A whodunit primer from authors whodoit

Moderator Sam Reaves (from left), Lori Rader-Day, Tracy Clark and Patricia Skalka discuss mystery writing at the Midland Authors Feb. 13 program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. (Thomas Frisbie photo)

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Four accomplished mystery writers led a lively panel discussion about their craft Feb. 13 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The authors — Sam Reaves, Lori Rader-Day, Tracy Clark and Patricia Skalka — talked about what it takes to create a successful mystery and how some genres are different from others.

“People expect crime fiction to be rooted in the real world,” said Reaves, who also moderated the program. “They want to learn something about the real world.

... Just speaking for myself, I want to learn something about the part of the real world that I don't know much about.”

To achieve that, an author should be sensitive to the milieu in which a book’s characters live, said Clark, whose third book in her Cass Raines series will come out in May (See Literary Latest, Page 7).

“[As a writer, you should] always be looking at a society that you're dealing with, where your character lives, how they deal with people and the world.
Whodunit

Continued from Page 1

County mystery series, said she would “go crazy” if she did not know who the killer is before she starts writing.

Skalka likened writing a mystery to creating a huge puzzle.

“I have to create the picture so that by the time [it is] done, the picture is complete. And then, as the writer, I ... destroy the picture, put all the pieces back in the box [so] someone else who's reading it can start putting the pieces together to try to figure it out.”

The authors also discussed the various genres of mystery writing and the difference between standard mysteries and literary fiction.

Rader-Day joked, “Literary fiction [is] the fantasy that everybody lives in New York.”

Reaves, though, said, “The distinction between genre fiction and literary fiction ... is genre fiction has an element of fantasy fulfillment in it. If you write crime fiction, there are fantasies perhaps of being a tough guy or fantasies of justice winning out in the end. If you're writing romance, there's an obvious fantasy element. So I think that's a kind of crude demarcation. [But] genre fiction ... can rise to the level of the best literature.”

Rader-Day added: “Literary fiction often expects stories to engage with bigger issues than just the crime at question. And a category mystery, which is I think some of the things we're talking about, will often not very deeply engage with anything other than the actual crime.”

Skalka said, “I consider my books to be literary mysteries because the character development is very important. But ... also with a touch of the noir. So that's the way I would describe them. ... Each book has its own story arc. But the series has an overarching story arc in that my protagonist starts in a very, very bad place personally.

Whodunites

Continued from Page 1

Towards Glass (See Literary Latest, Page 6) will be released April 21 from Pyr Books (launch party will be April 26 at the Book Stall in Winnetka, Illinois).

And in July, Sellers Media will be releasing my 2021 Lord of the Rings boxed calendar. I had a great time revisiting the trilogy and crafting more than 300 testing crime, start with the scam, start with an interesting crime.

Most crime is not interesting. If you hear about an interesting crime or you see the potential for an interesting crime, start with the crime.”

Rader-Day, whose latest book is The Lucky One (William Morrow Paperbacks, Feb. 18, 2020, See Literary Latest, Page 7), said the next step is to “start surrounding [the protagonist] with real life. Who are they related to? Who do they live with? Who do they work with, who do they encounter? And one of those fellows is going to be your killer, right?

“But you don't have to know [who the killer is going to be]. You just have to tell a story and get your characters interacting and telling each other things and lying to each other and hiding secrets and things like that. And then you work your way through the story the best you can.

“You don't have to know,” she said. “I have not known ... for months.”

Clark said, “I didn't know who the killer was, either, in the first [book]. In fact, halfway through, when I sort of had an idea of who the killer might be, it changed.

“Everybody lies in the book,” she said. “Your protagonist has to figure out which lie is the least truthful. ... Things will change. Things will shift, but everybody lies. The dead body is still there. You have to figure out what happened. It's sort of a profound A to B to C, and you just have to pick your way through it.”

But Skalka, who is finishing up her sixth book in her Dave Cubiak Door around them,” Clark said.

