, we're scheduling them weeks in advance, we're closing the section 11 days before the cover date of the section you receive. It sounds like we're processing units in a factory somewhere, but the volume is hard to keep up with.

So too with the individual editors who are assigning books for review. They run through—I'm dating myself—their Rolodexes in their mind, to think who might be good. We are collectively not as alert as we should be to new authors and new voices—even when we have favorably reviewed their book. But it's something we're trying to change. I think we've had some success. A number of reviewers who write for us fairly often now—two I'll mention in particular are Lorraine Adams, the novelist, and Megan Marshall, the biographer—came to us because we liked their books. In fact, in the case of Megan Marshall, she wrote a very polite letter to the editor pointing out an error in our review, which was quite elegantly done; before we knew it we were using her as a reviewer. Once you swim into that system where we're aware of you, then the assignments will come. So it's kind of a matter of letting us know about you. E-mail my last name at NYTimes.com and it'll reach me.

**Q:** [About the effect of a negative review from Publishers Weekly when posted as the lead review on Amazon.com.]

**NELSON:** It is true that we license our reviews to Amazon and they are usually the first review that is up there. I want to correct a couple things. I have no problems with Amazon, but sometimes it seems like Amazon is the whole book business now, though in fact it's something like 10 percent of the business, a little bit more for certain kinds of books, business books and other things. But as Jane said, that one review so prominently placed can feel like 20 bad reviews. I get a lot of calls and a lot of letters saying, I could live with seeing it in the magazine but there it is for everybody to see. There's nothing to say about that except many,
whether favorable or unfavorable is limited publisher out for As We TANENHAUS: Q: Both. I do to viewed? Q: it advance, make try ter subject thing pile which that's have "Maybe" pile, which they sit around with these books and there is a "Yes" pile which is this big [indicates very low] and the "No" pile which is this big [medium height] and the "Maybe" pile, which is this big [much higher], because that's the hard one. And then it's, Do we know something about the author? Does something about the subject or the plot appeal? We try to be publisher blind. We try to be jacket blind—you know, just because a book has a nice jacket doesn't mean it's a better book. We're human and it's hard but we really do try to keep the range broad. We do a certain number of nonfiction books every week, a certain number of science fiction, and so forth. There is some time to make the decision; we try to publish three months in advance, but we will consider a book one week and if it doesn't get in, reconsider it the next week.

Q: What can a first-time author do to get her book reviewed?

SKURNICK: Facebook? But if you're saying, What do I do to get a review into print, that's different. Is that what you're saying?

Q: Both. How can a writer approach the Times to get a book reviewed?

TANENHAUS: It's pretty much up to the publisher. We really don't expect to hear from an author. The publisher sends the galleys, the advance reading copy. As Sara said, there are a lot of books coming in. And limited space. The editors evaluate the books submitted and make the decision whether to send something out for review. The single most important decision we make is whether to review a book. Reviews being favorable or unfavorable is much less important than whether a book is reviewed at all. Readers' perceptions of book reviews are very different from those of authors, publishers and other inside literary people. Your typical reader looks at them quite differently. The assumption is that almost every review is favorable since it has been published—that there's no such thing as bad publicity.

As Sara said before, I think a negative review can be much more helpful than a bland review. Because readers, who have a kind of naïve sophistication about all this, know a review is only one person's opinion, and so if a book has provoked an opinion—and an intense opinion—that would indicate that there's something going on in the book. The classic example for us in recent years was when we published an absolutely devastating review of Bernard-Henri Lévy's last book by Garrison Keillor. It became a kind of national joke. Whenever Lévy was on tour he would always mention Garrison Keillor and it brought down the house. And he thanked me for it. He invited me out to lunch and he thanked me for it because he said a bland review that had run in the back of the book would have attracted no attention at all. Instead, this one put him on the bestseller list; it made him a kind of hero. So I wouldn't worry about the critical review; getting no attention at all is tougher.

BLOUNT: I would think maybe for a book about the Coen Brothers, you could just bug your publisher to make sure they send copies to a movie magazine.

TANENHAUS: By the way, sometimes the best attention you can get for a book is not in the book review pages. A book like Thomas Frank's What's the Matter with Kansas? made its way to The New York Times because columnists were writing about it.

Q: [As translated and commented on by Roy Blount] Is it true that The New York Times is not interested in health and nutrition books? No wonder the country's so fat.

TANENHAUS: It's true, we tend not to do them unless they make a broader social argument. If it's an advice or how-to book we don't, except in the rarest of circumstances. But as a rule we don't.

BLOUNT: Thank you very much. We appreciate all of you [to panelists] and all of you [to audience]. ✦
Along Publishers Row

Continued from page 2

ing an affair with his estranged wife. Bala, the Associated Press reported, was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

FICTION'S SOURCE: In 1876, Mark Twain described where he got his material for The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

Twain wrote, “Most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred. One or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were schoolmates of mine. Huck Finn is drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual—he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture.”

MEMOIR: Jordan Belfort, former head of a brokerage house, spent 22 months in prison for swindling investors out of more than $100 million. He said that while he was in prison, he read Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities at least five times and was inspired to write a book that The New York Times called a "rolllicking, often scabrous account of his lusts and depredations on the fringes of Wall Street." The book, out last September, is entitled The Wolf of Wall Street.

Director Martin Scorsese has bought the film rights, and Leonardo DiCaprio is scheduled to star.

According to The Times, Belfort "says he sees the book as an atonement. He says he has stayed away from the markets and no longer has a taste for drugs, prostitutes and other illicit pleasures that once consumed him." He has a contract for another book and writes eight to nine hours a day. He must pay investors 50 percent of his gross income until they receive $110 million.

GOING GRAPHIC: Terry Brooks has been an author for 30 years. He hit the charts in 1977 with his first novel, The Sword of Shannara. Publishers Weekly said he's had 20 best-sellers with more than 21 million copies in print. His first graphic novel, Dark Wraith of Shannara, is due out in the spring.

PROMOTION: Jenna Bush is the 25-year-old daughter of the president and author of Ana's Story, a novel for young adults. Her fictional heroine has been an abused child who has AIDS.

The Today show gave the smiling blonde about 30 minutes of air time, punctuated by commercials for a Frankie Valli album, 1-800 Dentist, local New York news of a sex abuse trial, a traffic report and weather (onsshore breeze predicted) and the usual screaming tourists outside the studio in Rockefeller Center.

Bush told a fawning interviewer that she wrote the book after teaching "kids" and visiting Latin America because "I was so inspired." Yes, her father had read the book when it was in galleys, and he was proud.

"He's not the President of the United States," she said, "he's my father."

The TV cameraman zoomed in on the author’s engagement ring, a diamond flanked by two dark sapphires. Her upcoming wedding was discussed.

The editor of Ana's Story appeared on the screen and said that the publisher expected the book to be an instant bestseller. Bush took off for more appearances on other TV shows and then began a 25-city book tour.

The New Yorker's Ben McGrath wrote: "The book has a spare, verging-on-hardboiled prose style . . . and suggests that Jenna may yet have a future following Margaret Truman and Susan Ford into the mystery-novel genre."

VIEWPOINT: Marcel Proust observed: "Only through art can we get outside of ourselves and know another's view of the universe which is not the same as ours and see landscapes which would otherwise have remained unknown to us like the landscapes of the moon."

CHANGE: Michael Gates Gill grew up in a Bronxville mansion and became an advertising executive earning $160,000 a year. Then he lost that job and divorces took their toll. He now earns $10.50 an hour making coffee at Starbucks and has written a book titled How Starbucks Saved My Life: A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else. An excerpt appeared in the AARP magazine.

In it, Gill wrote, "When he was alive, my father, Brendan Gill, a celebrated writer for The New Yorker magazine, had access and power, and he made sure I had it as well. Over the years, I met the likes of Andy Warhol, E. B. White, Ernest Hemingway, Jacqueline Kennedy and Ezra Pound.”

In an interview, Gill told The New York Times, "I remember John Updike coming out to the house, and my father said, you have to rub his hair; he has the smoothest hair of any animal in the world.”

Gill now lives in a small rental apartment and most of his furniture is backyard plastic. He went on part-time at Starbucks while he traveled to promote his book.

SHARING: Iris Johansen's Killer Dreams is a best-selling paperback. There are more than 21 million copies of her books in print.

PW said that she signed a deal with St. Martin's to collaborate on two thrillers with her son Roy Johansen, an Edgar award-winning novelist and screenwriter. Their first collaboration, Silent Thunder, will be out next summer.
ROSEMARY'S BABIES: Ira Levin, 78, died in November (see Deaths). He was the author of several best-sellers, including Rosemary's Baby. In an obituary in the Los Angeles Times, he was quoted as having said: "I feel guilty that Rosemary's Baby led to The Exorcist, The Omen. A whole generation has been exposed, has more belief in Satan. I don't believe in Satan. And I feel that the strong fundamentalism we have would not be as strong if there hadn't been so many of these books.

"Of course," he added, "I didn't send back any of the royalty checks."

NICE GIFT: A first edition of Wuthering Heights, published with Emily Bronte's pseudonym Ellis Bell, sold at auction in London for $236,000. The book belonged to Anne Reid, who had received it as a gift from her grandfather. The book had been in her family for four generations.


He sent us an interview that appeared on the blog Bookpleasure.com. Miller was asked what had driven him as a writer and what kept him working.

He replied: "I like to find out what's going on when nobody's looking. What makes people celebrate and what humiliates them... The creative writing school nonsense that you should write what you know? Ridiculous. You should write what you're curious about... What's on someone's bedside table? What tree is planted in the backyard? I remain curious about people and places whose qualities can provoke my interest endlessly."

SHOWCASE: Nancy Zaroulis, a Guild member from Newton Cen-
tre, Mass., sent in an e-mail: "I have started a new Web site where traditionally published authors can showcase their work. They can upload first pages, cover images, and more... And BookZillion is free!" Details may be had at www.bookzillion.com.

COVER MAN: Chip Kidd has designed more than 1,000 book covers and was awarded a 2007 Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award. He told Smithsonian magazine, "I try to avoid something that's literal. I did a cover several years ago for the novel My Name Is Red by Orhan Pamuk. The title is in blue. But of course rules were made to be broken. I did Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses, and what's on the cover? A pretty horse. But it was showing just the mane, not the entire body, as if the horse became a part of the landscape."

Kidd believes that the book is not about to become obsolete because it is "the most concise piece of technology to deliver what it delivers. When the last Harry Potter book came out, kids weren't downloading it. They were lining up at bookstores. People like something they can pop into their bag."

SEQUEl? James Frey made headlines (and got a public scolding on television from Oprah Winfrey) when it was decided that his bestselling "memoir," A Million Little Pieces, had too much fiction in it. The publisher, Random House's Doubleday, agreed to pay up to $2.35 million to readers who said they were defrauded.

Now Frey has signed a new book deal for a novel, Bright Shiny Morning, with HarperCollins. The money amount was not disclosed. Frey's agent, Eric Simonoff, told The New York Times that he and Frey had decided not to seek an auction, despite the fact that "in the past three days, quite literally every house in New York City called and asked to see it."

HIS WAY: Ha Jin's new novel is A Free Life. His Waiting won a National Book Award. The author, who grew up in China, is in the English Department at Boston University.

Jin told PW, "I don't think of the audience when I write. I just try to make the story work, to make it meaningful and nuanced."

Jin's first language is Chinese, and he said, "I will never feel at home in English, so the books involve so much labor and so much risk... There's an absence of spontaneity. If you read Conrad and Nabokov, you see it, too, but they know how to turn it to advantage; they create their own style. I don't exactly try to emulate them, but I try to understand their logic, then find my own way."

TOO MANY? The late M.F.K. Fisher is appreciated for the unique way she wrote about food. Joan Reardon wrote a biography entitled Poet of the Appetites: The Lives and Loves of M.F.K. Fisher.

