



Literary License

March, 2007

BIOGRAPHERS FOLLOW FOOTNOTE TRAIL TO AVOID PLAGIARISM PITFALLS

BY RICHARD FRISBIE

To avoid inadvertent plagiarism while using secondary sources, follow the footnotes.

That was the advice of Janet and Gerry Souter at the March 13 SMA meeting in the Chicago Athletic Association when they described their method of producing a series of biographies of famous artists.

So far, they've done Georgia O'Keeffe, Frida Kahlo, Camille Claudel, Diego Rivera, Edward Hopper, Alexander Calder and Mark Rothko for Parkstone-International publishers.

One thing these artists have in common, Gerry said, is that they're all dead. Instead of interviewing their subjects, the Souters have to work from diaries, letters and various archives. They use the footnotes in previous biographies to track down sources. Instead of incurring library fines, they buy the books they need for \$5 or \$6

from Amazon.com.

"We use only the facts," Janet said. "We frame different viewpoints in our own style."

This is something they are qualified to do. Both are artists themselves and graduates of the School of the Art Institute. Gerry said too many books about artists "carry the stink of a Ph. D. thesis."

The Souters also look at the artists' works. They drove from their home in Arlington Heights, Ill., to review the full-size Rivera murals in the Detroit Art Museum.

They said it may or may not be a help if the subject has written an autobiography. Diego Rivera claimed in his to have experimented with cannibalism in his youth, having found a source of fresh corpses of accident victims. Gerry, who has been also a newspaperman, is skeptical of that story.

Gerry read a passage from Rothko in which the artist attempted to define "beauty" in such convoluted and obscure language that it drew a laugh

from the audience.

The Souters got the assignment by following up a tip from the American Society of Authors and Journalists. Parkstone had announced they were looking for writers.

Lavishly illustrated with the artists' works, the books contain 40,000 to 50,000 words of text. They're published in French and German as well as English.

The Souters have written more than 30 books, sometimes separately, sometimes together.

Both of their names are on the cover of the Rothko book. Janet did the O'Keeffe book. Gerry's books on Kahlo and Rivera will soon be published as a boxed set.

Janet and Gerry review each other's work. "She cools me down, I jazz her up," Gerry said.

Janet spoke of what they had learned about their artists' relations with others. She admired O'Keeffe and Claudel as "fiercely independent women," but artists, she said, aren't very good "caregivers." Claudel, who

POETRY NIGHT: PAGE VS. STAGE AND STUDENT VS. TEACHER

A fun-filled night of poetry with Richard Jones and Michael Kadela. The opening poet will be Carolyn Aguila.

Where: Chicago Athletic Assn., 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago

When: 6 p.m. social hour, 7 p.m. program, Tuesday, April 10, 2007

Reservations NOT needed. Public invited. Reception and presentation \$5 for nonmembers. SMA members and teachers and students with ID free. Snacks and cash bar.

Other Coming Events

May 8--92th Annual Banquet and Awards Presentation. Our last time in the historic Chicago Athletic Association with the much-quoted Paul Green as master of ceremonies.

Board Meetings

Usually on the third Wednesday of the month, September through June, except December.

LITERARY LICENSE

©2007, Society of Midland Authors,
P.O. Box 10419, Chicago, IL 60610

Editor: Richard Frisbie, Suite 104,
445 W. Erie St., Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: 312/397-0992
Fax: 312/255-9865
richardfrisbie@sbcglobal.net

Associate Editor: Carol Jean
Carlson

Literary License accepts
appropriate advertising inserts. For
information, contact the editor.

www.midlandauthors.com

had a stormy relationship with the sculptor Auguste Rodin probably would have benefitted from Prozac®.

Although Hopper slapped his wife around, it was she who promoted his career. She fought back, too, with her fingernails.

Gerry said Calder was an exception, “a wonderful person.”

MAKING MEDIA FRIENDS WELL WORTHWHILE

BY TOM CIESIELKA

TC PUBLIC RELATIONS

In publicity, the single most significant investment you make is the time you put into relationships. Your contacts, both in the media and elsewhere, need to know who you are, and should have you in mind on a regular basis. You never know when your effort to build that connection will pay off.

Take these simple steps to develop a network of friendships that you can call on for endorsements, introductions or media coverage to help promote your work:

Keep a Record: Any time you meet new contacts, record their names and a few facts about them. Find a way to file this information so that you can keep in touch.

Make Excuses: Don't wait until you need a favor to get in touch with your new contacts. Let them know

about blogs that might be of interest, make introductions to other great contacts, and come up with other excuses to stay “top of mind.”

Ask for Input: When you need some insight, ask your contacts for advice. This shows them that you think highly of their expertise, and they may offer to step in and help where they can.

Intentionally making and keeping friends is a surprisingly rare practice. Care for your relationships with media contacts with these simple practices and you may be surprised at the kind of coverage that results from your efforts.

