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The BIOGRAPHER'S craft

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FOR WRITERS & READERS OF BIOGRAPHY

April 2020 | Volume 15 | Number 2

BIO during the Pandemic

By Linda Leavell

Working at home in their PJs may not be as unusual for biographers as for others affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and yet many of us are suffering its effects in unprecedented ways, from canceled research trips to canceled book tours. Please rest assured that BIO is thriving, and its efforts to support your work, including timely delivery of *The Biographer's Craft* each month, continue uninterrupted.

The BIO Board of Directors has been practicing social distancing almost since its inception. Since we are spread out over the country, we meet monthly by conference call. At our March meeting, we canceled the annual May conference and planned to film the BIO Award winner, Dame Hermione Lee, giving her keynote address for distribution to our members. Lockdown restrictions in the UK, however, have thwarted those plans, at least temporarily.

Everyone who registered for the conference will receive a refund. The full amount you paid will be credited to the card you used to register. BIO will pay the processing charge out of its coffers. The registration software company is processing many refunds besides BIO's, so I ask for your continued patience. BIO is, as always, happy to accept donations, if you are in a position to give some or all of your refund to BIO.

At its April meeting, the Board will consider alternative methods of delivering Hermione Lee's address to you and will also consider various ways we can bring the BIO membership together digitally with new programs. In fact, even before the pandemic we had identified the enhancement of BIO's online communications as a key goal.

If you have not already done so, please join our Facebook group, a forum in which you can promote your work, learn about the latest biography-related news, and get quick answers to questions about all aspects of researching, writing, and promoting biographies. If you want a more personalized consultation (for a discounted fee), BIO's coaching program is up and running; you will be paired with an experienced biographer who can advise you about your project. And remember that BIO's member directory provides contact information for nearly 500 fellow biographers. For general inspiration, check out the podcast and video libraries on BIO's website.

Most of BIO's activities are proceeding without interruption. The June *Biographer's Craft* will announce the winners of the Plutarch Award, the Hazel Rowley Prize, and the Ina and Robert Caro Fellowships. Nominations are now being accepted for the 2021 Plutarch Award; BIO members are invited to nominate eligible 2020 books, including their own. You should have already received a ballot to elect a new vice president and new Board members for two-year terms

Writing in the Time of Corona, Part 1

Frantically rescheduling upended research trips? Worrying about the pub date of a forthcoming book? Trying to adapt to virtual book tours? Struggling to stay sane, and productive, while being surrounded by family members who are usually away all day? If you're not working, or fretting, how do you pass the time? Welcome to writing in the time of corona. If it's any comfort, you're not alone and perhaps reading how others are coping—or not—may provide solace, too. Send us your experiences about and tips for surviving these trying times. We'll run the submissions we receive next month—and perhaps in the months to come.

Writing in the Time of Corona, Part 2

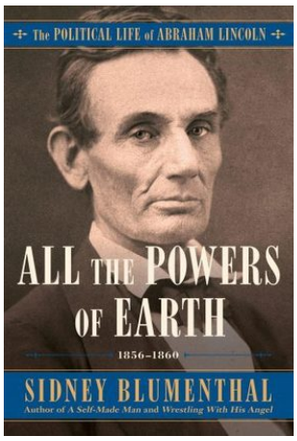
Estella Chung, chief curator of the Wisconsin Historical Society, is inviting BIO members to take part in a special project related to COVID-19. With "Collecting History As It Happens," the beginning in May.

If you have ideas for how BIO might best serve its members, kindly send me an email. And please accept my personal wishes for your safety and that of your loved ones in these uncertain times.

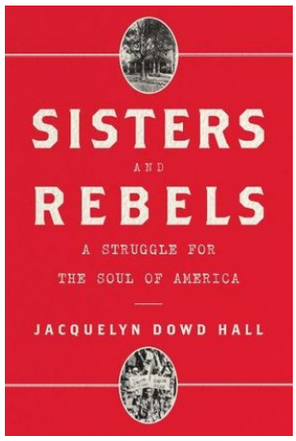
Linda Leavell is the president of BIO and a charter member. Her biography of the American poet Marianne Moore won the 2014 Plutarch Award.