In Reardon's book, there is an excerpt from a letter Fisher wrote to her younger sister: "I seem to have no special interest, no interest really, in selling things and seeing them printed. I believe there are too many books, too many people writing, above all too many women writing. But I write without really wanting to. I write probably 10 hours a day, mostly in my mind. Now I am writing while I garden, mulling over and over, almost like the daydreams that flow with somnolific music..."
Shea of The Boston Globe. Wood’s reviews were described by Shea as “immensely learned, barbed essays, utterly unbowed by conventional wisdom.”

Wood told Shea, “I do think the job of a critic is to try to find some kind of vital current in the literary culture.”

Lindsay Waters of Harvard University Press said that with Englishmen installed as prominent critics at The New Yorker and The Atlantic (Christopher Hitchens), “it’s like being in America before 1830, before Emerson arose. We still need to declare our independence.”


BIG THEMES: Pat Barker won the Booker Prize in 1995 for The Ghost Road. Her latest, titled Life Class, is the final volume in her Regeneration trilogy.

Barker’s fiction deals with major events like war, and PW asked her why so many serious writers today focused more on themselves.

Barker said, “I agree that much contemporary fiction is egocentric and introspective, partly perhaps because individual writers typically do not have a sense of connection to major events, which they usually experience as passive observers via television. Contemporary writers who have been born in one society and either voluntarily or as refugees have been transplanted to another culture find it easier to link their individual experience to a worldwide trend of mass migration and dislocation. It’s no accident that much of the strongest contemporary writing deals with themes of uprooting and transformation.”

HAPPY TALK: Michael Korda’s Ike: An American Hero made the bestseller list, and the retired S&;S editor told The New York Times, “Over the years, it has been my lot to tell many authors that they have hit the list—sometimes opening at No. 1, like David McCullough and Mary Higgins Clark, sometimes more humbly, lower down. It’s always one of the best telephone calls for an editor. For an author—any author—hitting the list is still the equivalent of hitting one out of the ball park, and it’s one of the unforgettable great moments in the lives of many, many writers, most of whom will say they don’t really care about hitting the list (and most will be fibbing when they say that).”

Korda added an e-mail to the Times and said getting on the list “produces a glow (alas all too temporary) that nothing else can quite equal, and that makes what somebody once called ‘the grubby and lonely task of writing books’ seem suddenly worthwhile, and even glamorous.”

FIRST FICTION: Dr. Jonathan Hayes was a forensic pathologist in New York City. Now he has become a novelist with Precious Blood. He was interviewed for PW by novelist Linda Fairstein, who has a background in law enforcement too.

Hayes said, “I’d been writing professionally about food and travel for several years before I felt ready to write a novel. Precious Blood has its origins in my heavily Catholic childhood—I was educated, in part, at a monastery school in southwest England. I actually started the book in Oaxaca in Mexico, after a day spent visiting the city’s gothic churches. Their walls and ceilings have insanely detailed gilt decoration, thousands of hours of painstaking work; I was struck by the fact that religion and obsession are often very closely linked. It wasn’t a big step from there to the book’s essential plot.”

BUSY: Ethan Hawke is an actor, director and novelist. In an interview by Deborah Solomon for The New York Times Magazine, he said, “I always wanted to have an interesting life, and spending your life on a film set does not a great human being make. If I could be great at one art form, it would be writing, because I really respect it and it is not so ephemeral. My mother wanted me to be a novelist. In a way I am a construction of my mother’s imagination.”

CONFLICTING COMMANDS: In position No. 11 on The New York Times fiction bestseller list was Ann Patchett’s Run; at No. 12 was Stuart Woods’s Shoot Him If He Runs.

TITLE TROUBLE: Robert I. Sutton is author of a bestseller, The No Asshole Rule. The New York Times called the book The No ****** Rule, and the title created problems when Sutton was interviewed on radio. The author says the book is about “how to survive in destructive work places where creeps rule the roost.”

In one early case, a court had ruled: “We are sympathetic to the networks’ contention that the FCC’s indecency test is undefined, indiscernible, inconsistent, and consequently, unconstitutionally vague.” But despite that earlier ruling, some stations were unwilling to risk the FCC’s $300,000 fine just so Sutton could use the ‘a’ word.

Sutton wrote in a PW essay that he respected his hosts’ problem and instead of asshole used, “jerk, bully, beep, beephole, a-beep, a-hole, schmuck, tormentor, work-
place weasel and my favorite: ‘Starts with the letter “a” and rhymes with castle.’"

AUCTIONED: A complete set of all seven Harry Potter books signed by author J. K. Rowling was auctioned on e-Bay for a charity that provides books for children in 80 countries. Agence-France-Presse reported that the books sold for $37,100.

OBSERVATION: Sara Nelson is editor of PW. In a recent column, she wrote, “It has oft been said—and oft despairingly—that the book business has become more and more like the TV and movie biz, what with the corporate ownership, the Philistine sensibilities, the blockbuster mentality and the focus on the bottom line. Books these days are supposed to ‘open’ like Brad Pitt films and run like Law and Order. Most of all, they’re supposed to turn a big profit.”

But what if the writers of books went on strike? Nelson continued, “Imagine if they could convince Joyce Carol Oates to put down her pen, if only for a few days. Think of the books that would live!”

BEST LAID PLANS: “The task of unveiling a big book,” said The New York Times, “especially one with great news interest or enormous popular demand—has changed dramatically in recent years as players in an increasingly competitive news media seek to be the first to unveil content, and the Internet makes it more difficult to keep books under wraps.”

Alan Greenspan’s The Age of Turbulence was carefully choreographed by the publisher for a Monday release with an interview on Sunday’s 60 Minutes, an excerpt in Newsweek, and author appearances on Monday’s Today show and many other outlets. But on Friday night The Wall Street Journal bought a copy of the book and ran a story online. The Times and The Washington Post had front-page articles on Saturday and all three carried interviews with Greenspan on Monday.

“The gentlemen’s agreements that once existed between publishers and media outlets,” said the Times, “have long since fallen by the wayside, as embargoes are seen as catnip to reporters chasing news.”

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: Smithsonian magazine included ZZ Packer in a special issue about “America’s Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences.” Packer, 34, is a graduate of Yale and she attended writing programs at Johns Hopkins and Iowa Writers’ Workshop. A short-story collection, Drinking Coffee Elsewhere, was published in 2003. Packer has been working on a historical novel for six years. It is tentatively titled The Thousands. She said, “I’ve become a better writer than I was when I wrote the beginning. Writing the novel has taught me how to write the novel.”

Asked if she worried about the high expectations her early success has engendered, she said, “You can’t think about that every day. You have to plow ahead. Now I respect bad novelists because at least they’ve finished.”

NICHE: In the movie Dan in Real Life, there is a scene in a bookstore in which a woman named Marie (Juliette Binoche) tells the hero (Steve Carell) that she’s looking for a certain kind of book. She says, “I want something funny. But not laugh-out-loud funny. And definitely not making-fun-of-people funny. I want something human funny.”

Know any book like that?

GOOD GRADS: Barnard College in Manhattan is getting a reputation as a place that turns out successful writers. Graduates include Mary Gordon, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anna Quindlen, Edwidge Danticat, Erica Jong, Rosellen Brown, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Tama Janowitz and Ntozake Shange.

Former student and current teacher Maxine Swann tells students, “Each of us has a private interior vision, sees the world the way nobody else does, and what you’re trying to do is transcribe that.”

Mary Gordon told The New York Times that Barnard’s secret is that it “pays attention to women’s voices” when historically “in the literary world it is the male voice that is the default setting.” She added, “What I felt was that these extraordinary women that I revered were paying attention to me and believed in me, and I felt maybe I can do this because these terrific women were saying I can.”


About this new book, Diaz said, “I would write two hundred pages, get . . . depressed and crazy, sit around for two months, and then come back and write another two hundred pages. It was endless. Sometimes they don’t come easy.”

RETURNED: A 10th anniversary trade paperback of Mitch Albom’s Tuesdays with Morrie put the book back on the bestseller lists. PW says it has sold more than 10 million copies.

WINNING BIG: A few days after Stuart Dybek (author of story collections The Coast of Chicago and I Sailed with Magellan) got word that he was a MacArthur “genius” and would receive a grant of a half million dollars, he was named recipient
RELATIVES: In 1980, Graham Greene published *Ways of Escape: An Autobiography*. He wrote: "The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author—they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut and they grow into independence. The more the author knows of his own character, the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in."

THAT'S BAD? Garrison Keillor's new novel about Lake Wobegon, *Pontoon*, hit bestseller lists, and The New York Times reported that before his earlier *Lake Wobegon Days* was published, the author had told PW that "a minimum of 15 reviews of this book will refer to me as 'a modern-day Mark Twain.' Anyone who comes from anywhere west of Eighth Avenue is another Mark Twain."

In The New York Times Book Review, Veronica Geng didn't mention Twain. She compared Keillor to James Thurber.

PW reported that while Keillor was promoting *Pontoon* at the Northshire Bookstore in Manchester, Vt., he told fans that the book was fun to write. The ending, he said, came from a story he once told on his radio show. He said, "I had to work my way back to the beginning, which is what a lot of mystery or horror writers do."

Keillor based one character on an aunt of his. He said, "You only need a sliver of reality to get you started, and the rest writes itself; just a little DNA, and you can raise a story from a small seed."

HAPPY TALK: It's 1929 in Stockholm, and Nobel laureate Thomas Mann (Magic Mountain) is sitting at a luncheon next to Selma Lagerloef, another Nobel laureate in literature. Mann described that event in *7 Arts*, a paperback published in 1953.

Mann wrote, "We talked about her most popular work, the world famous *Goesta Berling Saga* and the amazing career of this novel in all languages and across borders. 'Dear me, yes,' she said, ‘it turned out like that, but you must not suppose I thought much of it when I wrote the book. I wrote it down for my young nieces and nephews. It was a form of amusement like any another. We thought it fun, you know, and it made us laugh.'

"I was delighted for the same thing happened to me. I told her about the case of the book which played a similar role in my professional life . . . I mean *Buddenbrooks*. This too had originally been a family matter and family entertainment, scribbled as a lark by a rather harum-scarum youth of twenty. I read it to my people, and we laughed until we cried. That the world would know how to take hold of it: that this novel, or whatever it was, would become the occasion and ground for my sitting here in Stockholm beside the author of *Goesta Berling*; such an idea never entered our heads as we sat there and laughed."

NEW SERIES: Jan Karon's Mitford series has sold 25 million copies, PW said. She has started a new series with her fictional Father Tim, *Home to Holly Springs*, out last October.

BIOS: Ross Miller, a literature professor at the University of Connecticut, and a friend of Philip Roth, is working on a biography of Roth. Michael Lennon is working on a biography of Norman Mailer. Patrick French is writing an authorized account of V. S. Naipaul.

But Rachel Donadio, an editor at The New York Times Book Review, wrote that writing a biography of a living figure can include problems. Gore Vidal asked Fred Kaplan to write his biography but didn't like it when Kaplan noted Vidal's "narcissistic egomania, his fascination with celebrity, his need to be in the spotlight, his evasion from serious self-analysis, that kind of thing," Kaplan said. "But not in a judgmental way."

Hermione Lee, biographer of Edith Wharton, Virginia Woolf and Willa Cather, said, "I must say I have been glad to work with the safely dead."

Blake Bailey, currently working on a life of John Cheever, said, "I would have a hard time writing a single page without worrying what the consequences might be . . . and would almost certainly end up diluting the content somewhat."

THE KEY: Paul Theroux told The New York Times Book Review, "I regard writing criticism as a duty, but also a pleasure, to honor the joy of reading. And it seems that only through writing—about anything—that I can make my mind up and reach a conclusion."

NAME CALLING: We don't seem to have literary feuds these days the way the Victorians did. This one was described in The Saturday Review Reader in 1950:

Algernon Charles Swinburne told Edmund Gosse that he was quarreling with Ralph Waldo Emerson by mail.

Gosse said, "I hope your language is quite moderate."

"Perfectly moderate," Swinburne assured him. "I merely informed him, in language of the strictest reserve, that he was a hoary-headed and toothless baboon, who, first lifted into notice on the shoulder of [Thomas] Carlyle, now spits and sputters from a filthier platform of

of the 2007 Rea Award for the Short Story. The prize was $30,000.
his own finding and fouling. That is all I said.”