OTHER MEMBER NEWS

Happy Outcome for Small Publisher

In a recent full-page *Publishers Weekly* feature, the chief of the Independent Publishers Group gloated over their handling of a best-seller from Haki Madhubuti and his Third World Press.

The book was *The Covenant with Black America*, a collection of essays by important black thinkers, introduced by broadcasting personality Tavis Smiley.

Curt Matthews, who is also CEO of Chicago Review Press, explained that both he and Madhubuti recognized the book's potential.

But sometimes a bestseller can ruin a small publisher. As sales take off and the media rave, the temptation is to print too many copies. As the excitement dies down, the returns flood in and eat up the profits.

With *Covenant*, the IPG staff “worked crazy hours” to get 50,000 books into the stores. Then reprints were held to batches of 25,000 or 30,000 as more orders came in.

The happy ending was that almost all of 315,000 copies were sold and paid for.

Nurturing Wonder in Children

Martin E. Marty's new book, *The*

Mystery of the Child, is “breathtakingly ambitious in scope, written with the author's customary sober and reflective erudition,” said *Publishers Weekly*.

Children, he writes, are not a problem to be controlled. Instead, adults should not only “nurture wonder in children, but to seek their own ‘childlikeness.’”

Although written for a general audience, the book's scholarly underpinnings grew out of a three-year study at Emory University of “The Child in Law, Religion and Society.”

Sidewalks of Chicago

The long-running “Sidewalks” feature in the *Chicago Tribune* with text by Rick Kogan and photos by Charles Osgood has been turned into a book of the same name, a “beautiful coffee-table collection.”

In a *Tribune* review, Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* wrote that Kogan's books “make me--a native Chicagoan now living in the emotionally colder climate of New York--homesick.”

Sidewalks covers famous and obscure landmarks, celebrities and the ordinary folks Kogan meets strolling around town.

Alter observed, “In New York you're in finance, or journalism, or fashion, or some other industry that is so big you never manage to connect with the other worlds. In Chicago, the circles are smaller and more concentric. This makes for a richer social life.”

Luck Enriches Historical Novel

Rebecca Johns, author of *Icebergs*, got two lucky breaks when researching her historical fiction novel, which was inspired partly by a World War II-era plane crash involving her grandfather. Johns told a group March 10 at the Niles Library in Niles, Ill.

The first break was that the world's only remaining flight-worthy B-24, the kind of plane her grandfather had been on, was brought on tour to Palwaukee Airport near Chicago, giving her a

chance to fly on it and gather details that would help her describe the aircraft.

The second break was that her research led her to the fellow airman who saved her grandfather's life in 1944 when he was thrown headfirst from a crashing B-24 into a snowbank on the Labrador coast and couldn't climb free on his own.

One of the main characters in Johns' novel, Walt Dunmore, is similarly aboard a crashing B-24 and is trapped in a snowbank. The book, Johns' first, follows the lives of the families of two aviators in the crash, one who lives and one who dies, and shows how the crash affects their lives.

Also, just as J.R.R. Tolkien said he was inspired to write *The Hobbit* when the first line of the book popped into his head, Johns said the last line of *Icebergs* suddenly came to her on March 10, 2002, inspiring her to write a book worthy of it. And what was that last line? Well, to understand its significance, Johns has some advice: read the book.

Johns, who now lives in Iowa City, was born in Libertyville, Ill., and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. *Icebergs* (Bloomsbury) won the Michener-Copernicus Award.

Poet Laureate Promotes New CD

As Illinois Poet Laureate, Kevin Stein has announced release of the first-ever audio compact disk poetry anthology, *Bread & Steel: Illinois Poets Reading from Their Works*. "Through the voices of established poets and those just emerging in the art form, listeners journey along the thoroughfares and back roads of Illinois diverse poetic landscape."

Bread & Steel offers the voices of 24 poets, including Dave Etter, Susan Hahn, Li-Young Lee, Haki Madhubuti and Lisel Mueller, reflecting "the cultural, aesthetic and racial mix of this state."

Building on the popularity of audio and video poetry offerings on the Illinois Poet Laureate's website

(www.poetlaureate.il.gov), *Bread & Steel*, Stein said, "is a must-have addition to the holdings of Illinois school and public libraries, delivering the intimacy of the poetry coffeehouse to the library or classroom."

Funds from the purchase of *Bread & Steel* will support other ventures to promote Illinois poetry, most particularly Stein's Poetry Now! project, which he has funded out of his own pocket.

Grants from Poetry Now to more than 20 Illinois libraries "aim to create an audience for contemporary poetry in rural and urban locales not generally immersed in the current poetry scene." (www.bradley.edu/poet/breadandsteel)

Merchant Marine on D-Day

Bruce Felknor writes: "The National D-Day Memorial at Bedford, Va., invited me to lecture at the end of January on "The Normandy Invasion: Getting it There." I did so, with PowerPoint illustrations, to an enthusiastic overflow audience.