In a response to a question from former Midland Authors Board Member Lynn Voedisch, who has published urban fantasies, about how to write a mystery, Reaves said: “Start with the crime. I always say start with the scam, start with an interesting crime.

Your protagonist has to figure out which lie is the least truthful. ... Things will change. Things will shift, but everybody lies. The dead body is still there. You have to figure out what happened. It's sort of a profound A to B to C, and you just have to pick your way through it.”

But Skalka, who is finishing up her sixth book in her Dave Cubiak Door

Turn to Page 3

Literary License

©2020, Society of Midland Authors P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610
Editor: Thomas Frisbie tomfrisbie@aol.com
Copy Editor: Beverly Offen
www.midlandauthors.com
Follow the Society on Twitter@midlandauthors

Society of Midland Authors members can now pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a $1 fee to help cover PayPal’s fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at www.midlandauthors.com and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

Biblio File

Continued from Page 1

text; visual appeal; and the overall spirit of the book.” It was signed, ‘Congratulations again, and thank you for your wonderful contribution to literature for young readers!’” ... Barbara Barnett writes to say, “I am thrilled to announce that Alchemy of Glass (See Literary Latest, Page 6) will be released April 21 from Pyr Books (launch party will be April 26 at the Book Stall in Winnetka, Illinois). And then in July, Sellers Media will be releasing my 2021 Lord of the Rings boxed calendar. I had a great time revisiting the trilogy and crafting more than 300 questions. Be sure to stop by and visit my newly redesigned website.” ... Wild Rose, Wisconsin, has declared April 19 as

Program Chair Greg Borzo introduces the panelists at the Midland Authors’ Feb. 13 program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The authors also discussed the various genres of mystery writing and the difference between standard mysteries and literary fiction.

Rader-Day joked, “Literary fiction [is] the fantasy that everybody lives in New York.”

Reaves, though, said, “The distinction between genre fiction and literary fiction ... is genre fiction has an element of fantasy fulfillment in it. If you write crime fiction, there are fantasies perhaps of being a tough guy or fantasies of justice winning out in the end. If you're writing romance, there's an obvious fantasy element. So I think that's a kind of crude demarcation. [But] genre fiction ... can rise to the level of the best literature.”

Rader-Day added: “Literary fiction often expects stories to engage with bigger issues than just the crime at question. And a category mystery, which is I think some of the things we’re talking about, will often not very deeply engage with anything other than the actual crime.”

Skalka said, “I consider my books to be literary mysteries because the character development is very important. But ... also with a touch of the noir. So that's the way I would describe them. ... Each book has its own story arc. But the series has an overarching story arc in that my protagonist starts in a very, very bad place personally.

Program Chair Greg Borzo introduces the panelists at the Midland Authors’ Feb. 13 program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The authors also discussed the various genres of mystery writing and the difference between standard mysteries and literary fiction.

Rader-Day joked, “Literary fiction [is] the fantasy that everybody lives in New York.”

Reaves, though, said, “The distinction between genre fiction and literary fiction ... is genre fiction has an element of fantasy fulfillment in it. If you write crime fiction, there are fantasies perhaps of being a tough guy or fantasies of justice winning out in the end. If you're writing romance, there's an obvious fantasy element. So I think that's a kind of crude demarcation. [But] genre fiction ... can rise to the level of the best literature.”

Rader-Day added: “Literary fiction often expects stories to engage with bigger issues than just the crime at question. And a category mystery, which is I think some of the things we’re talking about, will often not very deeply engage with anything other than the actual crime.”

Skalka said, “I consider my books to be literary mysteries because the character development is very important. But ... also with a touch of the noir. So that's the way I would describe them. ... Each book has its own story arc. But the series has an overarching story arc in that my protagonist starts in a very, very bad place personally.

Program Chair Greg Borzo introduces the panelists at the Midland Authors’ Feb. 13 program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.
Literate License: Why did you pick Juliette Kinzie as your book’s topic?