Carlyle had refused to meet Swinburne because he did not care to meet anyone “who was sitting in a sewer and adding to it.”

FAREWELL, HYPHEN: The article’s title was “Death-Knell. Or Death Knell.” Charles McGrath of The New York Times wrote that Angus Stevenson, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, had eliminated some 16,000 hyphens from the sixth edition. Stevenson said, “People are not confident about using hyphens anymore. They’re not really sure what they’re for.”

Most of those dropped hyphens were those linking the halves of a compound noun. Ice cream, fig leaf, hobby horse and water bed will be two words while bumblebee, crybaby and pigeonhole are one.

McGrath concluded: “We may feel a little under-dressed—under-dressed, rather—without them.”

AMEN: In his introduction to The Best American Essays 2007, editor David Foster Wallace admitted that the volume was heavy on politics and lacked profiles of the famous. He wrote, “I now actually want to know less than I know about most celebrities.”

NEW SETTING: The Spiderwick Chronicles began in 2003, and the series for the young has sold six million copies.

Holly Black said on her blog that she and coauthor Tony DiTerlizzi have introduced new characters in a different locale. She wrote, “Instead of being set in a small New England town, The Nixie Song is set in a shiny new development in Florida.”

NO. 8: Fatal Revenant by Stephen R. Donaldson is the eighth in his Thomas Covenant fantasy series that began more than 30 years ago. The books have sold more than 10 million copies worldwide. PW said that Donaldson toured six cities to promote the latest.

MORE FANTASY: Christopher Paolini’s Eragon and Eldest were to be part of a trilogy, but after the third volume is published next year, the author will write a fourth. The first two in the “Inheritance” series have sold 12.5 million copies worldwide.

The author, who began writing the first book when he was 15, told The New York Times that “when I finally delved into Book 3, it soon became obvious that the remainder of the story was far too big to fit in one volume.”

TWO CARVERS: Tess Gallagher, novelist, poet and widow of Raymond Carver, wants to publish 17 of Carver’s stories without the editing that was the work of Gordon Lish. The New York Times reported that Carver’s first book, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, “became a literary sensation,” and “was credited with popularizing a minimalist style.” According to the Times, Carver, before he died at the age of 50 in 1988, tried to set the record straight. “He restored and re-published five of the stories in magazines or later collections.”

Max Rudin, publisher of the Library of America, told the Times, “There are always going to be readers who will feel that Gordon Lish did Raymond Carver a favor, or at least worked the kind of editorial magic that he was supposed to, and others who disagree, who will feel that Lish hijacked the stories, cutting and shaping them to serve his own, not Carver’s vision.”

Charles McGrath, who now writes for The New York Times, was once Carver’s editor at The New Yorker. At the end of a long essay, McGrath concluded: “That the author did not insist on restoring all the stories in his lifetime suggests that at the least he was ambivalent. But the evidence also suggests that he eventually outgrew Mr. Lish. What happened to Raymond Carver, and what accounts for that unexpected late flowering, is that over time he learned how to be his own best editor.”

HIS BIDDING: “Karen Kingsbury is a fixture on PW’s monthly religion charts,” the magazine said. But in a recent interview on Crosswalk.com, Kingsbury said, “God did not want me to be about bestseller lists or numbers. It was not where God wanted my heart. He wanted me to glorify him by writing books that would draw people to him.”

Kingsbury’s most recent title is Summer. Amazon.com lists nine other titles, including Halfway to Forever and Where Yesterday Lives.

In a USA Today article, Kingsbury’s editor, Sue Brower, was quoted, “She reaches into you, rips out your heart and helps mend it with stories.”


Solomon: “Compared with [Gabriel Garcia Marquez], your style is more rooted in sprawling, panoramic narratives of the 19th-century novel.”

Llosa: “My God! I hope this is true. The apogee of the novel was in the 19th century, with Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Melville and Dickens . . .”

Solomon: “What do you have against psychoanalysis?”

Llosa: “It’s too close to fiction, and I don’t need more fiction in my life. I love stories, and my life is principally concentrated on stories, but not with a pretense of scientific precision.”

Solomon: “ Might you ever write your autobiography?”

Llosa: “Only if I reach 100 years
old will I write a very complete autobiography. Not before.”

PAT AND KAY: Patricia Cornwell’s 15th Kay Scarpetta novel, *Book of the Dead*, hit No. 1 on the hardcover bestseller list. The author says on her website that she and her heroine share certain experiences. Both were born in Miami, both have been divorced, both worked in forensic science, and both had troubled relationships with their late fathers.

JUST FOLKS: Diane Setterfield’s *The Thirteenth Tale* was a best-selling hardcover followed by a bestselling trade paperback edition.

On the website of her British publisher, Orion Press, the former French teacher wrote: “To be a writer, I thought you had to be extraordinary, and I knew I was ordinary. But desire is like an underground stream: if it can’t surface where it wants, it will divert and surface somewhere else. My wish to write novels surfaced as a wish to teach and research literature. By the time I was in my thirties I understood things better: it is books that are extraordinary; writers themselves are no more or less extraordinary than anyone else. In some ways I wish I had figured this out earlier, but overall I’m not disappointed at the way things have turned out.”

LONDON LAW: London music critic Norman Lebrecht’s *Maestros, Masterpieces & Madness: The Secret Life and Shameful Death of the Classical Record Industry* was published in July. Klaus Heymann, founder of Naxos Records, sued because of “15 inaccurate statements” and was awarded legal fees and an undisclosed sum directed to a charity. Penguin Books also sought the return of all unsold copies.

The U.S. edition remained on the market with “routine, minor factual editorial changes” made to the reprint that came out in October.

Lebrecht is a columnist for London’s Evening Standard and has a BBC radio program. The New York Times said that in his 1997 book, *Who Killed Classical Music?* Lebrecht said 750,000 people had heard Placido Domingo sing in Central Park. The number was closer to 100,000. Lebrecht identified Rudolf Bing, the Metropolitan Opera’s general manager, as a public servant.

TREND? In 1999, Sena JeterNashlund published *Ahab’s Wife or the Star Gazers*, a fictional, first-person account of the life of Captain Ahab’s wife. He, of course, is the obsessed seaman in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, which has a famous first sentence: “Call me Ishmael.” The first sentence of *Ahab’s Wife*: “Captain Ahab was neither my first husband nor my last.”

Now Lenore Hart has written a novel entitled *Becky: The Life and Loves of Becky Thatcher*. PW said the book “imagines the fictional Becky Thatcher—best known as Tom Sawyer’s crybaby girlfriend—as a strong heroine whose true story was held back by childhood friend Samuel Clemens, who chose to give the charismatic Tom Sawyer center stage in his writings.”

Are there other classics that offer such possibilities? How about Robin Hood’s shy Maid Marian? What would she say about the bandit who was a one-man welfare provider? And what did Jane really think about that illiterate hunk Tarzan?

THE BEST: Eric Weiner’s latest nonfiction, *The Geography of Bliss*, is about the happiest places on earth. Among those where he has sampled life are Bhutan, Moldova and Iceland.

PW asked the author about what makes us happy, and Weiner said, “One study found that people are happiest just before they accomplish something big. Just before you finish writing a book, when you know you’re going to make it and you’re just polishing—that’s the best.”

FINE LINE: “The Book Review’s editors, like editors everywhere, value a memorable first sentence,” according to The New York Times Book Review. Their example: “Writing here a few years ago, Kinky Friedman began a review this way: ‘There is a fine line between fiction and nonfiction, and I believe Jimmy Buffett and I snorted it in 1976.’”

Last fall, Friedman lost out in his race to become governor of Texas.

THE DIFFERENCE: Screenwriter Theresa Schwegel won an Edgar Award for best first novel, entitled *Officer Down*. Her new book is *Person of Interest*.

Schwegel explained to PW the difference between a screenplay and a novel: “In screenwriting if it’s not part of the plot, it’s not on the page. Movie dialogue is written so actors do the work: they want to say a lot with a little. When I write fiction, I try to make each scene concise and action propelled. After the scene is there, I add those things a screenwriter leaves up to the filmmakers: the costumes, props, tone and color.”

REVELATION: Harry Potter creator J. K. Rowling surprised an audience at New York’s Carnegie Hall when a young fan asked her if Dumbledore, the headmaster, finds “true love.” Rowling said, “Dumbledore is gay.” The audience, according to the AP, gasped and then applauded.

Rowling went on to explain that Dumbledore had fallen for Gellert Grindelwald, a bad guy he had defeated in a battle between good and evil. She said, “Falling in love can blind us to an extent.” Dumbledore’s love,” she explained, was his “great tragedy.”

stein concluded, “Ms. Rowling refuses to be content with simply rejecting the old order and championing a morally vague multiculturalism. The pure-bloods here are blinded by their pride, but Harry and his friends see something more profound, a threat that goes beyond self-interest and identity. This is why Dumbledore’s supposed gayness is ultimately . . . unimportant. . . . These wounded outsiders recognize the nature of evil, and finally that is what matters.”

SHOCKER: Chuck Palahniuk is the author of Fight Club and other novels that are full of violence. His latest is Rant. He told Writer’s Digest, which referred to him as “a shock writer,” that his goal is to shock himself, “to put something on the page that I never want my mother or nephews to see and that I can’t imagine reading in public. . . . [I]f you can somehow create something that you can’t conceive of at the beginning, you evolve—you discover something that was beyond your capability when you started. That makes more sense to me.”

Palahniuk explained, “My writing has to excite people or include their experiences. That way, every time I go out socially, and people ask, ‘What are you working on?’ and I tell them the premise, I end up illustrating it with anecdotes taken from hundreds of people. That’s part of my process—to go out and interact with people. It’s very much like an archival process. I understand that the Brothers Grimm would go out and get people talking so they could document folk tales that weren’t being documented any other way. I try to offer a little bit of myself—some experience from my life that evokes stories in other people.”


GORY: Tess Gerritsen’s latest best-seller is The Bone in the Garden. On her website, she warned fans that if they show up at one of her signings they can expect: “A lot of gory stories. I don’t like to read from my books, but I do like to talk about how the story came about. So I’ll be talking about the state of medicine in 1830, from what it was like to be a medical student (and how you dig up a body) to how amputations were done in that era before anesthesia. People with weak stomachs are forewarned.”

NEW ROUTE: Archer Mayor is deputy sheriff and an investigator for Vermont’s chief medical examiner. His 18th novel in his Joe Gunther series, Chat, came out in October.

Mayor himself has become a publisher in order to keep his earlier novels in print. He explained on his web page that he is reissuing his first dozen books as trade paperbacks under his own AMPress imprint. He told PW he had to mortgage his home and get investors to create AMPress.

He promoted his books by doing 88 signings in the fall.

NO BREEZE: Sue Grafton’s new mystery, starring fictional investigator Kinsey Millhone, is T Is for Trespass.

Grafton told PW: “Originally, I thought that after five or six novels, I’d get the hang of it and breeze right on through. Since I’m not interested in writing the same book twice, my challenges and the difficulties increase every time out.”

Of her fictional detective, Grafton said, “Over the years . . . she’s become more cavalier about breaking and entering and lifting other people’s mail. She knows it’s very naughty, but there are times when she simply can’t help herself. I always enjoy such escapades myself, since in my life I’m so law-abiding and well-behaved.”

AIRBORNE: Stuart Woods promoted his new novel, Shoot Him If He Runs in Georgia and Florida by flying from bookstore to bookstore in his Piper Malibu Mirage. The new novel has 241,000 copies in print.

ODD COUPLE: Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas’s autobiographical My Grandfather’s Son made the No. 1 spot on PW’s bestseller list. The same week, Jeffrey Toobin’s The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court was No. 5.

Tobin wrote of Thomas: “He was the only African American. He was more than a decade younger than most of his colleagues. . . . He was the friendliest, warmest justice, and he was full of rage.”

ACTING OUT: Mo Willems does both pictures and words. He was in a bookstore selling his latest picture book, Knuffle Bunny Too, when the father of a young fan told him that life imitated art. Willems’s earlier Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus had made a deep impression. The father explained that whenever his daughter got angry, she drew an imaginary squiggly line above her head (like the line above the pigeon’s head in the book) and stormed from the room.

