CLOSE-UP:

WORKING WITH PUBLISHERS AND AGENTS

Glimmer Train Close-ups are single-topic, e-doc publications specifically for writers, from the editors of *Glimmer Train Stories* and *Writers Ask*.

ELIZABETH McCRACKEN, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How did you get your first publishing break?

Well, it depends on how you count it. I do remember getting my first acceptance letter, from Larry Goldstein at the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, which said, "I greet you at the beginning of a wonderful career." And I thought, *Really? Really? I get a story accepted,* and *I get a career? Nifty!* ■

THOMAS BELLER, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

*Why not publish the new book [*How to Be a Man: Scenes from a Protracted Boyhood*] in hard cover?*

I don't know the publishing logic.

It's hard to make money off of hardcover, isn't it?

I don't know. If they sell a lot of books, they make money on it. Even though this has "memoir" in its title, it is a collection of personal essays, which is a bit different. Even though you can find huge excep-

Submission Calendar

tions to this, that genre is a—someone said to me a notch above poetry in the commercially saleable concept. To be perfectly honest, I am just glad they put it out.

Of all the [major] publishing houses, W.W. Norton might be the last one whose rationale I would question. ■

TIM GAUTREAUX, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

At some point in your life, you had to make the decision that you wanted to be a writer. How did that decision come about?

It's not like deciding to become a CPA. For me, at least, writing is just something I do, the way other people swim or play canasta. I never took it seriously. I wrote because I enjoyed it. I'd always written, all the way back to when I had a pen pal when I was eleven years old.

There was one big moment of departure, and it happened when I sent a story to the *Southern Review* in 1989. They sent me a letter containing compliments saying they didn't have room to publish it. I got a little miffed, because I thought this story was appropriate for the *Southern Review*, and I had faith in it. But that is pure, foolish vanity.

At any rate, I stuck that story in an envelope the day I got it back from the *Southern Review*, and I sent it to C. Michael Curtis at the *Atlantic Monthly*. He said it was okay until the ending, where it turns talky and peters out, and that if I ever tinkered with the ending they would look at it again. I took that story and rewrote the ending. It was about a one-thousand-word rewrite, finished within six hours of the mailman coming. I put it back in the mail, and Curtis bought it. I couldn't believe it when I got the acceptance letter. That is when I began to get some confidence that I could do better, serious work and have a broad audience. ■

SIGRID NUNEZ, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

Is there a movie to be made of The Last of Her Kind*?*

It's been optioned.

Was it optioned by someone who read it?

Indeed, and he said, "I will be totally honest with you; it wasn't a review that made me think of reading this book. I was in a bookstore…and the

cover of the book made me interested." That pleased me because I found that Eggleston photo myself.

The picture of the two girls?

It's from the seventies. I forget what stage I was in with the book. I wasn't finished yet. There was this photo from Memphis and I clipped it—I had this idea that Farrar Straus could work with it because it seemed right. And then I went off to Berlin in January 2005 and sent it to my editor [Jonathan Galassi] at Farrar Straus and then I didn't hear anything, and time passed and I knew the book was being put together. I inquired and he said they were working with it. And the next thing, I got the mock-up of the cover, and people have responded well to that image. And they used it on the soft cover because Picador also really liked it. And it's from the right era, and when you look at it, you don't know who's who. I just like it. It's beautiful. When it was published in Italy, they said, "We also want to use the cover," and they rarely use the same image.

Any interest in your earlier novels?

None of them. This was the first time. Who knows? I don't know how these things work.

People who are supposed to know how they work don't know how they work.

Yeah, yeah. We'll see what happens. ■

TIM GAUTREAUX, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How did you find your agent?

The first agent I had contacted me after he saw a story of mine that was published in a literary magazine. ■

ELIZABETH McCRACKEN, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How many rejection letters did you receive before publishing your first story or book? Were any especially memorable?

Photo credit: Tom Langdon

A nameless editor at *Harper's* rejected a story of mine about tattooing, explaining that reading about tattoos

was like reading about music or food—pretty soon you want to go out and experience the real thing. I still don't know what that means. He also misspelled "tattoo" all through the letter, so I corrected it in red pen. ■

WILLIAM LUVAAS, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

You've got two story collections and two novels out there. How did you go about finding publishers?

I have found publishers mostly on my own through persistence, that most essential writerly tool. ***The Seductions of Natalie Bach*** **was rejected fifty-six times, mostly by agents, and I despaired, but my wife insisted I not give up—so perhaps the most essential writerly tool is a supportive mate.** I returned home to Upstate New York from a family reunion in Oregon to a mailgram from Little, Brown, which read, "We have been seduced by Natalie Bach and would like to talk." Mine was one of three books taken off the slush pile by L.B. in twenty years, so it was one of those writers' fairy tales. I saw that slush pile when I visited my editor in Boston—a small room stacked floor to ceiling with manuscripts, and a dwarfed reader sitting amidst them, plowing slowly through. It was a scene right out of Kafka or Saramago. I think we must believe in small miracles as writers. Perhaps creativity is something of a small miracle in itself. Agent BJ Robbins found a publisher for my second novel, and that went much easier. But the short-story collection was taken without the aid of an agent after many submissions—and near misses. So it is something of a myth that a fiction writer needs an agent to be published. We just need to be bullheaded. ■

WILL BLYTHE, *interviewed by Rob Trucks:*

I'm sure that you've hit upon that voluptuousness, that monomaniacal focus as a writer. Did you ever attain that as an editor?

As an editor? No. Except for the aspect of editing that included reading. There were times that I would get something, like, say, from Denis Johnson, where I would sink into that level of absorption that you can get into watching a game, or writing if it's a happy day. And you know, certain writers, just reading them, I would be overcome by that or absorbed into the piece. But the actual act of editing? No. Even if you sort of have to read with the eyes of the writer who was doing the piece, or with a kind of double vision, their eyes and your own, there's something about that that's inherently detached. ■

JULIA ALVAREZ, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

In Saving the World*, the character Alma, a Latina novelist, seems to be very well regarded, and is doing well by book industry standards. She expresses great resentment and bitterness about it. That couldn't be you—you seem to be flourishing.*

She doesn't think she has been ill served by it. **What she regrets is that the book biz has gotten her far away from her reasons for writing—that the biz can become very much this performance and this self-promotion and this kind of glossiness**, and a certain amount of inauthenticity tends to creep in. I don't know if that happens more when you are from an ethnic community or not. When the year 2000 was approaching, and everybody wanted a Latino pundit on their radio program or TV, [I was asked] to predict what I saw for Latinos in the new millennium. [*Laughs.*] You find yourself with your Latina training, wanting to be polite and kind and to oblige, and you feel like you need to be nice, because here you are being asked a question, and it's an honor and a privilege and you are so lucky that anybody would even care, etc. But you find that you are saying things that sound bogus. Because statements, reactions to questions—they just don't have the complexity, the texture, the largeness of story. Here you've worked for three, four years on a novel, that you hope approaches that complexity and mystery, and then you're asked to summarize what it's all about for a sound bite. You have your picture taken. People are responding to you, not to the work. It's the creation of personality and celebritydom around writers—you know, the book tour—

Do you have to participate?