Ann Durkin Keating: Juliette Kinzie’s history Wau-Bun: The Early Day in the Northwest (1856) has been dismissed as fiction by many scholars. While working on Rising Up From Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago (2012), I realized that she was arguably the first historian of Chicago and that she wrote a great deal about the course of a life that spanned from her birth in Middletown, Connecticut, in 1806 to her death just before the 1871 Fire. Most of her writing was in letters to family members that landed in archives because her granddaughter and namesake, Juliette Gordon Low, founded the Girl Scouts of America in 1912.

LL: Was it a challenge to portray a woman who was a trailblazer in some ways but who also firmly held some views that today are considered outdated?

Keating: Juliette was a well-educated woman engaged in building a new city. But she was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln nor a strident reformer like Jane Addams. When writing of Chicago’s early history, historian Bessie Louise Pierce went so far as to declare that “Chicago, like most western towns of the ‘30s and ‘40s was pre-emminently a man’s city. In the eyes of the world, building a city on the marsh was man’s work.” What I learned about Chicago during these years was that it was a city built by families – often large extended families – who created a civic culture by creating public and private institutions from which the “City of the Century” would emerge.

LL: How did you do your research into an era when Chicago was just a few scattered buildings with no library and few records?

Keating: Juliette’s letters buoyed me in this project. I was regularly surprised by the kinds of sources her letters led me to: a photograph of her brick house, maps that she drew, newspaper accounts of scandals and local government records that survived the 1871 Fire.

LL: What is your next book?

Keating: First, I have co-edited (with Will Barnett and Kathy Brosnan) City of Lake and Prairie: An Environmental History of Chicago, which will be published later this year by University of Pittsburgh Press. I have also begun working on a look at the Near West Side across the late 19th and 20th centuries through the lens of the social planning embraced by Jane Addams and other Progressive reformers with Rima Lunin Schultz.

Literary Landscape

Ann Durkin Keating

March 10, 2020, program
Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor
6 p.m. - Social Hour
7 p.m. - Program
Free - donations accepted

Biblio File

Continued from Page 2

Jerry Apps Day for the Wild Rose area. ... Robert W. Fieseler will be touring with his debut book Tinderbox, which won the Edgar Award in Best Fact Crime and the Louisiana Literary Award, this May and June for Pride. Robert writes to say, “Although I’ve done book events in Chicago, I’ve never had a chance to give my historical lecture on the Up Stairs Lounge tragedy (the notoriously unsolved arson fire at a New Orleans gay bar – featured in Tinderbox) and the forgotten Chicago victim Guy Andersen.” ... Publishers Weekly published an interview with April Pulley Sayre on Feb. 7. ... Former Midland Authors Board Member Carla Knorowski has accepted a position as president and chief development officer for the U.S. Naval War College Foundation in Rhode Island. ... Christoph Irmscher was one of two guests who discussed Henry Wardsworth Longfellow on a February Maine Bicentennial program. Also, Christoph reviewed Nina Amstutz’s Caspar David Friedrich: Nature and the Self (Yale University Press) for the Feb. 22-23 Wall Street Journal. ... Maggie Kast’s events for her new book, Side by Side But Never Face to Face (See Literary Latest, Page 7) will be Thursday, June 4, 7 p.m. Women & Children First for a talk and book signing, 5233 N. Clark St. Chicago; Sunday, June 7, 3 p.m., The Seminary Co-op, talk and book signing, 5751 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago; Tuesday, July 7, 6-7:30 p.m., Book Ends & Beginnings, talk and book signing, 1712 Sherman Ave., Evanston, Illinois. ... Bill Savage’s review of Rahm Emanuel’s new book, The Nation City: Why Mayors Are Now Running the World, was posted Feb. 21 in the Chicago Tribune. ... How to Speak Midwestern author Edward McClelland helped Justin Kaufmann judge Chicago accents on his WGN podcast and they even determined the correct pronunciation of paczki. ... Wilder by Claire Wahmanholm, Laurentian Divide by Sarah Stonich, Otherwood by Pete Hautman and a novel by Kate DiCamillo were among the finalists.