ANOTHER OATES: Joyce Carol Oates has used her imagination to describe the deaths of five famous American writers. The title of her new book, due out in the spring, is Wild Nights! Stories About the Last Days of Poe, Dickinson, Twain, James and Hemingway.

PW said: “The brutal turning of Hemingway against himself sparks a torrent of rage like that of early Oates novels such as Them.”

OATES AGAIN: More than 20 of her titles are listed in the front of a new volume: The Journal of Joyce Carol Oates. Greg Johnson has edited Oates’s 4,000 single-spaced type-
written pages (written from 1973 through 1982) down to 495 pages.

The book is packed with observations about the writer’s work and life. Here’s one small sample: “The secret of being a writer: not to expect others to value what you’ve done as you value it. Not to expect anyone else to perceive in it the emotions you have invested in it. Once this is understood, all will be well.”

THE BEST PART: Tom Perrotta is the author of Little Children. His latest is The Abstinence Teacher. He told Writer’s Digest: “I just live for the last three or four months of writing a novel. Everything is in place and you just really feel it coming. That’s the great pleasure of novel writing.”

HIS TRICK: John Burdett, 53, writes detective thrillers set in Bangkok’s sordid netherworld. His Bangkok 8 has sold more than 100,000 copies in the U.S. and rights have been purchased in 19 other countries. Sequels are Bangkok Tattoo and a bestseller on the West Coast, Bangkok Haunts.

As a lawyer who grew up in London, Burdett earned enough working in Hong Kong to quit his practice and write. He has spent much of the last seven years in Bangkok. The New York Times said that he often makes final revisions to his books on the veranda of a stone farmhouse on the banks of the Lot River in southwest France. Burdett said, “The distance forces the imagination to work. It becomes an imaginative exercise rather than a factual research exercise. It’s a good mental trick to play if you can.”

SURPRISED: When it was announced that Doris Lessing had won the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature, she told a reporter from The New York Times, “I was a bit surprised because I had forgotten about it actually. My name has been on the short list for such a long time. This has been going on for 40 years.

In Memoriam
Sheila R. Allen
Gerald M. Astor
Gary Devon Blum
Judy Crichton
Diane Davidson
Isabel Eberstadt
G. Randolph Erskine
Janet Goldenberg
Elaine Childs Gowell
W. C. Heinz
William James Knight
Ira Levin
Gail Lynch
Norman Mailer
Dona Z. Meilach
Diane Middlebrook
Gloria Bley Miller
S.F. Moore
Roul Tunley
Peter Viertel
Sven Wahlroos
Sylvia Wallace
Leslie Waller
Sarah Wernick
Phyllis Whitney

Either they were going to give it to me sometime before I popped off or not at all.” She is 88 years old.

Lessing is the author of The Golden Notebook and 15 other novels, five books of short stories and novellas, and five books of nonfiction. She lives in London.


Near the end of the book, the narrator tells the reader: “I plan on calling the story you know a novel, and the arsonist’s guide a memoir. Why write both books? Maybe I just want the best of both worlds, which is exactly what both worlds usually don’t want you to have, and the bond analysts aren’t entirely sure they want me to have it either, which is why they insist I call the story that includes them a novel and the story that doesn’t a memoir. They tell me, ‘You need to protect the innocent, dude,’ which is what the guilty always say when they need to be protected.”

In the novel, the first home burned is that of Emily Dickinson, which as I recall is made of brick and was still standing the last time I was in Amherst, Mass.

THE BEST: In a cover article, PW said, “Three thousand books are published daily in the U.S. Six thousand were reviewed in 2007” in the magazine and online. The editors named 150 titles “Best Books of the Year.”

Hope yours made that list.

HAPPY HOLIDAY: Debbie Macomber’s latest is titled Christmas Wishes. She has 60 million books in print.

Macomber told PW that she believes in angels, the power of love and Christmas. Especially Christmas. At that time, she puts on display five Christmas trees and 37 nativity scenes. She said, “I tend to go a bit overboard, but I love Christmas. My passion for the holidays inspired me to write my first Christmas book back in the early 1990s, and now it’s a tradition for me.”

ADDITION: Columbia College in New York has added a creative writing major with 25 new courses. These include writing workshops in fiction, poetry, nonfiction, playwriting and screenwriting, as well as craft seminars such as Exercise in Style, Techniques of the Short Story and Voices from the Edge. Columbia University’s General Studies program has had a creative writing major, but half the courses came from outside the major.

Thirty-five college undergradu-
ates were admitted to the new major last fall.

INFLUENCES: Braulio Muñoz was born in Peru. He is a professor of sociology at Swarthmore College, where he has taught since 1978. His second novel, his first in English, is The Peruvian Notebooks.

In an interview in the Swarthmore College Bulletin, Muñoz was asked which authors had been major influences. He said, “Kafka, for his ability to make the unbelievable appear common; Borges, for his deft, economical use of Spanish; Juan Rulfo, whose one small book Pedro Paramo uses the language of the common people to talk about great things; and Flaubert. I continue to read Flaubert for his brilliant use of French.”

ARTISTS TOO: Guild member Donald Friedman has produced a book that he believes will be of interest to other authors. The title is The Writer’s Brush: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture by writers. The book has 400 images by 200 writers, “some of the greatest names in Western literature.”

CRIME PAYS: Ian Rankin has written 17 mystery novels about Inspector John Rebus of Edinburgh, Scotland.

He told The Writer: “A crime novel is about so much more than a basic puzzle. Holding back the information about who did it—that’s the least interesting part of it for me. I would love to write a crime novel that began by telling who did it and why. Then you could get on with the story.”

Rankin lives in the same Edinburgh neighborhood as J. K. Rowling and Alexander McCall Smith.

SKIMMER: Pierre Bayard is the author of How to Talk About Books You Haven’t Read, translated from the French. It was a bestseller in Europe.

Bayard told The New York Times that skimming was a fine way to read some books. He admitted that he skimmed Proust. Bayard said, “He’s a companion. Sometimes I go to Proust and I seek advice for my life. I open it and I skim some pages. That is to live with books. It’s important to live with books.”

WINNER: Anne Enright’s novel The Gathering won the 2007 Booker Prize (about $105,000). Enright lives in Dublin, Ireland, with her husband and two children, four and seven.

About her writing, Enright told The New York Times, “I’m very interested in emotions when things are not resolved, when things are not clear, before they become defined. I was very, very loose in the writing. I didn’t analyze. I sent the bucket into the well and reached into a distant part of my brain, really, to produce this.”

Enright continued, “The kids go to school; I sit down and write. . . . I find that the whole sense of anxiety and largeness, the sense that you’re writing everything, the illness of it, disappears completely. You have three or four hours a day, and you’re going to write a book, and it just shrinks the work into its proper proportion.”

THE ONLY JOB: Novelist Paul Auster of Brooklyn won the Prix Asturias, Spain’s top literary honor. In his acceptance speech, he said, “Numbers don’t count where books are concerned, for there is only one reader, each and every time only one reader. . . . That explains the particular power of the novel and why, in my opinion, it will never die as a form. Every novel is an equal collaboration between the writer and the reader and it is the only place in the world where two strangers can meet on terms of absolute intimacy.

“I have spent my life in conversations with people I have never seen, with people I will never know, and I hope to continue until the day I stop breathing.

“It’s the only job I ever wanted.”

BANNED: The late Madeleine L’Engle wrote more than 50 books, and for many years she was librarian and writer-in-residence at Manhattan’s Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Her most famous book is A Wrinkle in Time, a novel for young adults. It was a bestseller with more than 50 hardcover printings. It still sells, but it is also one of the most banned books in the U.S. because the author was accused by some of giving children an inaccurate portrayal of God by creating and nurturing belief in myth.

In an interview with The New York Times in 2001, L’Engle said, “It seems some people are willing to damn the book without reading it. Nonsense about witchcraft and fantasy. First I felt horror, then anger, and finally I said, ‘Ah, the hell with it.’ It’s great publicity, really.”

A QUESTION: At the National Book Awards Ceremony in November, Terry Gross, who often interviews authors on National Public Radio, was given an award for Outstanding Service to the American Literary Community. She told the audience that there was one question she was often tempted to ask but rarely does. She said, “The question is ‘How do you manage to look into my own heart?’” Then she added, “It is a question no writer can ever really answer.”

TREND: In 2004, a report by the National Endowment for the Arts revealed that fewer than half of Americans older than 18 read novels, short stories, plays or poetry. A new report indicates that while the reading scores of elementary school students have been improving, scores are flat among middle school students and slightly declining among high school seniors.
NEW JOBS, NEW TITLES*

Ashbel Green, 79, senior editor and vice president at Knopf, will retire at the end of 2007. Writers he worked with include Ken Burns, Walter Cronkite, David Brinkley and Ernest J. Gaines.

Dave Nelson, formerly at Beaufort Books, is executive acquisitions editor at Union Square.

Mary Cash has been promoted to editor-in-chief at Holiday House.

Porscha Burke is assistant editor at Random House publishing group.

Paul Muldoon, chairman of Princeton University Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, is poetry editor of The New Yorker, replacing Alice Quinn, who had that job for 20 years.


Brian Halley has been promoted to editor at Beacon Press, and Amy Caldwell and Gayatri Patnaik have been named senior editors.

John Parsley, formerly at St. Martin’s/Thomas Dunne Books, is a senior editor at Little Brown.

Rob Kirkpatrick is senior editor at St. Martin’s/Thomas Dunne Books where he focuses on sports, pop culture, history and politics.

Anne Cole has been promoted to editor at HarperCollins’s imprints Collins Lifestyle and Collins Wellness.

Jaimie Levine has been promoted to executive editor at Grand Central Publishing.

Harlequin has hired Deb Broady to be executive editor of its new nonfiction titles. She will acquire and edit self-help, health/diet/fitness, relationships, love, sex, narrative and inspirational. Most titles will be aimed at women, PW said.

*Compiled from Publishers Weekly

DEATHS

Peg Bracken, 89, died October 20 in Portland, Ore. She was the author of The I Hate to Cook Book (1950), The I Hate to Housekeep Book (1962), I Try to Behave Myself (1964) and a memoir, A Window Over the Sink (1981).


Elizabeth Hardwick, 91, died December 2 in Manhattan. The noted critic and academic helped in the creation of The New York Review of Books. She was the author of two novels, The Ghostly Lover (1945) and The Simple Truth (1955). She also published four volumes of essays, including Sight Readings: American Fiction (1998). She was given the George Gene Nathan Award for theater criticism.

Eve Curie Labousisse, 102, died October 22 in Manhattan. The daughter of Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie was author of Madame Curie (1937) and Journey Among Warriors (1943).

Ira Levin, 78, died November 12 in Manhattan. He was the author of Rosemary’s Baby (1967), The Stepford Wives (1972), The Boys from Brazil (1976), all bestsellers, and A Kiss Before Dying (1953), Sliver (1991) and Son of Rosemary (1997).

Norman Mailer, 84, died November 10 in Manhattan. He was the author of more than 30 books, including The Naked and the Dead (1946), The Armies of the Night (1968) and The Executioner’s Song (1979), which won the National Book Award.

Judy Mazel, 63, died October 12 in Santa Monica, Calif. She was the author of The Beverly Hills Diet (1981), a bestseller for 30 weeks.

John Nobel, 84, died November 10 in Dresden, Germany. An American who survived five years in the gulag, he was the author of I Was a Slave in Russia (1958) and I Found God in Soviet Russia (1959).

Joseph V. Nobel, 87, died September 21 in West Orange, N.J. An expert in antiquities who served as an administrator at the Metropolitan Museum, he was the author of The Techniques of Painted Attic Pottery.


Nina Schneider, 94, died September 8 on Martha’s Vineyard, Mass. She and her late husband Herman (he died in 2003) wrote almost 80 science books for children including How Big Is Big? From Stars to Atoms, a Yardstick for the Universe (1946), Let’s Look Inside Your House (1948) and Plants in the City (1951). On her own Mrs. Schneider wrote a series starting with Hercules, the

The New York Times said, “The percentage of adults who are proficient in reading prose has fallen at the same time that the proportion of people who read regularly for pleasure has declined.”