You know, it's funny. There are several answers to that. First of all, I already gave you one—good training as a Latina. You pitch in and you do the work and you do what is asked of you. You are polite and you don't say no. There's that. I am still with Algonquin, my little publisher, who is one of the little independent publishers still trying to make it. Most people in the company read the list. You talk to the person in the mailroom—they have read you, and they are all pitching in. There is [Algonquin publicity director] Michael Taeckens, who is lovely—

And Shannon [Ravenel].

Shannon and all these people are pushing for your book, working their butts off and you'd feel like some diva if you don't pitch in to help. So I think you have to do a certain amount to survive in the book culture. ■

DAVID HUDDLE:

A useful rule of thumb is to submit your work to journals you've actually held in your hand and, at least in part, read. Go to the library or to your bookstore and have a look at the journals that publish the kind of writing you're about to send out. Carrying out that easy research can help you determine if there's a fit between what you've written and what a journal publishes. You should publish in a journal you admire, one that prints work you appreciate. And since you usually have to wait a couple of months or more to get an answer from a journal, it's crucial to know whether or not you're likely to be in the ballpark. Reading journals can also give you a sense of "what's out there." Most publishing writers are readers of publications—which is to say that people who get published develop a pretty good sense of what's being published. Then there's the issue of the larger literary community: you're not wholly participating if you're just sending out your stuff without reading what other writers are writing and publishing. Most publishing writers subscribe to and regularly read at least a few literary journals. ■

SUE MILLER, *interviewed by Sarah Anne Johnson:*

You mentioned that when you wrote the beginning to Family Pictures*, your husband [writer Doug Bauer] and your agent gave you some feedback and you changed your plans with the novel. How much are your agent and editor involved in your work?*

My agent is a wonderful reader, and she does fine editing. She doesn't do as much line editing as my editors, but she does as much in terms of saying something like, "Do you really want us to feel that this character is sappy? Because here he does this sappy thing, and he does it again here and here." And I'll realize she's right, I've made him a sap. Then I correct six small things and it's better. I've also gotten better at being my own editor, at turning in work where there aren't so many differences between what I intend and what I end up with. But my agent is great, and Doug is great and they've both been my teachers in that regard. I've sort of jumped around between editors, but my first editor and the one that I have now have both been very attentive.

Do they help you with simple editing, or do they also help you deepen the narrative or more fully achieve your intention?

The latter happened most with *Family Pictures.* Ted Solatarof, who was my editor for that, asked a question that made me write a short scene between Lainey and Nina at the end of the book. He said that he felt that the narrative didn't *come around* enough at the end, that the conflicts in the book hadn't quite crystallized. In response, I wrote a scene in which Nina accuses her mother of loving Randall more than she loved her "normal" children. Her mother says to her that she wished she could have loved him exactly the way that she loved the other children, but she had to love him the way she did, because he *was* damaged. It all gets laid out at that point. I'd come very close to making this clear, but Nina hadn't said that to her before. It hadn't come around to this moment where the meaning of Randall in her life got articulated, and the feeling about her parents got spoken. **I think that scene helped the book enormously. It was only about an extra five pages.** For the most part though, Ted used to say things like, "A question will linger in the reader's mind about…" Then it would be up to me to decide whether or not I *wanted* that question to linger in the reader's mind, or whether I wanted to answer it, and if so, where. Ted was very good at articulating anything that troubled him, but he never offered prescriptive advice. He never said, "Take this out, put this in." He never did that. ■

MARY YUKARI WATERS, *interviewed by Sherry Ellis:*

Have you had many rejections, and how do you cope with them?

Oh yes, I have had lots of rejections. I still get rejections. Rejections are depressing, there's no getting around it. But for some reason, they're not as traumatizing for me as they are for some people. It's because I don't know the people rejecting me. I'll never have to run into them at the supermarket. And they'd never recognize me even if I did. The sheer impersonality of it takes away most of the sting. But on the other hand, I could never be a telemarketer or a door-to-door salesman. That kind of rejection is too personal, and I don't have the toughness for it. ■

CHARLES BAXTER,
interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:

Do you have anyone read your work before you send it to your agent?

I show it to my wife, Martha, and to writer friends, if I have serious doubts about it, or if I find myself in a state of conflict about some strategy that I've used.

How do you deal with editorial suggestions you don't agree with?

I usually talk the suggestions through with my editors. Generally, editors have good suggestions, and I haven't had a serious disagreement with an editor for many years. ■

WILL ALLISON, *interviewed by Andrew Scott:*

You've written articles about writing and its business for Writer's Digest Books, the Guide to Literary Agents*, and* Writer's Market*. Did writing about the writing business prepare you when it was time to find your own agent?*

Not really. I'd already gotten to know a lot of agents when I was at *Story*. I never approached any of them about representing me. They knew who I was, they knew I was publishing stories here and there. I hoped that, sooner or later, one of them would be interested. I didn't have a book manuscript yet, so there was no hurry, and in the meantime, I didn't want to push my work on anyone before it was ready. I figured the agent had to be the judge of that, because she was the one who had to go out there and sell it.

What attracted you to Julie Barer's agency? Her clients, you included, are getting a lot of attention these days.

I met Julie in 2001 when we were on staff at Squaw Valley. That summer I started working with another agent I'd met at Squaw, but things didn't pan out, and I ended up switching to Julie in 2003. At the time, she was at Sanford J. Greenburger Associates and was still getting established. Since then she's started her own agency, Barer Literary, LLC. I signed with Julie mainly because I felt she believed in me and my work. It didn't hurt that she's also a great friend and very good at what she does.

Are you surprised by the book's success? It's been praised left and right, and both Borders and Barnes & Noble have featured it as a new voice in fiction. But it's also getting that word-of-mouth treatment in independent bookstores. And do you feel the pressure to "deliver" with your next novel?

After almost twenty years writing fiction, I'm mostly just glad to have a book out. All the rest is gravy. The other day, I was talking to my daughter's friend's nanny. She's in college, and she wants to be a writer. When I told her I'd written a novel, that it's what I'd wanted to do since college, she said, "Well? Did it make you happy?" I hadn't thought about it in those terms before, but the answer was easy: yes, definitely.