"I described the intense secret planning and development of the two artificial harbors implanted on the Normandy shore, each the size of the port of Gibraltar--whose major elements were essentially invented by Winston Churchill two decades earlier. The placement began on D-Day plus 1.

"The narrative came from my 1998 book, *The U. S. Merchant Marine at War, 1776-1945* (Naval Institute Press), and subsequent research, plus 'Bruce Felknor's Page at the Merchant Marine Web site (usmm.org). Book sales from the Memorial's gift shop exhausted its modest stock and I had to sign book plates for the back orders; that was a kick for a nine-year-old book.

"The merchant marine angle, virtually unknown today, was that the towboats who towed and emplaced great concrete harbor structures from England, and the battle-scarred freighters sailed there and sunk to provide breakwaters, all were manned by merchant seamen (except for a

scattering of Army and Navy tugs)...

"The merchant mariners, of course, manned the troopships and freighters and tankers that delivered most of the men and all the supplies and weapons of war across U-boat-filled seas."

A "Greek John Steinbeck"

Arcadia, My Arcadia by Chicagoan Nicholas D. Kokonis won a "First Homer Award" and "Gold Medal" from the International Society of Greek Authors at the Cultural Center of Athens on Jan. 11. *Arcadia, My Arcadia* has been widely acclaimed by some as "a hymn to the ordinary immigrant men and women who, unable to earn a living in their homeland, chased their dream and caught it abroad."

For others, "it is a book that must enter our home like a loved one who was missing for years."

For still others, "Nikos Kokonis reminds us of a Greek John Steinbeck."

In February, the honors literature course at Northeastern Illinois University discussed the book in an open-to-the public forum.

The story is currently under movie option consideration and a Greek edition will be available in the immediate future.

Notable Poetry

Linda Neme Foster's most recent book of poetry, *Listen to the Landscape* (Eerdmans), was a finalist for the 2006 Michigan Notable Book Award. It was a collaboration with photographer Dianne Carroll Burdick.

Foster completed another collaboration last year with jazz musician Steve Talaga.

Her poetry chapbook, *Contemplating the Heavens*, was the inspiration for Talaga's original score and CD of the same name. Composed over a two-year period, the piece combines classical, jazz, blues, fusion, and contemporary music elements that reviewers have hailed as "haunting, eclectic and powerful."

The original score and CD have

been nominated for this year's Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Another poetry book, *Amber Necklace From Gdansk* (LSU Press), was the subject of a panel discussion including Foster at the January American Historical Association's annual conference in Atlanta.

“Best First Mystery”

Lori Andrews' *Sequence* (paperback, April 2007) has been nominated for a Romantic Times Best First Mystery award.

In May, she'll host an important conference and see publication of another new book.

On May 21 in Chicago, she will lead a free conference on “Who Owns Your Body?” with author Michael Crichton. She is a law professor and the director of the Institute for Science, Law and Technology at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

See www.loriandrews.com.

for her new book, *The Silent Assassin* (St. Martin's Minotaur)

research took her from the White House to a former journalists' club in Vietnam.

“*Sequence* is a cutting edge forensic thriller with a smart, edgy female protagonist,” according to Chuck Hogan, author of *Prince of Thieves*.

Blurb detail: “Alexandra (Alex) Blake is a cutting-edge geneticist who has just taken a two-year post at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) in Washington, D. C.

“Her boss, Colonel Jack Wiatt, angry at losing his chance to head the FBI, decides to outfox that agency by pulling Alex away from her work sequencing the 1918 Spanish flu and thrusting her into forensic work.

“Alex helps track a serial killer who is targeting women near Navy bases, raping them and tattooing them after he murders them.

“But when Alex's work expands to include the murder of the FBI head's ex-husband, the suspects include the Senator, a Congressman who is Alex's one chance at a stable romance, and

even Wiatt and his staff, Alex puts her own life in jeopardy to bring the case to a surprising conclusion.”

RECENT NEW MEMBERS

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Jerry Crimmins

A veteran Chicago reporter at the *Daily Law Bulletin* and an editor, Jerry Crimmins is author of *Fort Dearborn*, a novel that *Publishers Weekly* calls “vividly imagined and scrupulously documented.”

Fort Dearborn tells its story through the eyes of two young boys and their fathers --one father a sergeant with the United States First Infantry, the other a Potawatomi warrior.

Booklist says, “The novel reads like a suspense story yet will reward readers with in-depth knowledge of a pivotal period in U.S. history.”

Crimmins is author also of the 1992 book, *Obits and Murders*.

Address Service Requested

Chicago, IL 60610

P.O. Box 10419

Society of Midland Authors

Library License