Peter Viertel, 86, died November 4 in Marbella, Spain. He was the author of nine novels and 11 feature films. Books included Dangerous Friends: At Large with Huston and Hemingway in the Fifties (1992), Love Lies Bleeding and The Canyon (1940).

Sarah Wernick, 64, died December 4 in Brookline, Mass. She was the author of The Emotional Problems of Normal Children (1994) and three bestsellers: Strong Women Stay Young (1997), Strong Women Stay Slim (1998) and Strong Women, Strong Bones (2000). She was coauthor of The Probiotics Revolution (2007).

**BOOKS BY MEMBERS**

Skater; Judith St. George: The Ghost, the White House, and Me; Stand Tall, Abe Lincoln; David Ezra Stein: Leaves; William G. Tapply (and Philip R. Craig): Third Strike; Florence Temko: Origami Note Cards; Studs Terkel: Touch and Go: A Memoir; Marilou Tomblin: Cookie Originales; The Carmelo Diaries; Hollywood Exits; Jamie Trecker: Love and Blood: At the World Cup with the Footballers, Fans, and Freaks; Jerome Tuccille: Gallery of Fools;

John Updike: Due Considerations: Essays and Criticisms; Rachel Vail: Righty and Lefty: A Tale of Two Feet; Christopher Van Tilburg: Mountain Rescue Doctor: Wilderness Medicine in the Extremes of Nature; Susan Vaught: My Big Fat Manifesto; George Venn: Soldier to Advocate: C.E.S. Wood’s 1877 Legacy; Darkroom Soldier: Photographs and Letters from the South Pacific; Victor Villasenor: Goodnight Papito Dios/Buenos Noches, Papito Dios; Bill Wallace: The Dog Who Thought He Was Santa; Gary Wassner: Revenge of the Elves; Carole Boston Weatherford: Birmingham, 1963; Before John Was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane; Joseph Weisberg: An Ordinary Spy; Monica Wellington: Truck Drive Tom; Eugenie Lovett West: Without Warning; Scott Westerfeld: Extras; Gloria Whelan: Parade of Shadows; Stuart Woods: Beverly Hills Dead; Sara Young: My Enemy’s Cradle

MULTIPLE GENRES

The Modern Language Association (MLA) holds several biennial contests; competitions in 2008 include the Prize for a Distinguished Bibliography for books published in 2006 and 2007, the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures for books published in 2006 and 2007, the Howard R. Marraro Prize for scholarly work on Italian literature for books published in 2007, and the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize in Yiddish Studies for books published between 2004 and 2007, all with a submission deadline of May 1, 2008. For submission guidelines and more details about each award, visit mla.org/resources/awards/awards_submissions/awards_competitions or contact the Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10004-1789. (646) 576-5141; awards@mla.org.

New Letters, a magazine of writing and art, offers three annual awards: the New Letters Prize for Poetry, for the best group of three to six poems; the Dorothy Churchill Cappon Prize for the best essay; and the Alexander Patterson Cappon Prize for the best short story (fiction). The application fees are $15 for the first entry and $10 for additional entries. The entry fee includes a one-year subscription, renewal or gift subscription to New Letters. Winners receive $1,500 and publication in New Letters; all entries will be considered for publication. Deadline: May 18, 2008. New Letters Awards for Writers UMKC, University House, Room 105, 5101 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110-2499; newletters.org/awards.asp.

Literary Arts, a nonprofit organization devoted to writing and art in Oregon, is offering the 2008 Oregon Book Awards for accomplished works by Oregon writers of poetry, fiction, literary nonfiction, drama and young readers literature. Finalists will be promoted in libraries and bookstores across the state and will be invited to join the Oregon Book Awards Author Tour. Applicants must be full-time Oregon residents living in the state at the time of submission. Visit literary-arts.org/awards for full eligibility requirements and submission guidelines for each genre. Deadline: May 30, 2008. Susan Denning, Literary Arts, 224 NW 13th Avenue, Suite 306, Portland, OR 97209. (503) 227-2583; susan@literary-arts.org.

Pearl magazine offers two awards each year, the Pearl Short Story Prize, offering $250 and publication in the magazine, and the Pearl Poetry Prize, offering $1,000 and publication of a book-length collection of poetry. Visit pearlmag.com/contests.html for detailed submission guidelines for each award. Entries must be postmarked between April 1 and May 31, 2008 for the Short Story Prize, and between May 1 and July 15, 2008 for the Poetry Prize. The fees are $10/story or $20 for a collection of poetry. Pearl Short Story Prize or Pearl Poetry Prize, 3030 E. Second Street, Long Beach, CA 90803.

A Room of Her Own, a foundation for women writers, offers the Gift of Freedom Award every two years. Applications are now being accepted for the 2009 award. Recipient will receive a $50,000 grant so that she may work on a specific project that will affect the broader community. The recipient will be required to report and interact with a mentor and submit periodic reports accounting for the use of funds and the project’s progress. Poets, playwrights, and writers working in creative nonfiction and fiction are considered. Deadline: October 31, 2008. More information and
Application forms are available at aroomofherownfoundation.org. A Room of Her Own Foundation, PO Box 778, Placitas, NM 87043. info@aroomofherownfoundation.org.

Fiction Contests

Snake Nation Press is accepting submissions for its Serena McDonald Kennedy Award for a novella or short story manuscript. The award carries a $1,000 cash prize and publication with Snake Nation Press. Submit a novella of up for 50,000 words or a short story manuscript of up to 200 pages, including previously published works, with a $25 entry fee by April 30, 2008. Snake Nation Press, 2920 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA 31602. rgeorge@snakenationpress.org; snakenationpress.org/guidelines.html.


The University of Georgia Press will accept applications for its annual Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction between April 1 and May 31, 2008. Each year, two winners receive $1,000 and publication by the Press under a standard book contract. Stories may have been previously published in magazines or anthologies, but not in a book-length collection of the author's work. Entries may be collections of short or long stories, or a collection of novellas of 50-150 pages. Novels or single novellas will not be considered. Manuscripts must be within 50,000 to 75,000 words (about 200-275 pages). There is a $20 submission fee. Visit ugapress.org/info_aup_submittoc.html for detailed submission guidelines. The Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, The University of Georgia Press, 330 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30602-4901.

The University of Michigan Press has an annual Literary Fiction Award for a novel. Send a manuscript with the title listed on every page, but without the author's name. Include a cover letter with author's name and manuscript title, and a copy of a previously published book of literary fiction. Winner receives a $1,000 advance and publication by the University of Michigan Press. Visit press.umich.edu/fiction for full submission guidelines. Manuscripts will be accepted between February 1 and July 1, 2008. Michigan Literary Fiction Awards, University of Michigan Press, 839 Greene Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. (734) 764-4388; ump.fiction@umich.edu.

Bard College annually awards the Bard Fiction Prize to emerging writers, age 39 or younger. The winner will receive a $30,000 grant and an appointment as writer-in-residence at Bard College for one semester. The residency includes at least one public lecture and informal meetings with students, but does not require teaching traditional courses. Applicants should include a cover letter describing a project to work on while at Bard, a C.V., and three copies of the published book they feel best represents their work. Deadline for the 2009 prize is July 15, 2008. Bard College, PO Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504, (845) 758-7087. bfp@bard.edu; bard.edu/bfp.

Poetry Contests

Applications are being accepted for Ashland Poetry Press's annual Richard Snyder Award. The award, which honors the memory of the poet, playwright, fiction writer, and professor of English at Ashland University, will go to an original collection of 50 to 80 poems. The award carries a cash prize of $1,000 and publication by Ashland Poetry Press. The winner will be announced in the AWP Writers Chronicle and Poets & Writers magazine. Send a single-spaced manuscript with no more than one poem per page, bound by a single clip, with a $20 fee and two title pages: one with name, address and phone number, and one with the collection's title only. Deadline: May 15, 2008. The Richard Snyder Memorial Publication Prize, The Ashland Poetry Press, Ashland University, Ashland, OH 44805. ashland.edu/apoetry.

Bitter Oleander Press is accepting applications for the 12th annual Frances Locke Memorial Poetry Award. To enter, send up to five poems, each no more than two pages, with a $10 reading fee ($2 for each additional poem entered). Send a brief biography and include name, address, phone number and e-mail on each poem. Deadline: June 15, 2008. 2008 Frances Locke Memorial Poetry Award, The Bitter Oleander Press, 4983 Tall Oaks Drive, Fayetteville, NY 13066. info@bitteroleander.com; bitteroleander.com/contest.html.

Submissions are being accepted for the 2008 William Stafford Award for Poetry. The winner will be awarded $1,000 and publication of the poem in Rosebud Magazine. Send three to five original, unpublished poems with the poet's name and address on the upper-right-hand corner of each page, along with a $10 entry fee and a SASE. Include a cover letter with brief biography.

Omnidawn Publishing will accept submissions to its first annual poetry contest for a first or second book of poetry between March 1 and June 30, 2008. The winner will receive a $2,000 cash prize and be published in 2009. There is a $25 entry fee. Visit omnidawn.com/contest.htm for submission guidelines. (510) 237-5472; manager@omnidawn.com.

The Robert Frost Foundation will accept applications for the 2008 Robert Frost Award between March 1 and September 15, 2008. Send two copies of a poem written “in the spirit of Robert Frost,” one copy without any personal information and one that includes the author’s name, address, e-mail and phone number. Submit up to three poems, including previously published work, with a $10-per-poem entry fee, by mail or e-mail. Poetry Award, The Robert Frost Foundation, Lawrence Public Library, 3rd Floor, 51 Lawrence Street, Lawrence, MA 01841. frostfoundation@comcast.net.


Authors Guild Survey

Continued from page 8

Some try to provide special bonuses, like the author who holds occasional drawings for free books. Others stress the importance of creating individual relationships with readers via e-mail, including P.T. Deutermann, who “respond[s] to every e-mail that comes in. I feel that, if they take the time to comment on one of my books, I owe them a reply. Fully half of the readers to whom I reply are amazed that I did . . . which I think gives me a competitive advantage. Plus, it’s only polite!”

A number of respondents described marketing with e-mail as empowering. “It is the only way I know,” Stephanie Gunning explained, “to bypass the problem of perceived powerlessness when a publisher is in control of an author’s promotion.” Most authors are aware of the limitations of relying on their publisher’s publicity department; the rise of personalized e-mail newsletters may be, in part, a response to this. Further, it can be utilized by any author, however new to the game or not-yet-famous.

As important as the content of a mass e-mail, however, is the list of recipients: quality, as usual, trumps quantity, and who is on your list is more important than how big it is. Respondents listed bookstores, libraries, colleagues, and specialists in the area of the book’s topic as key newsletter recipients, in addition to a roster of readers. The importance of a narrow focus, both in content and when compiling a list of e-mail addresses, was repeatedly cited. Doing otherwise, respondents pointed out, tends to result in time wasted on e-mails that will be ignored, deleted, or solicit angry replies; similarly, online marketing can be a time-consuming, fruitless effort if approached haphazardly.

While the jury is still out on the question of how directly e-mail newsletters lead to book sales, our survey confirmed that many authors have embraced online marketing—some wholeheartedly and others begrudgingly—and view it as a necessary part of being a published writer today. However, few of the authors we surveyed claimed that e-mail marketing alone can bring success. Coupling online promotion with traditional postcard mailings, spending more time on developing a sophisticated website than composing frequent “e-blasts,” and focusing on connecting with readers in whatever medium they choose were repeatedly listed as the most effective methods for staying “in the minds of our readers.” As Joan Hall Hovey put it, “do it all, as much as you can. Snail-mail flyers, press releases, e-mail, book signing, library readings, radio, TV interviews, etc. . . . And unless you have lots of money for promotion . . . get as many freebies as possible. Good luck!”