As far as pressure—yeah. I'm under contract with Free Press for another novel. There are deadlines involved. But it's been a very useful, motivating sort of pressure, and just the fact that they want another book is enormously reassuring. I'm certainly not complaining. ■

MELANIE RAE THON,
interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:

How did you find your agent?

My wonderful agent (Irene Skolnick) found me. She read the short story "Iona Moon" in the *Hudson Review* and was intrigued enough to call. But we didn't sign a contract until I'd finished my first novel, *Meteors in August*. We both wanted to be sure her response to the longer work was as strong as her connection to the story.

My advice? Don't look for an agent too soon. Wait until you have a significant body of polished, accomplished work to show. Try to meet any prospective agent. Can you imagine having a relationship with this person for the next ten, twenty, forty years? It's an important commitment! Does the agent speak of your work with passion and insight? Does he or she grasp your vision? Could you trust this person to put your manuscript in the hands of the right editors? ■

RICHARD RUSSO, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

I remember when my first story was accepted. Back in graduate school and all of us—all of my friends—we were all trying to get published, all trying to get that first story published. My first story was published in a magazine

with a circulation of about three hundred, and I was paid in contributor's copies. Six or seven of them, not as many copies as I had family members to give them to. [*Laughs.*] But I couldn't afford more than that and that was payment. I can remember bouncing off the walls when that happened. Because it was the first real validation that I had, somebody else saying, "You're a writer." Somebody else giving me permission to go on and write another story. I fed off that publication for a couple of years. I had a couple of other really small successes, but that first one was astonishing. After twenty-some rejections of *Mohawk*—when Gary Fisketjohn at Vintage said yes to *Mohawk*—I had a similar reaction, because that had been the first story, and this was the first book. The idea that I would very shortly be able to walk into a bookstore—presumably in a town other than the town that I lived in—and be able to find a copy of my book—which I learned was not true, but I thought it was. [*Laughs.*] At the time I thought I would be able to walk into any bookstore, there would be nothing to prevent a book of mine from being there, there was no law against it. [*Laughs.*] It was just astonishing. It was just the most incredible thing. I lived for a long time in a waking dream, waiting for that book to come out. When someone says, "God, the Pulitzer, that must have been the greatest thing?," it was pretty wonderful then, but in its own way, no more wonderful than that first story with a circulation of three hundred. ■

ANN PATCHETT,
interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:

How did you get your first publication?

I sent "All Little Colored Children Should Learn to Play Harmonica" to Tom Jenks at *Esquire*, who then sent it to the *Paris Review*, where Mona Simpson was the fiction editor. She called me and said that she wanted to have lunch, but she didn't say whether she would publish the story. When I got to the *Paris Review* office, someone said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Ann Patchett. I'm here for lunch." And I could see all their faces melt. This cloud of disappointment came over the room. I didn't realize it right away, but I came to understand that they had invited me to see if I was black. Mona and the managing editor took me to lunch. They were very disappointed. At the end, I finally said, "So, are you going to take the story?" And she said, "Yeah, I guess so." ■

KENT HARUF, *interviewed by Jim Nashold:*

Plainsong *has been hugely successful. You said you were glad success came to you late. Why was that?*

Good fortune and money and notoriety can be very dangerous and seductive if you're not mature enough to deal with them. I didn't have that problem. It's my contention that people in this country don't know how to deal with success. I'm not suggesting that I'm famous, and I don't want to be. We were talking about various writers who seemed to have written better things before they became famous. By the time this book came around and did well, I was certainly old enough to not be distracted by it. I keep telling people that I'm so old and my neck is so stiff that it won't turn my head.

Gary Fisketjon, your editor at Knopf, seems like an old-style editor, very hands-on, using a blue-pencil treatment on a book. You mentioned that he went through the book two or three times.

Gary read it first to decide if he wanted the book. Once he began the editing process, he read it very carefully. He told me one time that he'd read the book more carefully than anybody except me, and I believe that. He went sentence by sentence and made numerous marks, and asked numerous questions. He says what he's doing is starting a conversation on the page with me about what was written on the page. What he tries to do as an editor is to make sure that the writer is up to the best of his own standards. ■

SUSAN ORLEAN,
interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:

How did you sell The Orchid Thief *to Random House?*

I had originally written an article for the *New Yorker* because I thought that's all it was. And I took that and said, "There's a book here. There's so much great stuff I didn't even begin to touch on."

How did you convince your [then] editor Jonathan Karp at Random House?

I already had a book contract and came to them and said I want to do this instead, and I had the good fortune with them to have the same relationship that I have with the *New Yorker*, which is to say that my conviction

that it was a good idea, even though I couldn't articulate why exactly, was sufficient to say, "All right, well, if you are really sure, go ahead." I needed to be told go ahead and do it. I'm spoiled I guess, I'm used to people saying, "We agree, so go do it." Rather than doing it and coming back and saying here's what I found, now will you buy it? ■

ERNEST J. GAINES, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

You've recommended the book Max Perkins: Editor of Genius *by A. Scott Berg. How do you think about that style of hands-on editing exemplified by Perkins?*

I like Maxwell Perkins because of all the great writers who were around him. A. Scott Berg did a wonderful job with that book. He did a lot of research and brought out the different characters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe.

I knew some good critics and editors. Malcolm Cowley, who had the sense to rediscover Faulkner, was a teacher of mine at Stanford. Wallace Stegner was my mentor at Stanford. He was the person who brought me there. Ed [E.L.] Doctorow, who later became famous as a writer himself, was my editor at Dial Press. I have a good editor at Knopf now, Ash Green. These people are wonderful editors. They are not as famous as Max Perkins, and not all writers are fortunate enough to get great editors, but I've been lucky. You need a good editor because every writer thinks he can write a *War and Peace*, but by the time he gets it on paper, it's not *War and Peace* anymore; it's comic-book stuff. If you have an honest editor who knows what literature and writing are about, he can give you good advice. You don't have to necessarily follow it all. It's good to get the material away from you after you've finished something, to send it out and let another person comment on it.

I had a wonderful agent, Dorothea Oppenheimer, and she saw everything of mine for thirty-one years. Whenever I wrote something, I sent it to her. We had our fights. When she would criticize me, I would say, "Well, you don't know what you're talking about. I'm the writer." But I would apologize later. I think those editors and agents are necessary. ■

LEE MARTIN, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

Are there things that you wish you had known earlier in your writing life?