Turn to Page 4
announced in January for this year’s Minnesota Book Awards. All four authors are past Midland Authors award winners. Winners will be announced April 6. … On Feb. 22, Eldon Ham talked on Chicago’s The Score radio station about former MLB pitcher Mike Bolsinger’s lawsuit against the Houston Astros. … Eve L. Ewing discussed Afrofuturism and Chicago with librarian and archivist Stacie Williams at the Harold Washington Library Center on Feb. 20. … Greg Borzo discussed Chicago’s most beloved bygone restaurants Feb. 12 at the Brookfield (Illinois) Public Library. Greg reports the event was SRO and went so well he’s been invited back to talk about Chicago’s Fabulous Fountains. … On Feb. 5, NPR quoted David Quammen in a story about the coronavirus. … Frederick Douglass biographer David W. Blight kicked off Black History Month in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. … Eileen Meyer presented “The Superlative A. Lincoln” for third- and fifth-graders Feb. 17 at Fernandina Beach, Florida (also known as Amelia Island). On Feb. 23, she was at Barbara’s bookstore in Vernon Hills, Illinois. In late February, she was doing author visits in a number of western Chicago suburbs. Eileen writes to say, “It’s fun to talk to groups of hundreds of students about our 16th president.” … Ed Bachrach and Austin Berg wrote “Chicago should study LA police reforms for ways to really lower the homicide count” for the Jan. 4 Chicago Tribune. … Jeremy T. Wilson will speak at Elgin (Illinois) Community College’s spring 2020 Writers Center Reading Series on Thursday, March 12. … In February, John Wasik discussed how to thrive in an automated era at the College of Lake County’s Grayslake (Illinois) Campus. John writes to say, “Good crowd. It featured my book Winning in the Robotic Workplace and it took place in CLC’s Baxter Innovation Lab. It’s one of several talks I’m doing over the next few months.” … On Feb. 25, Citylab quoted from Jon C. Teaford’s book The Metropolitan Revolution: The Rise of Post-Urban America. … Now that he is writing full time, Keir Graff has a monthly newsletter called Graff Paper.
MIDLAND AUTHORS presents

Writing and Publishing Children’s Books

Tuesday, April 14, 2020
Cocktail hour: 6-7 pm
Panel discussion: 7-8 pm
at the Cliff Dwellers Club
200 S. Michigan Ave.
22nd floor penthouse—with a great view of Millennium Park!

Free, open to the public
Free appetizers, cash bar

❖ Esther Hershenhorn, Moderator, S is for Story
Author and writing coach Esther Hershenhorn admits that S is for Story is the book she wishes she’d owned as a little girl, dreaming of a writing career. She lives in Chicago, where she teaches Writing for Children at the University of Chicago’s Graham School’s Writer’s Studio and at the Newberry Library.

❖ Claudia Guadalupe-Martinez, Not a Bean
“Martinez reveals the hidden secrets of the legendary Mexican jumping bean in her picture-book debut. Much like the seed pod’s concealed cargo, this informational picture book packs plenty of facts and learning into a thoroughly entertaining package. Engaging and fun, as all learning should be.” — Kirkus Reviews

❖ Patrick McBrearty, Drawbridges Open and Close
“As a kid, I always loved books that explained a concept I didn’t fully grasp when I first saw it. Drawbridges is one of those books...a great book for those who want to understand the world they encounter.” — Michael Higdon, Retail Manager at the National Building Museum

❖ Eileen Meyer, The Superlative A. Lincoln: Poems about our 16th President
“These 19 poems demythologize A. Lincoln. An excellent use of language and recognizable rhyme schemes make this title a wonderful teaching tool for the classroom. VERDICT: A good example of how poetry can also inform. Highly recommended for elementary schools and public libraries.” — School Library Journal
SEQUEL TO THE APOTHECARY’S CURSE


“*Alchemy of Glass*, the sequel to the Bram Stoker Award-nominated *The Apothecary’s Curse*, is inspired by several personal fascinations.

“I have always been curious about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s obsession with the fairy folk. How does the physician/journalist/storyteller who created the most rational fictional character ever in Sherlock Holmes possess an undying obsession with fairies?