Residencies

The National Park Service offers Artist-in-Residence programs for writers at national parks throughout the United States. Upcoming deadlines are May 1 (South Dakota), July 1 (Washington) and July 15 (California, Connecticut, Michigan). Visit nps.gov/archive/volunteer/air.htm for details about each park’s program.

The Liguria Study Center for the Arts and Humanities offers residential fellowships in Italy to writers and scholars doing research or creative work, and is accepting applications for the February–May 2009 semester. Fellows are provided with living quarters and full board and may be accompanied by spouses or companions during their stay. Deadline: April 15, 2008. Visit liguriastudycenter.org for a list of disciplines and more information about the Center and application process, or contact the US office. The Bogliasco Foundation, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10020. info@bfny.org. ✪
The 2007 New Mexico Book Awards ceremony, organized by the New Mexico Book Co-op, was held on November 9 in Albuquerque. Rudolfo Anaya received the People’s Choice Award for his novel Bless Me Ultima and was honored for his contributions to New Mexico’s literature. Harold Burton Meyers received the award for Best Book for The Death at Auahi. Other winners included Cindy Bellinger, for Waterwise Garden Care: Your Practical Guide (Gardening), and Journaling for Women (Self-Help); Sallie Bingham, Cory’s Feast (Novel—Romance); Robert Powers, Peopling of Bandelier (New Mexico History); and Stephen Trimble, Lasting Light: 125 Years of Grand Canyon Photography (Arts). Finalists included Nancy Bartlit (and Everett Rogers), Silent Voices of World War II (New Mexico History); Sallie Bingham, Nick of Time (Novel—Adventure or Drama); Elizabeth Fackler, Bone Justice (Novel—Historical Fiction); Chellis Glendinning, Chiva: A Village Takes on the Global Heroin Trade, and Charles Henderson, Goodnight Saigon (Other Nonfiction); Carolyn Reeder, The Secret Project Notebook (Young Adult); June Walker, Self-Employed Tax Solutions (Business); and Arlene Williams, Tiny Tortilla (Children’s).

Diane Ackerman’s nonfiction book, The Zookeeper’s Wife, and Diana M. Raab’s memoir, Regina’s Closet: Finding My Grandmother’s Secret Journal, were nominated for the Sophie Brody Award, presented annually to the American author of the most distinguished contribution to Jewish literature for adults. The Zookeeper’s Wife was named an Honor book.

The International Association of Media Tie-in Writers announced the winners of the 2007 Scribe awards at the San Diego Comic-Con in July. Donald Bain, author of the Murder, She Wrote series of original mystery novels based on the television show of the same name, received the first annual Grandmaster Award, the Faust. The Grandmaster award honors career achievement in the field. Lee Goldberg was nominated in the Best Novel—Original category for Mr. Monk Goes to Hawaii. Ultraviolet, by Yvonne Navarro, received a nomination in the Speculative Fiction category.

The New England Booksellers Association, which represents independent bookstores in New England and New York, presented all three of their New England Book Awards for authors to Authors Guild members Roy Blount Jr. (Nonfiction), Julius Lester (Children’s) and Gregory Maguire (Fiction). The annual awards recognize New England authors and publishers who have produced a body of work that contributes to the region’s literature. Each award carries a $500 grant for a literary organization chosen by the winner.

Mystery Readers International (MRI) announced the winners of their annual Macavity Awards. Roberta Isleib was nominated for Best Short Story for “Disturbance in the Field,” which appears in Seasmoke: Crime Stories by New England Writers, coedited by Susan Oleksiw.

The National Book Awards Benefit Dinner and Ceremony was held in New York City November 14. Tim Weiner, author of Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA, received the Nonfiction award and $10,000. Edwidge Danticat was a Nonfiction finalist for Brother, I’m Dying, and Kathleen Duey, author of Skin Hunger: A Resurrection of Magic, Book One, was a finalist for Young People’s Literature. Joan Didion received the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

The Academy of Arts and Letters awarded Madison Smartt Bell a Strauss Living award for literary excellence. The prestigious “Living” is bestowed every five years and provides a $50,000 annual distribution for five years, allowing the recipient the freedom to devote time exclusively to writing.

Eric Jay Dolin, author of Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America, received the 23rd annual L. Byrne Waterman award for outstanding contributions to research and pedagogy in the arts, humanities and sciences. The award was presented by the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Leviathan was also named one of the best nonfiction books of 2007 by the Los Angeles Times, one of the top nine nonfiction books of 2007 by the Boston Globe, and chosen as one of the top 10 history books of 2007 by Amazon.com.

“Our Giraffe,” a 3-act libretto written by Charles Flowers, was one of 10 operas selected for partial live production in the New York City Opera’s VOX: Showcasing American Composers competition. The works will be performed in May at New York University’s Skirball Center.

The Writer’s Brush: Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture by Writers by Donald Friedman, was included in year-end best lists by the Los Angeles Times, the London Times, the Financial Times of London and Francine Prose in O, The Oprah Magazine. The book has also been featured on CBS and the BBC.

Libby Hathorn’s CD-ROM of interactive stories, Wonderstop: The Adventures of the Wandering Wonhats, received the 2007 EnergyAustralia National Trust Heritage Award for Education, in recognition of the work’s contribution to heritage or environmental conservation.
The publication of Matthew Kennedy’s Joan Blondell: A Life between Takes inspired the Museum of Modern Art in New York to produce “Joan Blondell: The Bombshell from Ninety-first Street,” a 13-film retrospective. “Bombshell” was the most extensive tribute the late actress has ever received, with screenings of films from a nearly 50-year career.

The French edition of Curt Leviant’s novel Diary of an Adulterous Woman was chosen by Lire Magazine/Radio France as among the Twenty Best Books of 2007, and among the top eight for fiction. In a similar Top Twenty survey by France TV1, the book was cited as best literary novel.

Louisiana’s Song, by Kerry Madden, has been selected by California Readers for the 2008 California Collection for Middle School, a list of books by California authors for young readers.

John Moir received an honorable mention from the National Association of Science Writers for his book Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird from Extinction at the 2007 Science-in-Society Journalism Awards at NASW’s annual meeting on October 21 in Spokane, WA.

Takayo Noda was recognized as an outstanding children’s book author and artist by the Center for Children’s Poetry & Literature at Fordham University’s Graduate School of Education in New York City. at the Annual Holiday Literary Tea on November 13.

Barbara Novack received the 2007 Editor’s Special Recognition Award for her poem “Cause and Effect” from In Other Words, a poetry anthology published by Western Reading Services in Denver, Colo. The award is presented annually for the best poem in the anthology.

Peter Orner received the 2007 Bard Fiction Prize for his novel The Second Coming of Mawadi Shikongo. He was appointed writer-in-residence at Bard College for one semester and received a $30,000 grant.

New Letters, a magazine of writing and art, presented Sara Pritchard with the 2007 Alexander Patterson Cappon Prize for Fiction and a cash prize of $1,500.

Mara Purl’s novel Closer Than You Think received the 2007 USA Book News Best Book Award in the Audio Book—Romance category; the print edition was a finalist in the Fiction & Literature—Romance category. Albert Russo was a finalist in the Fiction & Literature—Gay/Lesbian Fiction category for Shalom Tower Syndrome.

Art in the City, by Mo H. Saidi, received the 2007 Eakin Memorial Manuscript Publication Award of the Poetry Society of Texas. The award is presented annually in honor of writer and publisher Edwin M. Eakin.

Arlene Sanders’s short story, “Wish You Were Here,” was nominated for the 2007 Pushcart Prize. The story was published in the December 2007 issue of The Dos Passos Review. Her story “Fire and Ice” was nominated for the prize in 2006.

The North Carolina Literary and Historical Association presented the American Association of University Women Award to Eleanor E. Tate for her book Celeste’s Harlem Renaissance. The award, given annually to the year’s best work of juvenile literature by a North Carolina resident, was presented on November 10 in Asheville.

The Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., appointed Ross Terrill as a Public Policy Scholar for Spring 2008, during which time he will research a book on relations between the United States and China.

The Anti-Defamation League honored Scott Turow with the 2007 First Amendment Freedom Award, presented at a dinner in Chicago on September 11.

Jess Wells received a San Francisco Arts Commission Grant for Literature to help fund the research and writing of a historical novel about the early years of Christine de Pizan.

Vera B. Williams received the 2008 Regina Medal, presented annually to a children’s book author by the Children’s Library Services Section of the Catholic Library Association, in recognition of her continued, distinguished contribution to the field.

The Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR), based in Seattle, named poet and playwright Bill Withering as Artist-in-Residence. The position was created to link WPSR with the wider arts culture of the Seattle area.

CONTRACTS Q&A

Continued from page 12

Q. I currently have two manuscripts that I am trying to place. One is a collection of essays, the other a memoir. The collection includes an essay called “Relief.” The memoir grew out of this essay, whose contents are dispersed throughout the memoir’s four main sections. The total number of words from “Relief” comprises approximately 7 percent of the entire memoir. My questions:
1. If a publisher takes the memoir first, would a second publisher need to acquire rights to reprint the essay in the collection?

2. If a publisher takes the essay collection first, would a second publisher need to acquire rights to reprint the parts of "Relief" that are included in the memoir?

A. The best way to handle your concern is not via a lawyer’s analysis of whether publication of the second book (whichever it is) violates the copyright in the first book or is permitted because of the “fair use” doctrine, even if the lawyer doing the analysis is a specialist in copyright law. Questions of “fair use” are frequently subjective rather than objective. Lots of money is spent in lawsuits where both sides are convinced they are right and have written memoranda from their respective lawyers saying why. It is far better—less expensive, less emotionally distressing and more certain—to resolve the matter in the contract with the publisher with whom you sign a contract first, regardless of which book it is for. This will avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding or dispute, as well as any question as to whether publication of the second book violates the copyright of the first book or whether the second violates the typical provision in a publishing contract which prohibits an author from publishing competing books.

If the publisher of the first book (whichever it is) agrees with you that the second book does not compete with the first, then the way to handle your concern from a contractual viewpoint is to insert a paragraph in your contract for the first book that says (i) nothing in the contract prohibits you from publishing the second book, and (ii) if anything in the second violates the copyright in the first, permission is granted to you to publish the second upon whatever terms you decide on with its publisher.

You should consult a publishing lawyer to draft the precise language for you since there are several ancillary items that should be covered in the provision, e.g., that the right to publish the second book includes both the right to publish it yourself and the right to license publication rights to others; the extent to which the manuscript for the second book may be revised and still be considered the same version for which the first publisher is giving its permission; that the right to publish the second book is not a one-time right but extends to multiple editions, whether published by one or different publishers, and in English or in translation.

(Although some might question how one book you wrote could violate the copyright in something else you also wrote, the answer—implicit in your question—is that once you have granted the first publisher the right to publish your book, that publisher must grant permission to you and the second publisher in order for the second book to be published since the first publisher, in essence, now shares the copyright in your first book. Otherwise, you would be unable to warrant to the second publisher, as typically required in publishing contracts, that nothing in the second book violates the copyright of any other book.)

For the purpose of this answer, it makes no difference which of the books is published first.

Without seeing the two books, I’m reluctant to say whether anything in one would violate the copyright in the other. Once you get a publisher interested in either book, and assuming that publisher won’t add a section to your contract like the one I suggest (which would effectively sidestep the issue but still accomplish what you want by mutual agreement, a less expensive and more conciliatory approach), you could then consult an experienced copyright lawyer if you wish to proceed. My initial reaction, however, is that publication of the second book—whichever it is—would violate the copyright of the first. Keep in mind that the percentage of one work used in another is only one criterion for determining whether permission is needed or whether the “fair use” exemption applies and, generally speaking, should not be relied on as the sole factor in determining that permission is not required. Moreover, note that the language relating to this factor in Section 107 of the Copyright Act is “the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole,” not the percentage of the second work that the copyrighted work (in your case, the essay) constitutes. Indeed, from what you write, 100 percent of a complete, copyrighted work—the essay "Relief"—appears in the memoir; the 7 percent number—the percentage that the essay bears to the entire memoir—is irrelevant for purposes of this test.

E-mail questions to QandAColumn@authorsguild.org. Questions and letters are often edited for readability or to make them more broadly applicable.