Now part of me wants to say no, because the journey is really the main thing. But then another part of me wants to say yes. I wish I had known more about the practical nature of the business end of the whole thing. I keep learning more and more as the years go on that, especially if you are talking about a novel or a memoir, eventually you've created a commodity. And that commodity has to be dealt with by people who don't always have your best interests at heart. It's a process that I feel I can't control. I mean, I do what I can to promote a book or what not, but ultimately there are so many factors that are removed from me and the artistic process. I sort of wish I'd known that. But of course, if I had known it from the very beginning, I might have just stopped. ■

ELIZABETH McCRACKEN, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

You've said there are two aspects of writing: the act of writing and the business of publishing. How have you been able to separate those two sides?

It certainly gets harder and harder. I do think that is one of the reasons it took me a while to write a second novel. My new novel really didn't get off the ground until two years after *The Giant's House* came out. I needed to forget the publication process entirely and not pay attention to any of the other concerns but my own pathetic, petty ones. I had to forget things that readers said to me so that I could write selfishly about the things that I was interested in and get back to the reasons that any writer writes—jealousy, revenge, bitterness, and rage. It may be why, to some extent, I don't like going to writers' cocktail parties. I don't like to have those preoccupations in my head at all. And those are the questions people ask me. It's difficult to talk about that aspect of my work. I have an agent I love and trust. That is another way that I can separate the two things.

I'm inherently not interested in the publication process. I like being published, don't get me wrong. It's not like I'd be just as happy if I sat on a mountain and scribbled in my notebook. I wouldn't be, but I'm not interested in the process it takes to get there. ■

THOMAS BELLER, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

What do you make of the assertion that only a handful of books can be attended to at a time by the culture? Meaning that major media seem to end up reviewing the same handful of books.

Everything about the way I am operating is to pretend that that reality doesn't exist. Even though it does. That speaks to the website [*Mister Beller's Neighborhood*] and *Open City*. I try to ignore everything about the realities of the publishing world.

What's your take on the proliferation of small literary magazines in the last three or four years?

That's kind of interesting. Cool. There have been a lot. I'm all for it.

So what does that say, a generation of Don Quixotes?

Yeah, definitely. I can only refer back to my own impulses. There is some aspect of writing that is really solitary and some writers are very solitary and not hungry for the company of others. There is another aspect of that—because it's so solitary that you want to gather around in a little gang. And sort of make a production and an enterprise. In fact, there is a line, I need to find it in either *The Mezzanine* or *Room Temperature*, where he has this line about friendship—friendships between guys only exist when you have this shared project. They need to be on a team together or a business or something like that. In the absence of that, it doesn't exist. I was thinking about that recently and was really provoked by that and thinking that's not true. But maybe it is true—when you start a thing like a magazine it's an occasion to gather your little gang together and expand the gang and have fun with them. And thank god it's still fun, because there is no other reason to do it.

It doesn't become routine.

That thing I said about how sometimes one wants to go to a piece of writing that's not in that pop pocket of "just out, just new," you want to feel like you are discovering it. Editing these things is an extreme case of that. ■

ANN PATCHETT, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How and when did you find an agent?

I got an agent, Binky Urban, when "All Little Colored Children Should

Learn to Play Harmonica" was published. She was the novelist Allan Gurganus's agent, and he is my hero in life. Binky said, "When you've got a collection or a novel, call me. I want to be your agent." She was my agent for years, and I had no contact with her. Then she called and said that she was being promoted to the head of fiction at ICM, and I would be handed over to her assistant, Lisa Bankoff, who turned out to be one of the true loves of my life. **I may switch publishing houses, I may switch editors, but as long as Lisa is an agent, she is my agent.** ■

CHARLES JOHNSON,
interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:

You've put a lot of pressure on yourself to be a spokesman and innovator of black fiction. In the introduction to the Plume edition of Oxherding Tale, *you wrote that you believed your level of success with the book would have an impact on more than just your writing, that the entire field of black literature could be opened if you achieved success. "Black fiction—as I imagined its intellectual possibilities—hung in the balance," you wrote.*

I did. I still do. I think that every black writer in America since the nineteenth century has been expected to write a certain way. Those expectations can smother the possibilities of creative expression. If you are writing only about racial oppression—and only about racial oppression in a particular way that, for example, white readers understand—you're missing something. **Sartre said that if you're a black writer in America, you automatically know what your subject is: it has to be oppression. Maybe that was true in the period of segregation.** But there was also Jean Toomer, who wrote *Cane* in 1923. He looked at everything, beginning with the nature of the self.

It is not true that if you are a black writer in America that you automatically know what you are going to focus on, but that is a trap black writers can fall into. Why did nobody pay attention to Zora Neale Hurston until the sixties and seventies? I'll tell you why. Richard Wright's *Native Son* and *Black Boy* are works of genius in the naturalistic tradition, and they defined black writing. He is the father of black literature. Hurston did not write about racial oppression. She wrote about relationships and culture. Her work was trapped in the background for a long time because of the conception of what black writing should be.

I knew when I began writing *Oxherding Tale* that this was going to be a

danger. Some people couldn't conceive of black philosophical fiction, even though we have Toomer, Wright, and Ellison as examples. I was determined to make the things that interested me the focus of the book. It is a slave narrative. I did not want to deny the history of slavery, but this book is not merely about legal or political slavery. It's about other kinds of bondage: sexual, emotional, psychological, and metaphysical. The main character, Andrew Hawkins, has to work his way through all these types of bondage, some of which are even more fundamental than chattel slavery. Eastern philosophy was very useful to me in that exploration, as it is in all my books.

Writers, especially black writers, have to fight against limitations. Why shouldn't you be able to write about anything? That kind of freedom is not given to black writers. You have to fight for it. You have to claim it.

In what ways have you claimed your territory?

I'll tell you what I did with my editor when I was writing *Oxherding Tale*. I gave him a ten-page, single-spaced outline. He wrestled with it. Midway though our conversation, I said, "I may not write this book. I think I might write a three-generation black family drama." His eyes lit up, and he said, "Yes. I can sell it to the publisher right now."

I went home and wrote him a letter stating that I never intended to write that book. I wanted to see what he would say. And I knew what he was going to say. He was going to jump on that idea because everyone was excited about *Roots*, but that was not the book I wanted to write. I didn't want to feed an audience something that just reconfirmed its own assumptions and prejudices. There are other things I'm interested in. That is what *Being and Race* is basically about. It is about shaking up those presuppositions, not just through black literature, but through black American life itself. I think Ellison did a marvelous job of this in *Invisible Man*. We are mostly invisible to each other. **One of the things that literature ought to be about is liberation of perception and consciousness.** Our voices need to be freed so that we don't fall into those traps that diminish or limit other human lives. ■

VALERIE MARTIN, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How many rejections did you receive before publishing your first book or story? Were any especially memorable?