*Alchemy of Glass* explores this in what I hope is an interesting way, weaving together history, science and mythology as readers return to the world of Gaelan Erceldoune, a 500 year-old antiquarian bookseller with a unique genetic makeup.

“Setting part of the novel in 1826 London at the start of a terrible epidemic also allows me to explore my interest in medical history and the interplay of magic and science, knowledge and superstition.

“The novel is also inspired by my own obsession with the magnificent Lake Michigan and the ravines that run along the shore north of the city. The modern sections of *Alchemy’s* braided narrative take place along the shore from Navy Pier to Highland Park and all points between.”

SHARPLY DEFINED CHARACTERS

Kate McElligott writes to say of her new book: “1638 East Palace (Adelaide Books, 2019) is the sequel to *Mommy Machine* (Heliotrope Press, 2008), so the characters were already sharply defined. Each woman has a motivation that brings her into the circle of friendship at East Palace.

“I love these characters that I created and I enjoyed playing the cosmic puppeteer deciding their fate.

“In *Palace*, I wanted to show that people are more alike than different. Everyone yearns for that special place where they are welcomed and accepted. It goes beyond a physical space, though. The heart seeks fulfillment with a partner that allows us to grow and flourish, regardless of the many boxes we segregate ourselves into; gender, color, culture and so many more. It’s about what can be: communion, love without barriers.”

REMARKABLE FIRST LADY


Here is what Rosenstock tells Literary License:

“Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign had me wondering which of history’s first ladies might have made good presidents. I researched a bit on Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Taft, but at first ignored Abigail Adams because (sad to say) the only ‘fact’ I ever learned about her in school was that she hung laundry in the newly built White House.

“I thought of Abigail as a housewife, unworthy of my attention, which (as a woman who spent years as a housewife and stay-at-home mom) says a lot about how even women buy into our society’s sexist attitudes. And then I read that Abigail Adams started a business importing handkerchiefs. That stopped me in my tracks. I began to read her letters and was soon obsessed with writing a short picture book for children that encompassed this most intelligent, hard-working woman’s life.

“I found the core of the story on a research trip in Massachusetts while visiting the Adams’ homes with a National Park Service supervisor. I climbed up into the attic where Abigail housed American soldiers, fed them, changed their bedding, took care of any who were ill.

“In that space I realized that John...
Adams didn’t really live here for decades. He was off running a revolution, gathering support for a new country. Abigail was in charge, a woman without any legal rights at all – not to her family’s property, not to her children. Yet, she collected John’s legal fees, hired and fired farm hands, taught their four children, cared for elderly relatives, and eventually, yes, ran an import business to keep them fed.

“Plus, she wrote about her life and political opinions to friends and relations constantly, in a terrific, natural voice that is clear, smart and funny, still now, after almost 250 years. Those letters are evidence of a woman keeping up relationships in the middle of a revolution (and of course, she was making bullets in her fireplace, too!) happening with her help. Leave it to Abigail, I realized, there was nothing she couldn’t do. And those words became the book’s title and its textual structure.

“But this children’s biography ends not with Abigail’s death, but with her American spirit inspiring other prominent American women from our wide variety of cultures, faiths and interests, encompassing our young girls who will continue this women’s revolution.”

Love in Old Age

In her new book, Side by Side But Never Face to Face (Orison Books, June 2, 2020), Maggie Kast asks, “Can new love be found in old age?”

It’s a story narrated by Greta, who has been wrenched from a long and tightly circled marriage to Manfred, an Austrian Holocaust survivor.

Kast tells Literary License, “I began the novella, which eventually gave its name to the book, in 2015, shortly after my novel, A Free Unsullied Land, was published. I was struggling with the mix of true knowledge and fantasy that characterizes every relationship. I may think I ‘know’ someone, whether parent, partner, friend or child, but there’s always an imagined character that I impose on the real one, like a transparency. As I explored this charming but challenging ‘otherness,’ I introduced one of my characters to a Hmong family, looking at difference from a cultural distance.