The answers in this column are general in nature only and may not include exceptions to a general rule or take into account related facts which may result in a different answer. You should consult a lawyer for information about a particular situation. No question submitted, or answer provided, creates an attorney-client relationship with the column’s author.
From the President
Continued from page 4

turned the Kindle on? Speaking of elegance, I’ll say this for The Compass in Your Nose: the first page of its introduction does not say, “If you have not done so already, open the cover of this book and flip through the front matter until you reach this page.” As far as I can tell, by the way, Kindle books lack front matter—copyright page, dedication, that sort of thing—so it’s a bit like jumping into bed with someone you’ve hardly met.

But what the heck. The Kindle is awfully pretty, and it knows what it’s up to. In half an hour, from a hotel lobby, for less than thirty dollars altogether, it wirelessly downloaded six books from Amazon.com (some in copyright and costing $9.99 or $7.99, some out of copyright and costing $1.80): Captain Grose’s 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue; The Tin Roof Blowdown, by James Lee Burke; A Historical Guide to Mark Twain, by Shelley Fisher Fishkin; the Rosetta Books version of Kurt Vonnegut’s Breakfast of Champions; and Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions. I can search these books instantaneously. I can click on any line to get a dictionary definition of every word in that line. I can click pages quickly back and forth. I can affix my own notes to the text. To me, the little letter-keys that I have to poke in order to spell out these notes are inhumanly teeny-tiny, but then my thumbnails have not developed any text-messaging skills. The black-on-grey screen-page looks passably like ink on paper, and the type size is adjustable. Apparently you can download music, too, and an abbreviated daily version of, among other periodicals, The New York Times.

And yet here I sit at home surrounded by mounds of, like, actual books (the word is related to beech, perhaps because the earliest books were inscribed on wood from that tree), and literal newspaper clippings, and various other sorts of clutter that I dare say high-schoolers of today will soon regard (well, they must already) as ludicrous. At present the Kindle costs too much—$399—for me to have actually bought one, but something like the Kindle (Sony makes a similar electronic reader) undoubtedly has more of a future than I do. And then it will be replaced by a nano-receiver implanted in the brain. For all we know, we are already living and writing and arguing with copy editors and receiving disappointing royalty reports in just such a receiver, in the cerebellum of a 12-year-old visionary in Singapore.

Transformative is a word we hear a lot lately, and that the Kindle may be. But so far it doesn’t have a hold on me. My eyes wander, and so do my hands and the compass in my nose. (According to The Compass in Your Nose, “All humans have a trace amount of iron in their noses . . . to help in directional finding relative to the earth’s magnetic field.”) In Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut speaks of “beloved, frumpish” paperbacks that “gave off a smell . . . like flannel pajamas that hadn’t been changed for a month, or like Irish stew.” According to The Compass in Your Nose, “visual memories decline by fifty percent after three months while memories associated with smell decline by only twenty percent, even after a year.” Smell of course is a big part of taste. According to The Compass in Your Nose, the average American eats 20,000 eggs in a lifetime. My Kindle is a virtual chicken that I can take anywhere. It will lay relatively inexpensive eggs on demand, and it will keep some two hundred of them fresh for the foreseeable future. But to me they don’t quite taste like eggs.

LEGAL WATCH
Continued from page 14

received $200,000 from UTN in consideration for the license. The actual episode aired June 14, 2004.

On February 13, 2006, Smith filed a lawsuit in the Southern District of California in which he alleged that the reproduction, distribution and display of his copyrighted work violated various sections of the Copyright Act as well as his statutory rights of publicity and common law privacy rights. He also alleged that MG Perin breached the settlement agreement. NBC Universal, UTN’s parent company, which was also named in the suit, moved to dismiss this case, along with the other defendants. The case was later transferred to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

In evaluating Smith’s claims, the district court noted that California law would be applied to the privacy and publicity claims. Smith first alleged that the unauthorized broadcast constituted an intrusion into his private affairs as recognized by California law. To prove an intrusion, Smith was required to show that there was an intentional intrusion into a private place, conversation or matter in a manner highly offensive to a reasonable person. Further, intrusion required Smith to demonstrate that “the defendants penetrated some zone of physical or sensory privacy surrounding him or obtained unwanted access to data about him.” The court noted that the tort can be proven only if Smith had an objectively reasonable expectation of seclusion.
or solitude in the place, conversation or data source. As a matter of law, the court concluded that Smith could not have had a reasonable expectation of privacy in a video he had previously licensed for broadcast on national TV. As such, the court dismissed this claim.

Smith next alleged that the broadcast constituted an improper disclosure of private facts, which is defined as the public disclosure of a private fact that would be offensive and objectionable to a reasonable person and that is not of legitimate public concern. However, the court noted that if the information reported has previously become part of the public domain or the intrusion into an individual’s private life is only slight, publication will be privileged even though the social utility of the publication may be minimal. In the case at hand, the court recognized that the video was previously broadcast nationally with Smith’s express permission before it was shown over the UTN network. The court concluded that since the video was broadcast nationally, it could not be considered private. Moreover, Smith himself conceded the video was truthful and newsworthy, which protects the broadcast under the First Amendment.

Smith next alleged that his rights of publicity were violated under California law. Such laws prevent others from misappropriating the economic value generated by a celebrity’s fame through the merchandising of his or her “name, voice, signature, photograph or likeness.” To establish a violation of publicity rights, Smith was required to show that there was an appropriation of his name or likeness to UTN’s advantage, either commercially or otherwise, which Smith did not consent to and which resulted in injury to him. While the court acknowledged that Smith had proved that the defendants had used his likeness without his consent, the court was still obligated to determine whether UTN had used Smith’s identity for commercial advantage with resulting damage to Smith. The court found that while the episode did feature Smith, Smith had failed to provide evidence that any of the episode’s derived value resulted in an injury to him. The court pointed to the fact that Smith failed to allege that the episode’s value was in any way enhanced by his likeness or identity, since it featured Smith only because he was the victim of an orca whale attack. The court ultimately held that the market would not have paid Smith any consideration for his appearance in the portions of the video that appeared in the episode because his identity added no value to the excerpts that were aired. As such, Smith’s right of publicity claim was dismissed.

Finally, Smith asserted claims for breach of contract against MG Perin for breaching the settlement agreement as well as for mental anguish. With respect to the breach of contract claim, the court noted that Smith was required to prove that he was economically damaged. However, the court pointed out that Smith indicated he did not suffer economic damages. Rather, Smith claimed that because MG Perin was paid $200,000 for the episode, his damages should be in the same amount. The court rejected this theory, since Smith’s damages bore no relation to the profits earned by MG Perin. The court said that any award of contract damages must seek to approximate the agreed-upon specific performance, which means that Smith would be entitled to compensation sufficient to place him in the position he would have been in had MG Perin not breached the settlement agreement. If it were to award Smith damages solely based upon MG Perin’s profits, Smith would certainly be in a better position than he would have been had the breach not occurred. The court concluded that such a “windfall” is not permitted under contract law.

In regard to the emotional disturbance claim, the court noted that damages related to emotional disturbance can be recovered on a breach of contract action only where parties expressly agree that mental well-being is at stake, or where they could have reasonably foreseen that emotional disturbance might result. Here, the court found that Smith’s settlement agreement with MG Perin did not expressly provide that it intended to protect Smith’s mental condition. Moreover, the agreement specifically stated that it included the complete understanding of both parties. As such, the court held that Smith could not argue that there was an understanding regarding mental condition since it was not written into the agreement, and dismissed this last claim as well.

—Michael Gross
Staff Attorney
Censorship Watch

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ing that he believed what he read about the incident in other places was the God’s honest truth.

Ultimately, the judge ordered Ronson to pay Hilton’s attorney’s fees, which have been estimated at $93,000. But Hilton may never see any of that money. In December, Ronson’s own lawyers sued her for skipping out on their bill of $164,930.72.

In the end, Hilton’s lawyer proclaimed the verdict “a huge victory . . . for everyone who uses the Internet to comment on celebrities of public interest.” Perez Hilton’s analysis of the social impact of his win as posted at his website? “Don’t [expletive] with Perez, [expletive]!” Well, then!

Antiwar Sit-in Encourages Students to Stand Up. A group of teen protesters at a Chicago area high school may not have raised the consciousness of as many of their peers as they’d hoped during a recent Iraq war sit-in featuring sing-alongs and acoustic guitar accompaniment, but it’s likely they learned a valuable lesson themselves: When negotiating with The Man, it’s best to get everything in writing.

In early November, a group of Morton West High students in Berwyn, Ill., made plans to ditch classes and convene in their cafeteria to stage an anti-war sit-in. At some point after the group assembled, school administration asked the kids to relocate from the highly-trafficked cafeteria to a more sparsely populated hallway near the principal’s office. District Superintendent Ben Nowakowski, representing the administration, says the protesters weren’t asked to pack off to another area of the school because of what they were protesting but rather because of where they were protesting. He characterized it as a crowd control issue, a desire to let the other 3,400 students get on with their normal activities.

While some of the protesters returned to class, a group of about 25 students agreed to walk their sit-in to another part of the school. They say that part of the deal included the administration’s promise that they wouldn’t be disciplined beyond a Saturday detention for cutting class, or for taking part in the protest per se. Once the students were assembled in the hallway, songs were sung, arms were linked and talk was talked about the worldwide impact of the Iraq war. Cops were called in but no arrests were made. Police chief William Kushner characterized the whole thing as “peaceful and orderly.”

Then, the other shoe dropped. At the end of the day, Nowakowski told all the kids they’d be punished for their “mob action” with a 10-day suspension and possible expulsion. Some say certain kids—jocks and honor students—were enticed away from the protest by teachers and coaches earlier in the day. Parents of others in the favored group were given a heads-up by the PTA president and encouraged to pull their kids out of the antiwar demonstration. These students were given more lenient suspensions.

Eventually, all parents received complaint letters about the “gross disobedience” of the budding rabble-rousers from the administration and warned that further disruptions could lead to expulsion. A few days after the protest, parents assembled their own group to complain at the school and lobby for an end to the suspensions. Follow-up reports indicate that of the 18 confirmed suspensions, 14 were lifted within nine school days of the protest; four more were lifted within 11 days. The expulsion threats were dropped.

—Anita Fore
Director of Legal Services

Letters

Continued from page 2

I am discouraged by this. Few of the labor leaders read much either, is my suspicion. On the other hand, I do not like the elitism in Wasserman’s essay. Is book reviewing and reading only for the educated classes? For CEOs?

William (Bill) Witherup
Seattle, WA

R

e Mark Levine’s response to the question I submitted to Contracts Q&A, noting my dismay at discovering that bankruptcy judges routinely void the clause in book contracts about rights reverting to the author in the case of a bankruptcy, I would argue that the situation does in fact warrant remedy through an act of Congress.

Mr. Levine states that the author always has the option of returning the advance on a book and not delivering the final manuscript. But an e-book is not hard copy. It exists in digital copies that can be easily altered. In the case of Triskelion, many manuscripts had already been turned in, without being published yet. As most e-publishers don’t pay advances, the author
can’t return the advance, nor could she withhold a manuscript that had already been turned in.

I don’t believe artists or other creative people are asking for special rights compared to, say, vendors of furniture who may also be owed money. If we were simply dealing with physical books already published in hard copy, it would be another matter. We are instead dealing with our creative rights and our reputations. Particularly in the case of e-publishers who pay no advance, it was a slap in the face to see not only our royalties vanish—the same as with all creditors—but also our creative work seized.

I am pleased, however, to report a happy outcome to the situation. In a gesture of goodwill, Siren Publishing acquired the rights to 154 manuscripts at auction and returned these to the authors in their entirety. For a number of authors who had written the court protesting the seizure of their rights and whose manuscripts had been withheld from the auction, the court has decided to vacate all rights, returning them to the writers.

However, I hope all authors will be aware that in future a similar situation could affect them, and that—barring some action by Congress—the bankruptcy clauses in their contracts are worthless.