There were, of course, lots of rejections. The most memorable was one, mildly accusatory, that read: "There are more than a billion people in China and I feel certain that any one of them is more interesting than anyone in this novel." ■

ANTONYA NELSON, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

Writing is a solitary act. You go into a room and create worlds through sentences. But then it becomes public. How do you balance these extremes?

I wish it were a bit more public! I have a laptop computer, and I can be alone when I need to. My kids are old enough now that I can tell them to scram when I need to write. If I have an idea, I can tell my husband that I'm going away for a little while. He understands. **I also get up in the middle of the night and write. That feels to me like the most private time of the day. No one is going to phone or knock on the door; the mail is not going to come, and the kids are asleep and safe.** I can be alone with the computer. That privacy is necessary to me. I like that sense of being in a dark world, where the only source of light is the screen. It's a way of entertaining myself, of having a short conversation with myself. It's so private and exclusive; it's nearly masturbatory. I am the only audience, and I am working through something with utter honesty. I don't have to be embarrassed or feel self-conscious. I can evaluate it, manipulate it, and move to the next level. That private moment, that series of moments, over the course of however long it takes, eventually turns it into something I want to show somebody.

The emotional side is messy, but then I can make sure that the technique, form, shape—all of the elements that are craft-related—are in place. The sentences have to sound good. There has to be a balance between characterization, summary, memory, and action. That procedure tends to let me approach the work from some distance, so that when it's finally printed and I hand it to Robert [Boswell], I don't feel like I'm confessing things or writing things that I don't want anyone to see. I distance myself in some way. I become bulletproof by employing what I know about craft.

He evaluates it, and because he's close to me and I trust him, he permits the next level of modification so that it can go out into the world to another reader and be less of me, less exposing, because it has passed through these stages. And then if somebody critiques it, fine; if somebody accepts it,

excellent. I remove myself by taking advantage of what I know about craft. The private emotion of a public piece goes through stages, like a naked body being dressed. ■

MELANIE BISHOP:

There's nothing wrong with being a beginning writer, or a beginner at any pursuit. All established writers were beginners at one time, and since it's a period of such great learning, it's not one you should be ashamed of, nor one you should wish to rush through. I still remember the valuable lessons I learned in my first few years of trying to publish short fiction, and I wouldn't trade that time for anything. It served a purpose and got me to where I am now, which is just a higher rung on the beginner's ladder.

You can't rush the work itself, or your progress as a writer. Each story you finish, however successful or unsuccessful, will make way for the next one, and so on, until one day you will write something publishable. So in terms of the writing itself, write from the heart, inspire yourself with the work of writers you admire, and embrace the revision process. And keep at it! The other part of writing, the marketing aspect of it, is something you can handle in a professional or non-professional way. Presentation is key. There's nothing an editor hates worse than a messy manuscript, or one full of typos and misspellings. It's a waste of that person's time, and chances are, she/he will not read past the first page or so if you haven't taken the care to proofread, edit, and polish.

I'd also suggest checking out an anthology called *first fiction*, edited by Kathy Kiernan and Michael M. Moore. It features the first published stories by over forty well-known writers. This may provide the inspiration you need to believe in yourself as a "beginning writer." Everybody starts at the beginning.

Finally, every editor loves to discover talent, and to be able to say, "We published the first story by so-and-so, who went on to become famous." So editors actually read the work of beginners with interest, always hoping to find that spark of talent. My advice is not to worry about it; just go about the business of writing. As we all know, that's hard enough. ■

NOMI EVE, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

Where was your first story published?

The *Village Voice Literary Supplement*. I was an intern there which meant that I opened mail, and I was lucky enough that the editor, a woman named M. Mark, looked at me from the get-go and said, You can do, can't you? She didn't treat me like an intern; she treated me like a writer. She let me write book reviews right off the bat, and then when I was there four months, she said, Well, let me see a story. At that point, I was in my difficult time and I hadn't written in over a year. This was a Friday afternoon. And I went home. This was such a crazy time in my life. I wasn't earning any money as an intern, so I would spend five days a week in New York sleeping on friends' couches, and then I'd go home on the weekends to my cousins' in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. So it's Friday afternoon and she says, "I want a story from you," and I hadn't written in around a year, and I went home to my cousins' house, and that weekend I wrote the "Double Tree" story at their living-room table, and read it to my cousins Joanie and Abby. They sat on either side of me and I read it to them and we just knew. Here it was. I could do it. And I brought it in to M. on Monday, and Tuesday she said, "Of course." I walked around New York City with a smile on my face. I've been lucky to have that smile five times now when my work has gotten out into the world.

How old were you then?

Twenty-three, twenty-four. ■

CAROLYN CHUTE, *interviewed by Barbara Stevens:*

What was it like to be poor for so long and to write but never know if your writing was ever going to be read? What was it like to suddenly get published, to have someone say, We want to pay you for what you're doing. Was it just the best feeling?

Yeah. Yeah, it was. It was really neat. Especially when I got the check. It was good because we went out and got groceries on the counter. It was so neat. First, before I cashed the check we took it over to [some friends], and they said Wow! And we all felt the check. ■

ANN PATCHETT, *interviewed by Sarah Anne Johnson:*

What would you say to new writers working on their first stories or novels?

Finish them. That's a huge thing. It's amazing to me how often people call me and say, "I have a great idea for a novel. I'm looking for an agent." Put business out of your mind and write because you love to write. People get so caught up with the notion of publishing or selling something, and it's an incredibly backward logic. If you love to write, if you write passionately, if you work at it hard—which involves a lot of reading and rewriting—the other thing will come. It is incredibly cart-before-the-horse to say, "I want to get an agent because I have an idea," or "I wrote a story and I want to try to sell it." If you were taking a course in glass blowing, and you blew your first glass, and you said, "I want to go to Tiffany's and sell this glass," that would be crazy. Yet people write one story and want to send it to the *New Yorker.* That's just not the way it goes. You write a story, then you throw it away. You write a story, you throw it away. Or you file it away. You write and you write and you write for a long time because you're learning how to do it, because there's pleasure in doing it. People need to work harder at writing and work a little less hard at publishing. ■

CHRIS OFFUTT, *interviewed by Rob Trucks:*

To get published, you have to do what every writer in history has done. You have to sit for thousands of hours and hundreds of days in solitude. You have to read and write on a daily basis. You have to be utterly vulnerable on the page, and utterly ruthless in revision. To write something good, you have to want it so bad that nothing else matters. ■

MELANIE BISHOP:

What do you look for in a story?