“After many revisions, with the helpful critique of my writing group, I put the novella together with stories based on my marriage, two in the point of view of a character based on my husband and one in the imagined childhood of his mother, who grew up in 19th century Austria-Hungary. Then I took the manuscript to the Manuscript Boot Camp offered by Writing by Writers, where I worked with a small group led by Garth Greenwell. He read the collection as though it were a novel and helped me strengthen connections among stories, following characters throughout.

“I’m extremely grateful to Orison Books for a quick acceptance, excellent editing by Kevin McIlvoy, and a truly collaborative publishing experience.”

New Book

Midland Authors award winner Gloria Chao has a new coming book out, Rent a Boyfriend (Simon Pulse, Sept. 1, 2020).

From the publisher: “Chloe Wang is nervous to introduce her parents to her boyfriend, because she hasn’t met him yet, either. She hired him from Rent for Your ‘Rents, a company providing fake boyfriends trained to impress even the most traditional Asian parents. Drew Chan’s passion is art, but after his parents cut him off for dropping out of college to pursue his dreams, he became a Rent for Your ‘Rents employee.”

Chilling Novel

Lori Rader-Day’s latest is The Lucky One (William Morrow Paperbacks, Feb. 18, 2020). From the publisher: “The Lucky One [is] a chilling novel about a young woman who recognizes the man who kidnapped her as a child, setting off a search for justice, and into danger. Author Ann Cleeves wrote, “This might well be my favorite Rader-Day so far: a brilliant premise intriguingly developed, totally believable characters and a climax that took my breath away.”
Yes, people love reading true crime

This is the seventh part of a series reflecting on writing.

One agent I knew was a part-time correspondent for Publishers Weekly from Chicago’s North Shore who I got to know pretty well during the time I worked for the crime encyclopedia. I encouraged my colleague who had so much passion for the world of books and authors to become an agent because the Chicago market was bereft of bona fide literary representation. With good intentions she soon found that she had plunged head-first into an empty swimming pool, lacking the necessary connections to engage important New York editors with the manuscripts that came over the transom of her Wabash Avenue cubbyhole office.

One good thing came of it. My second agent managed to find me Cumberland House, a terrific publisher in Nashville, Tennessee who brought out my next three books. Cumberland, under the direction of its founder Ron Pitkin, served me very well. This is the kind of publisher one rarely encounters. His offer of an advance was well above my norm for my kind of books. My Cumberland-published books could be found in all the major retail outlets, and Ron was always open to suggestion, and most importantly, you could talk to him. The sense that you are working with a publisher who is a true partner is one of the intangibles that is important to most authors.


One good thing came of it. My second agent managed to find me Cumberland House, a terrific publisher in Nashville, Tennessee who brought out my next three books. Cumberland, under the direction of its founder Ron Pitkin, served me very well. This is the kind of publisher one rarely encounters. His offer of an advance was well above my norm for my kind of books. My Cumberland-published books could be found in all the major retail outlets, and Ron was always open to suggestion, and most importantly, you could talk to him. The sense that you are working with a publisher who is a true partner is one of the intangibles that is important to most authors.


Cumberland House published many fine titles in its day, but abruptly closed shop not long after the 2008 recession hit. Like so many publishers dependent upon the purchasing power of Barnes & Noble and Borders, when hard times befall them after 2008, Cumberland ceased operations. Half the titles went to Source Books, and the others were acquired by Turner. Sadly, I never fully appreciated Cumberland until it was no more.

University Press Publishing

I've published extensively with university presses such as Southern Illinois, Northern Illinois, Temple and Minnesota. All of them put out books of fine quality, literary merit and impressive appearance. But the scholarly presses are not a real good fit for non academic authors who do not happen to be on a tenure track, or required to publish in order to hold on to teaching position in the ivy halls. In recent years however, university presses have broadened their horizons and now publish many non-academic trade books in order to generate revenue to support the more serious but obscure titles that are reviewed in academic journals.