Jackie Diamond Hyman
Brea, CA

I found the Fall Bulletin to be particularly inspiring, especially the Half Century Club. I am approaching 75 and have been wondering what writers my age are doing. Do they feel as I do that the muse in me is ageless and that writing is breathing and breathing is writing? On down days, I feel it might all slip away from me, but then I recall feeling that way all the way through the writing journey. There is a generation of writers now who never existed before, writing into their much later years. Now and then it would be nice to see just what they are doing, how they are doing it, what age demands of them in adjusting to physical issues, so much we can all learn from elder adult writers. Many of my friends are in their eighties and have become my role models as they travel past the obstacles of aging to continue their lives. Thank you for making me feel far from finished.

Harriet May Savitz
Bradley Beach, NJ

Thank you for your piece on Madeleine L’Engle in the current Bulletin.

After I’d read A Wrinkle in Time, when I was 11, I sent her a fan letter. In her response, she observed that, judging by the way I’d expressed myself, she wouldn’t be at all surprised if I grew up to be an author myself.

We kept in touch on and off over the next 20 years, and when my first novel, Changing Pitches, was released in 1984*, she got the first copy.

Thanks again for your testament to her.

Steven Kluger
Santa Monica, CA

* Changing Pitches has just been reissued through the Authors Guild’s Backinprint.com. Ed.

Appellate Court Blocks Freelance Settlement

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entirely. That’s because the Second Circuit’s ultimate rationale for undoing the settlement—lack of jurisdiction—is based on the notion that claims from authors who didn’t register their copyrights cannot be properly included as part of a class action objection to copyright infringement.” Copyright registration is required to bring a lawsuit for infringement, but since registration is viewed as a formality (comparable, many legal scholars and practitioners believe, to the requirement that one file a complaint in order to get into court), lawyers on both sides believe the settlement is an appropriate vehicle to resolve infringement claims for both registered and unregistered works.

The Second Circuit did not rule that the $18 million settlement didn’t allocate enough money for the authors of the unregistered works. It ruled that the district court lacked jurisdiction over claims relating to unregistered freelance articles. This issue was raised by the court itself, not by the plaintiffs, defendants or objectors. The good news is that there is a substantial dissenting opinion by Judge John M. Walker, Jr. He submitted a 22-page explanation of his disagreement with the decision of the majority, which hangs on his conclusion that “the fact that some of the otherwise presumably valid copyrights have not been registered is an insufficient basis for undoing this class-action settlement.”

Plaintiffs and defendants have already started the process of seeking a review of the decision by all of the judges of the Second Circuit. The purpose of this en banc review is, of course, to see whether we can persuade a majority of the entire court to see things our way. The Guild filed a request for an en banc review January 4, 2008. ♦
Bloggi Blenni Blicci

Continued from page 7

captures those feelings as well as anything I’ve seen,” then quoted from the piece at length. Yo, Howard.

And back on the blog, my side was back. Slims-mom assured me, “I couldn’t have said it better myself. It is nothing I can put my finger on, but rather a feeling she is playing to the audience and is more interested in being first, than in what she can do for the country.” susaw shouted “Hallelujah!” while danie-bordo commented on his, or her, “joy to hear you voice your own opinion.”

But the joyride was short-lived, bnieider found “your review of Hilary to be demeaning not to Hilary but to you. Obviously, you have had many problems in your career trying to break the glass ceiling and achieving your goals as a woman. However, your review struck me as snarky and irrelevant to the case at hand.” mfarrell agreed, in the Briticism that seems to have invaded our shores. “Spot on! Alison Owings’ article strikes me as a great amount of pent up anger being lashed out at Hillary and for what reason? To soothe her own ego?”

More disagreements erupted, now among commenters. “Wow, dude,” wrote Pandorasbox. “Did you actually read the blog? AmandaM chided someone else, “Clearly you didn’t read the whole article. She says pretty clearly that she disagrees with Hillary’s vote to go to war in Iraq and . . . .” Blogging was beginning to feel like being a patient at a teaching hospital, undergoing examination by a group of interns.

Meanwhile, former long lost CBS colleagues took advantage of my website address and wrote. Another told me, to my chagrin, that I erred in thinking myself the third known woman newswriter at CBS. (I’d meant on The Evening News.) A stranger wrote to order my first book, The Wander Woman’s Phrasebook/How to Meet or Avoid People in Three Romance Languages. (Who says blogs don’t pay?)

Back on blog, the comments kept piling up. 300! More than 300! Was I about to be offered a blog of my own? Jessica grounded me. The “content of the post” matters more than not, she e-mailed, although “our more established bloggers” do get a lot of comments once they have built up a following. “So . . . your experience was unusual but not surprising!”

By now, I began to notice something else. Many of “my” new readers were not exactly mine, but were fighting one another on subjects—Chris Matthews, Tim Russert—well beyond my post. Nippersdad and Mr.Liberal53 got into a fray, revisiting former squabbles. So many inter-comment arguments broke out, in fact, that my analogy changed. I now felt I’d invited everyone to an open house, but at least half the guests skipped the hors d’oeuvres, to run out to the backyard and fight in the sandbox.

Then, one comment hit home hard. KarenZipdrive definitely was not interested in hors d’oeuvres. “I want a bitch in office who will scare the enemy—not with empty words but with the threat of her countenance of forced pleasantry,” she wrote, going on in that vein, before adding, “As a professional journalist, you might want to revisit the SPJ [Society of Professional Journalists] canon of ethics and reread the part about remaining politically neutral under your byline unless you’re an editorial writer. I too am a journalist, but I have the sense to use a pseudonym when I am opining my personal political beliefs.”

Her comment caused me to do a mental checklist of My Life in Journalism, from getting a B.A. in the subject, to being scrupulously fair as a television news-writer, to remembering my transcriber recently say I’m her only client who relists to each interview to compare it with the transcript. Call me Ms. Fastidious with quotes and objectivity, I would have said. I thought of how at protests (mostly against wars, but also impending prison executions) I went as an Ordinary Citizen, staying out of camera range lest a viewer think me biased. Did I throw all this carefulness away on a blog? Was my morning bed leap so intense that I will never be trusted to write objectively again about anything?

Or, does it matter?

Just before The Huffington Post closed the comments (at 348, now oddly down to 341 last I checked) to “My Hillary Problem,” susiesorority wrote, “This piece is as worthless” as one on celebrity moms.

dgscol, however, got in the last comment, calling me “very cute.”

So there.
You Like My Poems? So Pay for Them

BY WENDYCOPE

One summer’s day, strolling through a cemetery, my partner and I had a conversation about what we would like on our gravestones. He suggested that mine should read: “Wendy Cope. All Rights Reserved.”

He knows all too well that I am obsessed with copyright. A poem is very easy to copy, whereas nobody is going to photocopy or download a whole novel or work of nonfiction. Poets are thus especially at risk if people do not know and respect copyright law.

The authors of short, funny poems are especially vulnerable. Such poems have a tendency to run off on their own and detach themselves from the names of their authors. There’s a well-known poem I’ve liked since I was quite small. “The rain it raineth every day/ Upon the just and unjust fella/ But mostly on the just because/ The unjust hath the just’s umbrella.” For decades I thought of it as anonymous. Then, when I was compiling an anthology of poems for children, I found it in the British Library with an author’s name on it: Baron Charles Bowen. I was happy to reunite poem and author in the anthology. I’ve seen a poem by Ogden Nash in white paint on a beam in a pub with no mention of the author’s name. I’ve seen one of mine in an anthology, attributed to Dorothy Parker. I could mention numerous other examples.

But this isn’t just about short poems. There’s a problem for the authors of all poems, unless they’re really long, like Paradise Lost.

A few years ago one of my stepisters asked me about Jenny Joseph’s poem “Warning”—the one that begins: “When I am an old woman I shall wear purple.” My stepister spends a lot of time in the USA and had heard about the Red Hat Society, a women’s organisation inspired by Jenny’s poem. As “Warning” is included in an anthology I edited, I offered to send her a copy. “No,” she said. “Don’t bother. I’ll get it off the Internet.” That was when it dawned on me that nowadays, if you want a copy of a particular poem, you don’t have to buy a book.

My poems are all over the Internet. I’ve managed to get them removed from one or two sites that were major offenders, but there are dozens, if not hundreds of sites displaying poems without permission. If I Google the title of one of my poems, it is almost always there somewhere, and I can download it and print it out. I’m sure that this must affect sales of my books. I’ve tried Googling some of Seamus Heaney’s poems, and those of one or two other well-known poets, and it’s the same. Authors’ organisations—the Society of Authors, The Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS)—are concerned about this problem. Publishers aren’t happy either because they, too, are being robbed. But everyone agrees that Internet piracy is extremely difficult to fight.

Often the offending websites are the responsibility of well-meaning enthusiasts, who have no idea that they are breaking the law. Neither do the people I meet every now and then who say: “I liked your poem so much that I sent copies of it to all my friends.” I’m supposed to be pleased. I’ve learned to smile and say thank you and point out very politely that, strictly speaking, they shouldn’t have done that. They should have told their friends to buy the book. Or bought it for them.

In an attempt to do something about widespread ignorance of copyright law, the ALCS and the Poetry Society commissioned me, some years ago, to write a poem on the subject. It is called “The Law of Copyright” and the form is borrowed from Kipling’s poem “The Law of the Jungle.” Too long to reproduce here, the poem points out that “This is the law: the creator has rights that you can’t overlook. It isn’t OK to make copies—you have to fork out for the book”.

Another beef concerns literary festivals. These days they often invite actors or anthologists to come along and present a programme of other people’s poems. I’d like to be sure that they have cleared permission to read the work to a paying audience, and I know that in many cases they haven’t. So the people who wrote the work are getting no benefit from the event. For most poets, fees for doing readings of their own work are an important part of their income. So, if festivals invite actors or anthologists instead, and the poets are not paid for the use of their work, poets have cause for complaint.

One argument that often comes up in relation to all this is, “But it’s free publicity.” Well, it’s true that there are poets who are happy to see their work anywhere and everywhere, just for the sake of the attention. But for those of us who make a little bit of money from
royalties and permission fees, and depend on that income, it’s different. Free publicity has no value if all that happens is that even more people download your poems from the Internet without paying for them.

In the long run—if our poems survive into the long run—we’ll be in no position to benefit from royalties or permission fees. All poets hope that their work will outlive them. I’m no exception. Even so, I sometimes feel a bit annoyed by the prospect of people making money out of my poems when I’m too dead to spend it.

And I feel sad for other poets. One day I came across some postcards in a gift shop featuring poems by AE Housman, who died in 1936. I bought a postcard and, on the back of it, wrote the following lines. When I hear them in my head, they are sung to the tune of the hymn “The Church’s One Foundation”:

**POSTCARD POEM**

Will they do this, I wonder
With verse of mine or yours
When we are six feet under
And deaf to all applause?

We bring home little bacon
En route for that long night
And when the profit’s taken
We’re out of copyright.
Membership Application

Mr./Ms. ___________________________ Pseudonym(s) ___________________________

Address ___________________________ City ___________________________ State ___ Zip ________

Phone ( ) __________________ Fax ( ) __________________ E-mail ___________________

Agent Name _________________________ Agency ___________________________ Agent phone ( ) __________

How did you become interested in joining the Guild? (check one)  □ Invitation  □ Writing journal________
□ Referred by _________________________ □ Other _______________________________

What is your primary reason for joining?  □ Support and advocacy efforts  □ Legal services  □ Health insurance ________
□ Site-builder and other Web services  □ Other _______________________________

Writers may qualify on the basis of being book authors or freelance journalists. **Book authors** must have been published by an established American publisher. A writer who has a contract with an established publisher for a work not yet published may join as an associate member. **A contract with a vanity press does not qualify a writer for membership in the Guild.** **Freelance journalists** must have published three works, fiction or nonfiction, in a periodical of general circulation within the last eighteen months.

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Please enclose a check for your first year’s dues in the amount of $90 payable to “The Authors Guild” or charge your Visa or Mastercard.

 Account # ___________________________ Amount: $90

Signature ___________________________ Expiration Date _____ / _____

Mail to: The Authors Guild
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New York, N.Y. 10016