As an editor of a small literary journal, I know how many stories are out there and how few among those are worthy of seeing print. What I look for boils down to some very basic qualities. I want to be drawn in, to forget I'm doing my task as editor and just enter the world of the story and be transported for a time. I want the language to be lovely.

I want the people to seem real. I want to *care* in a big way about what's happening to these people. And when the story is over, I want to remember it for days, weeks, months, years. The stories we end up publishing are always the ones we remember best, the ones that stick with us, that haunt. ■

ANDRE DUBUS, *interviewed by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais:*

How do you feel about the market for stories right now?

I think it's great. There are all these quarterlies. I keep telling writers, "If you keep it in the mail, somebody will take it." I was talking to a French literary agent in the eighties, and he said, "We don't have literary magazines for stories and poetry. There are only two, and they commission pieces." I don't know about other countries, but you just have to persist. I don't believe a good story will go unpublished. ■

MARK WINEGARDNER, *interviewed by Robert Birnbaum:*

Who reads short stories?

In my world—forget me as a college professor and a writer—just the people I run into, I am disproportionately around people who are just as likely to read a book of stories as a novel. I realize that the culture at large doesn't behave that way. Serious readers—people who are really, really passionate about American fiction or fiction, period—are disproportionately story readers. The people who are there for your story collections are your real readers. The people who say, "Aw, that's just a book of stories, I'll read his next novel," those are the dilettantes. God bless 'em and I hope they come back for the next novel, but your core readers are there for the stories. They are, "Oh, a book of stories, now he's a real writer." Writers' reputations rest disproportionately on their stories.

Do publishers share that view?

Yes and no. I think there is a dim understanding of this. Your ability to last as a writer has so much to do with your ability to get anthologized. You are not going to get a novel anthologized. Shirley Jackson will never go away because of "The Lottery." There will come a time when no one is reading anything by James Baldwin except "Sonny's Blues." Was it his best work? Yeah, actually it was. There are twenty-five essays as good or almost as good as that. In neither case does the story represent the career. Likewise

John Cheever. "The Swimmer" is a very anomalous Cheever story, but it is the first thing people are going to think about when they think about John Cheever. Forever, probably. Getting stories anthologized and things like that make a career. This is on my mind because I am doing a textbook/anthology called *Three by Thirty-three*. Three stories each by American writers born after 1900, trying to cover that time. If I want an introduction to a writer's work I would much rather read a book of stories than a novel. You get to see a writer get a fictional world up and running ten times. ■

WILLIAM STYRON, *interviewed by Jim Schumock:*

What are your memories of the founding of Paris Review*?*

The main memory I have is of those guys in Paris at a time when Paris was one's oyster, so to speak. The dollar was unbelievably strong, as they say. If you had very little money, you could live beautifully. It was just a wonderful time. We had a lot of enthusiasm and we were determined to get this little magazine put together. Paris was jumping. It was beginning to recover from the war. There weren't many cars on the street. The only cars that you saw were old, pre-war Citroens, and there were many bicycles—that's how close it was to that old, previous war. But we were at the top of the world. We were living high. We went to a little nightclub called *Le Chaplain* every night and got drunk on cognac, which probably destroyed our livers. It was cheap and whiskey was prohibitively expensive. It was a glorious time to start a magazine. ■

RON CARLSON, *interviewed by Susan McInnis:*

My agenda as a writer is to write the story I want to read. Really and truly, though, my standard is higher. I want to write a story good enough that I would want to read it twice. I can think of a lot of people—writers I respect, who wouldn't have written a comic tale like "The Chromium Hook." But you have to say, "Well, this is what I do." You have to look it right in the face: I wrote "The Chromium Hook." And it's a story I'd want to read.

So I sent it to *Harper's*, and, honestly, I just couldn't believe someone would

publish that story. Because I wrote it for myself. But they wanted it, and they published it. Talk about pleasure!

And the truth is, I *can* believe it. The more idiosyncratic you are, the more true you are to your own agenda, the better the writing is going to be. ■

DANIEL WALLACE, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

What's been the impact of the readings and interviews you've done on your impression of yourself? Your view of yourself?

It hasn't been very good.

Oh, it hasn't?

Well, no. I don't feel like I'm really verbally articulate. I'm so glad that you said that I get to look at this before you publish it, because my fear is always appearing to be as dull as I actually am. I think that I can write a good sentence, but only over time. They don't just come to me full born. My fear's always that I'll appear stupid and people will think, How does this guy think that I would want to listen to him talk or to read what he's written, because he's obviously, clearly, not very bright.

I've heard John Updike talk. And he talks, I think, beautifully. And in paragraphs. He has his little topic sentence, and then the filler, and then the conclusion. And he has access to his entire vocabulary, whereas I don't. You know, I have a much larger vocabulary than I can use here. It's just not coming to me when I need it. Hello.

But I enjoy doing this because it's practice and it's fun and it's—in a way it's like writing itself. I get to figure out what I think from the questions that you ask. I don't know what I think until I see what I say. And it really is valuable in that way for me. ■

DANIEL MASON, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

I can see that you're a highly energetic person, but how did you manage to write a serious, substantial novel that required research, and do your medical-school studies? Does your family worry about you spreading yourself too thin?

They don't see it as me wearing myself out because I didn't set out to write

the book. They saw me writing the book to burn off energy from being cooped up in the library all the time. I was writing to cope with medical school. Writing was a way to escape. Now it's a little bit different. Now writing carries with it some pressure, so it is more difficult to do the two of them at the same time. But previously writing was a way to escape. It was a pleasure. It was like going on walks in the woods, in imaginary woods.

So you have a two-book deal going and that's why there's pressure now?

Right, but I think that pressure would be there anyway, because I feel pressure any time another idea comes up: a possible third book. Not a terrible pressure—a good pressure in a way. I wouldn't want to sit on these ideas too long. I think that the desire to write comes from a pressure that is good to indulge. ■

ROY PARVIN, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

Are you glad you have an agent?

Now I am. My first agent and I did not work out. It was good for me in a sense that one learns from adversity. I have a wonderful agent now who I am just delighted with. But I urge all writers to meet face to face with an agent. I did not the first time out; I was so impressed by who the agency's roster was. I didn't ask, Is this person the right person for me? Does this person understand my aesthetic? My first agent did not. It was unfortunate for me, but the damage wasn't terribly significant. I wrote what I wanted to write. I think that agents are probably more valuable the more books you have.

What do you need an agent for?

I think when you're thinking about two-book deals versus one-book deals. How to structure it. The agent I have right now is a prize—one of her clients recently won the Pulitzer. She is terrific—it is like dealing with a really good friend who knows a lot about the business that you don't. I didn't know that that's how it could be with an agent until now.