In 2007, I brought out Shattered Sense of Innocence: the Chicago Child Murders of 1955, and two years after that, The Gambler King of Clark Street: Michael C. McDonald and the Rise of Chicago’s Democratic Machine with Southern Illinois University Press. Gambler King won two major awards and Shattered represented five years of intense research. We left no stone unturned in the search for new answers and solutions to the baffling 1955 Schuessler-Peterson murders. It was a difficult and depressing story to write, with many unpleasant editorial disagreements arising with my co-author that followed, but SIU produced a beautiful-looking volume nevertheless, although reviews and publicity were again sparse. I believe the book could become a movie, with the right connections. Again, like everything else, it hinges on the “people you know.” And I did not know anyone of consequence in the film world.

These days, the two major Chicago newspapers receive advertising revenue from the big New York publishing houses that the small presses cannot match, and therefore are obliged to review the A-list books sent to them by trade house publicity directors.

I am proud of the recognition of my university press manuscripts that passed muster with juried peer reviews composed of three subject matter experts. There is the great satisfaction in knowing that your manuscript has cleared rigorous hurdles and is respected for the months of research you have put into it and the quality of writing compared with so much of the self-published or publish-on-demand material that no impartial source has critiqued or peer reviewed. For regional writers these days, the university press may be the only logical alternative to the mid-sized trade houses like Cumberland that are rapidly vanishing from the scene due in part to the scourge of the Internet and self-publishing.

Richard Lindberg's forthcoming books are a village history of suburban Addison, Illinois, and Tales of Forgotten Chicago, which relates stories roughly from the time of the Civil War to the 1960s and is due out with Southern Illinois University Press this year.
New Members

Sarah McFarland Taylor is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Northwestern University. A resident of Illinois for more than 20 years, she is author of Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology (Harvard University Press, 2018), an ethnography on the growing interest in earth care and earth ministries among vowed religious sisters and featured organic farming nuns in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, among other regions. Her new book, Ecopiecy: Green Media and the Dilemma of Environmental Virtue (NYU Press 2019), examines the problematic ways in which environmental media messaging often champions "green" consumption as an effective means to solve environmental problems. Her work in progress is titled Selling Planet B: Marketing Mars Migration and Manifest Destiny.

She was nominated by Thomas Frisbie.

Gerard Plecki is the author of Singing in the Rain: The Definitive Story of Woodstock at Fifty (Mill City Press, 2019) and Robert Altman (Twayne Publishers, 1985). He also has written articles on popular music and on television and film criticism. Born in Evergreen Park, Illinois, he has a Ph.D. in American Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an NEH post-doctoral Fellowship at New York University.

On Feb 28, Plecki was named the Midland Authors new corresponding secretary.

He was nominated by Walter Podrazik.

Paul M. Lisnek, J.D., Ph.D. is the author of 14 books, including his first work of fiction, the legal/political thriller Assume Guilt. His second work of fiction due out in October, 2020 is Assume Treason. Other books include: The Art of Lawyering: Essential Knowledge for Becoming a Great Attorney (Sphinx Publishing, 2010), The Hidden Jury: And Other Secret Tactics Lawyers Use to Win (Sourcebooks, 2003) and Winning the Mind Game: Negotiating in Business and Life (Meta Pubns, 1996).

Paul is also a television political analyst for WGN-TV, keynote and motivational speaker, corporate trainer, trial consultant, lawyer and mediator, as well as a multi-award-winning television anchor and host.

He was nominated by Dick Simpson.


Sive has taught at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and has held executive positions in business, government, philanthropy and nonprofits. Sive lives in Chicago and Michigan.

She was nominated by Jim Schwab.

Robert W. Fieseler, who was born in Chicago and grew up in Naperville, is the author of Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Upstairs Lounge Fire and the Rise of Gay Liberation (Liveright, 2018), which won the 2019 Edgar Award in Best Fact Crime and the 2020 Louisiana Literary Award. His essays and feature stories have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and recognized in roundups of best nonfiction by The Atlantic.