Is it possible for me to ask you how the other situation didn't work out?

I sent a story, oddly enough, "In the Snow Forest," [published in *Glimmer Train* Issue 35] to the agent. I said, This seems like it's opening up something new for me and my career. It's the first time I ever spoke up and said, This is the way I think my career should go. She sent me a fax and she sent me an

e-mail and basically said, This is the worst thing you've ever written, that she didn't see any commercial viability in it. And there was the suggestion that mine was a small career. That might be true—I might have a small career—but it's still my career.

Wow.

It had gotten over to an area of abusiveness that you should never be in with somebody. My writer friends laugh, they say, God, Roy quit an agent just because she didn't understand a fifty-page story. But it was more a fear that this agent was not understanding the direction I wanted to take my work in.

It sounds like the agent was unkind.

If the agent had said to me, You know, this story doesn't really do it for me, let's talk about it. But there was none of that, only nastiness. I think it was the first time in my career where I wasn't going to be the person "happy just to be here." I wanted to take control of my career in some way.

Maybe this situation allowed you to do that?

For a little while, I curled up into a ball and said maybe I can't write. But I was so sure in my head that the story said something. I took a long time to send it out. You were the first people to see it. And the response was what I thought it would be. I thought the response would be very quick. I thought that someone would say, Hey, it's a long story, but I gladly read these pages. That's what I felt in my heart. We all make a show of being modest, but I believe there's also something in your heart saying this is going to grip somebody for fifty pages. And that was my feeling, and so when my former agent responded so acidly, there was a sense of a huge disconnection from the world. Thinking maybe I'm just speaking in tongues for these fifty pages. But this feels like the best fifty pages I've ever written. This story feels like a step toward my next thing, and this agent didn't see it. And so, I figured that I wasn't going to stop writing and that meant the agent had to go.

I think about how many stories we have to reject. Being a writer requires being able to bear constant rejections.

Absolutely. It was not a question of rejection for me. I've been rejected by *Glimmer Train*, a lot, and you get used to being rejected. And you look for comments that they might write that are helpful—

But you never get them.

You go on a lot of hope. And you go on a lot of just dreaming. A lot of it's just built on dreams and magic. And a ton of hope, and so you're looking for an agent who can tell you the truth. My agent right now is not the kind of person who massages me at all, but we have a connection. I understand where everything is coming from. There's a mutual respect. We both want what's best for me. I think that my first go around, I was sure that someone would say, Hey, you're a fraud, get out of here. So, I kept very quiet about things. I should have spoken up about things earlier. I didn't, but, as you said, I learned a very important lesson. And a tough lesson, but you know writing stories is tough. So tough things aren't necessarily bad things.

Right, as long as you survive them. People often would like so much to have feedback on their stories. But, you know, we can get about forty thousand stories a year. We really can't.

It's very hard to give feedback on a story. Even at the graduate level, to give as much as a student wants. They always want more. There are always questions. Part of the job of becoming a writer is learning to answer those questions for yourself. ■

THOMAS E. KENNEDY, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

The fellow who published my book *A Weather of the Eye* was committed to publishing it, had done a great deal of work on it, and was suddenly diagnosed with lung cancer just before it was to come out. When I got to Kansas City—we were going to do a launch—he was hospitalized and the book actually wasn't out yet, but he thought it was, and it was a moving experience. I went to visit him in the hospital, and it was clear he had little time left, although he had *some* energy. He kept talking about the book, and at one point he closed his eyes, and I thought it was over. I stepped a little closer, and he opened his eyes again and said, "The concept of voice in fiction—I want to talk to you about the concept of voice in fiction." And I was thinking, My god, this is someone who is so dedicated to literature, it's unbelievable. In fact, that book is dedicated to him. His wife published it afterwards. He was a great man, and she is some woman. ■

JAMAICA KINCAID, *interviewed by Linda B. Swanson-Davies:*

When you were done writing this novel, how did you feel?

It sounds rather humorous, but I felt relieved for my publisher, who had waited and waited. They'd announced in the catalog, coming, coming, and the booksellers were waiting and waiting, and the book just never came. At one point I told a mutual friend to tell my editor he mustn't call me anymore and he really obeyed! He never called. I have this wonderful publisher, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and they still believe in—and this is unheard of—they still really believe in writing and literature. I don't know how they're going to survive. ■

ALLISON, Will. Novels: *What You Have Left*, *Long Drive Home*. Stories in *Cincinnati Review*, *Zoetrope*, *Kenyon Review*. willallison.com

ALVAREZ, Julia. Novels: *Return to Sender*, *Saving the World*, *In the Name of Salome*, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, *¡YO!*, *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Nonfiction: *Once Upon a Quinceañera*, *Something to Declare*. Poetry: *The Woman I Kept to Myself*, *Homecoming*, *The Other Side*. Middlebury College, Vermont. juliaalvarez.com

BAXTER, Charles. Novels: *The Soul Thief*, *Saul and Patsy*, *Shadow Play*, *The Feast of Love*, *First Light*. Story collections: *Gryphon*, *A Relative Stranger*, *Through the Safety Net*, *Believers*, *Harmony of the World*. Books on writing: *Burning Down the House: Essays on Fiction*, *The Art of Subtext: Beyond Plot*. charlesbaxter.com

BELLER, Thomas. Novel: *The Sleep-Over Artist*. Story collection: *Seduction Theory*. Essays: *How to Be a Man*. Editor, *Open City Magazine & Books* and the website *Mr. Beller's Neighborhood*. Editor of several anthologies, most recently *Lost and Found: Stories from New York*. thomasbeller.com

BIRNBAUM, Robert. Interviewer. Editor-at-Large of the literary and cultural website IdentityTheory.com

BISHOP, Melanie. Memoir: *Some Glad Morning*. Work in *Georgetown Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *Florida Review*, *Puerto del Sol*. Prescott College.

BLYTHE, Will. Nonfiction: *To Hate Like This Is to Be Happy Forever*. Work in *New Yorker*, *Best American Short Stories*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*.

CHUTE, Carolyn. Novels: *The School on Heart's Content Road*, *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*, *Letourneau's Used Auto Parts*, *Merry Men*, *Snow Man*.

DUBUS, Andre. Six story collections, his last being *Dancing After Hours*. Novels: *The Lieutenant*, *Voices from the Moon*. Essays: *Broken Vessels*, *Meditations from a Moveable Chair*. andredubus.com

ELLIS, Sherry. Interviewer. Editor of the anthology *Write Now!* Interviews in *AGNI Online*, *Post Road*, *Writer's Chronicle*.