A Columbia Journalism School grad, he writes about marginalized groups and overlooked people for The Daily Beast, Narratively and elsewhere.

He was nominated by Jim Schwab.

Sarah McFarland Taylor

Gerard Plecki

Paul M. Lisnek

Rebecca Sive

Robert W. Fieseler

Literary Largess

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Society always needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May book awards banquet.

A donation thank you to Michael Dorf and Maury Collins.

Note: Midland Authors members can get a free copy of our history, A Century of Winged Words, by sending $1 for postage via PayPal or to our post office box.
A good number of people turned up at the Cliff Dwellers Club on Feb. 13 to listen to a panel of authors discussing the art of writing mysteries.

Besides the upcoming April program described on Page 5 and the annual May dinner for which an early registration form is on Page 4, the Midland Authors has added a new Aug. 11 program at the Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan, Chicago.
MIDLAND AUTHORS

presents

eminent historian Ann Durkin Keating
in conversation with Greg Borzo, Midland Authors Event Chair

The World of Juliette Kinzie:
Chicago Before the Fire

Tuesday, March 10, 2020
Cocktail hour: 6-7 pm; Panel discussion: 7-8 pm

Free, open to the public ✴ Free appetizers, cash bar

Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan Ave.
22nd floor penthouse—with a terrific view of Millennium Park!

Juliette Kinzie is one of Chicago’s forgotten founders. She arrived in Chicago in 1831 and not only witnessed the city’s transition from Indian country to industrial center, but was also instrumental in its development. The World of Juliette Kinzie offers a new perspective on Chicago’s early history and is a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman who was an astute observer of early Chicago, an influential contributor to the city, and even one of the first women historians in the United States. This book brings Kinzie to life.

Ann Durkin Keating, who teaches history at North Central College, is one of the foremost experts on 19th century Chicago. She has volunteered extensively with the Chicago History Museum, Illinois State Historical Society and Naper Settlement.

The World of Juliette Kinzie was published by the University of Chicago Press (2019), as were Keating’s previous books, including her very well reviewed Rising Up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago.

For more information, contact event chair Greg Borzo at (312) 636-8968 or gborzo@comcast.net.
Margaret Garb (1962-2018), a Midland Authors member and an internationally recognized historian of race and the American city, died on Dec. 15, 2018. Known to colleagues and friends as "Maggie," Garb began her professional career as a journalist, went back to school to complete a Ph.D., and was a professor of history and co-director of the Prison Education Project at Washington University in St. Louis when she passed away.

Garb was born in Trenton, New Jersey, to a family of activists. Her father, Isaac S. Garb, served as Bucks County, Pennsylvania, judge for more than 30 years and was a staunch proponent of prison reform. Her mother, Joan E. Garb, was active in the local Democratic Party and Planned Parenthood.

Garb attended the Buckingham Friends School and the George School. Her interest in cooking led to her enrollment at the Cordon Bleu in Paris, where she studied pastries. She eventually completed her B.A. in comparative religion at the University of Vermont.

Garb then worked as a journalist, first covering the Chicago Police Department and then writing for The New York Times and In These Times. Garb earned a master's degree in history from the University of California, San Diego, and her doctorate from Columbia University in New York, where she studied with Eric Foner and Betsy Blackmar.


Both were published by the University of Chicago Press, and they made Garb a leading figure in American urban history.

Garb was also an adviser to the The Chicago Elections Project, an ongoing digital history collaboration on the electoral history of the city, which was inspired by Freedom's Ballot. At the time of her death, she was working on a book on the history of poverty from the Civil War to the Reagan era.

Garb joined the Washington University faculty in 2001, where she taught courses on social reform, the history of poverty, and urban history. In 2014, Ms. Garb and Professor of Drama Robert Henke founded the Prison Education Project; the first students graduated from the program in 2019.

Garb was also the recipient of fellowships from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the Collegium de Lyon in France, and the Fulbright Fellowship Program.

Garb is survived by her husband, Mark Pegg, also a professor of history; a daughter, Eva Garb; and siblings, Emily and Charles Garb.