EVE, Nomi. Novel: *Family Orchard*. Work in *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, *International Quarterly*.

GAINES, Ernest. Books of fiction include *A Lesson Before Dying*, *Catherine Carmier*, *Bloodline*, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, In My *Father's House*, and *A Gathering of Old Men*. Essays: *Mozart and Leadbelly*.

GAUTREAUX, Tim. Novels: *The Missing*, *The Next Step in the Dance*, *The Clearing*. Story collections: *Same Place, Same Things*; *Welding with Children*. Work in *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *GQ*, *Zoetrope*. Southeastern Louisiana University.

HARUF, Kent. Novels: *Eventide*, *Plainsong*, *Where You Once Belonged*, *The Tie That Binds*. Published in *Puerto del Sol*, *Grand Street*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Best American Short Stories*.

HUDDLE, David. Story collections: *Not: A Trio*; *Intimates*. Novels: *La Tour Dreams of the Wolf Girl*, *The Story of a Million Years*. Anthology: *A David Huddle Reader*. Several books of poetry. University of Vermont.

JOHNSON, Charles. Novels: *Faith and the Good Thing*, *Dreamer*, *Middle Passage*, *Oxherding Tale*. Story collections: *Dr. King's Refrigerator*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Nonfiction books include *Turning the Wheel*, *Being and Race*.

JOHNSON, Sarah Anne. Interviewer. Editor of *Conversations with American Women Writers* and *The Art of the Author Interview*. sarahannejohnson.com

KENNEDY, Thomas E. Advisory Editor, *Literary Review*. Novels include *A Passion in the Desert*, *A Weather of the Eye*, *Kerrigan's Copenhagen*, *A Love Story*; *Bluett's Blue Hours*, *Greene's Summer*, *Danish Fall*. Story collections: *Cast Upon the Day*, *Drive, Dive, Dance & Fight*. Nonfiction: *Realism & Other Illusions*: *Essays on the Craft of Fiction*. Fairleigh Dickinson University. thomasekennedy.com

KINCAID, Jamaica. Story collection: *At the Bottom of the River*. Novels: *Mr. Potter*, *The Autobiography of My Mother*, *Annie John*, *Lucy*. Essays and memoirs: *Among Flowers*, *A Small Place*, *My Brother*, *Talk Stories*. Work in: *New Yorker*.

LEVASSEUR, Jennifer. Interviewer. Editor, with Kevin Rabalais, of *Novel Voices: 17 Award-Winning Novelists on How to Write, Edit, and Get Published*.

LUVAAS, William. Novels: *The Seductions of Natalie Bach*, *Going Under*. Story collection: *A Working Man's Apocrypha*. williamluvaas.com

MARTIN, Lee. Novels: *The Bright Forever*, *Quakertown*. Story collection: *The Least You Need to Know*. Memoirs: *From Our House*, *Turning Bones*. Ohio State University.

MARTIN, Valerie. Novels: *Trespass*, *Property*, *Italian Fever*, *Mary Reilly*, *The Great Divorce*, *A Recent Martyr*, *Set in Motion*, *Alexandra*. Story collections: *The Consolation of Nature*, *Love*. Biography: *Salvation*.

MASON, Daniel. Novels: *A Far Country*, *The Piano Tuner*. Also published in *Harper's*.

McCRACKEN, Elizabeth. Novels: *The Giant's House*, *Niagara Falls All Over Again*. Story collection: *Here's Your Hat, What's Your Hurry*. Memoir: *An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination*. elizabethmccracken.com

McINNIS, Susan. Interviewer. Center for Distance Education, Fairbanks, Alaska.

MILLER, Sue. Novels: *The Senator's Wife*, *Lost in the Forest*, *The Good Mother*, *Family Pictures*, *For Love*, *The World Below*, *While I Was Gone*, *The Distinguished Guest*. Story collection: *Inventing the Abbotts*. Memoir: *The Story of My Father*.

NASHOLD, Jim. Interviewer. Co-author of biography: *The Death of Dylan Thomas*.

NELSON, Antonya. Novels: *Bound*, *Talking in Bed*, *Nobody's Girl*, *Living to Tell*. Story collections: *Nothing Right*, *Some Fun*, *Female Trouble*, *The Expendables*, *In the Land of Men*, *Family Terrorists.* University of Houston.

NUNEZ, Sigrid. Novels: *The Last of Her Kind*, *A Feather on the Breath of God*, *For Rouenna*, *Naked Sleeper*, *Mitz*.

OFFUTT, Chris. Story collections: *Kentucky Straight*, *Out of the Woods*. Memoirs: *The Same River Twice*, *No Heroes*. Novel: *The Good Brother*. Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky.

ORLEAN, Susan. Nonfiction includes *Rin Tin Tin*, *My Kind of Place*, *The Orchid Thief*. Staff writer for the *New Yorker*. susanorlean.com

PARVIN, Roy. Story collections: *The Loneliest Road in America*, *In the Snow Forest*. Nonfiction in *Northern Lights.*

PATCHETT, Ann. Novels: *State of Wonder*, *Run*, *Bel Canto*, *Taft*, *The Magician's Assistant*, *The Patron Saint of Liars*. Memoir: *Truth and Beauty: A Friendship*. annpatchett.com

RABALAIS, Kevin. Interviewer. Editor, with Jennifer Levasseur, of *Novel Voices: 17 Award-Winning Novelists on How to Write, Edit, and Get Published*.

RUSSO, Richard. Novels: *Bridge of Sighs*, *Empire Falls*, *Straight Man*, *Nobody's Fool*, *The Risk Pool*, *Mohawk*. Story collection: *The Whore's Child*.

SCOTT, Andrew. Interviewer. Fiction: *Modern Love*. Work in *Writers Chronicle*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*. Ball State University. Andrew Scott website

STEVENS, Barbara Lucy. Interviewer. Journalist and fiction writer who teaches writing at Rhode Island College.

STYRON, William. Novels: *Lie Down in Darkness*, *The Long March*, *Set This House on Fire*, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, *Sophie's Choice*. Play: *In the Clap Shack*. Essay collection: *This Quiet Dust*. Memoir: *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*.

THON, Melanie Rae. Novels: *The Voice of the River*, *Sweet Hearts*, *Meteors in August*, *Iona Moon*. Story collection: *In This Light: New and Selected Stories*. University of Utah.

TRUCKS, Rob. Interviewer. Nonfiction: *The Pleasure of Influence: Conversations with American Male Fiction Writers*, *Cup of Coffee: The Very Short Careers of Eighteen Major League Pitchers*.

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