BIO Announces Finalists for 2020 Plutarch Award

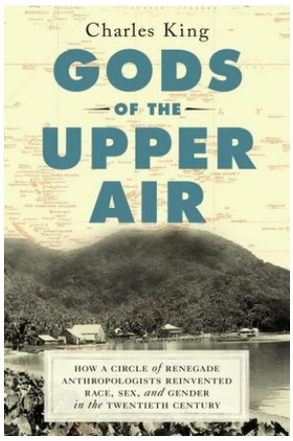
BIO's Plutarch Award Committee has chosen five finalists for the 2020 Plutarch Award for the best biography of 2019. In alphabetical order by author they are:



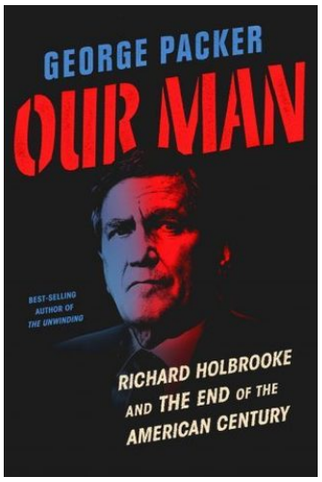
Sidney Blumenthal
All The Powers of Earth: The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln, 1856-1860
(Simon & Schuster)



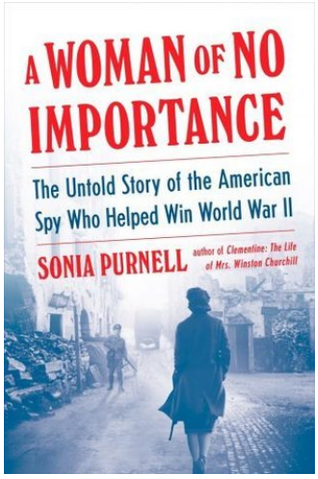
Jacquelyn Dowd Hall
Sisters and Rebels: A Struggle for the Soul of America
(W. W. Norton)



Charles King
Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century
(Doubleday)



George Packer
Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century
(Knopf)



Sonia Purnell
A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II
(Viking)

society is seeking journal entries from people across the country documenting their experiences during these trying times. You can find more about the project here.

Are You in a Writers' Group?

A BIO member wrote seeking information about writers' groups geared toward biographers, especially in New York City. *TBC* knows that BIO members belong to groups in Boston and Washington, D.C. Are there others out there? If you're in a writers' group or know of one, send us information about it. And we'd love to run an article on how to start and run a group, for members interested in forming a group where they live. Volunteers to contribute to that piece are welcome!

From the Editor

The disappointment was deep and wide when BIO's Board of Directors announced that it was cancelling the 11th Annual BIO Conference, scheduled for May 15-17. But given all that's happened in the United States and around the world since that word came down, the decision was inevitable. BIO president Linda Leavell has updates on the conference and more in this issue.

Despite the social distancing and self-isolating going on, BIO members have been staying virtually connected through BIO's Facebook page. If you haven't joined it, here's the link. I know social media is not everyone's cup of tea, but a crisis like this proves it does have worth in helping us feel part of a community. And, of course, cat videos.

In this month's Member News

"It's been a remarkable year for biography," said Caroline Fraser, Plutarch Award Committee Chair. The above finalists have emerged from an exceptional long list that "reflects biographers' wide-ranging interests and talents, showcasing the best of the genre's originality, diversity, deep scholarship, and excellent writing."

The 2020 Plutarch Award winner will be announced on May 16, 2020. The Plutarch is the only international literary award for biography judged exclusively by biographers.

In addition to Fraser, the members of the 2020 Plutarch Jury are Peniel E. Joseph, Hans Renders, John Richetti, and Susan Ware.

Mayborn/BIO Fellow Looks at Two Subjects, Two Cultures

Morgan Voeltz previously wrote about her great-grandfather, Henry Lawton, in *The Journal of Arizona History*.

Working on a dual biography of a relative who crossed paths with the Chiricahua Apache chief Geronimo, Morgan Voeltz has faced several challenges. She has also come to a conclusion that is probably familiar to many biographers: "Neither of these characters is entirely a hero," she said, "and neither is entirely a villain."

Voeltz spoke about her experience working on the biography (her first), at a talk on February 20, at the Women's International Study Center (WISC) in Santa Fe. The event culminated her two-week stay in New Mexico as the Mayborn/BIO Biography Fellow. The fellowship was initiated by BIO co-founder James McGrath Morris nine years go. (The fellowship is being restructured for next year; you can read about that in the companion piece to this article.)

While all the Mayborn/BIO fellows have benefitted from the chance to put aside daily demands and devote time to researching and writing (and to receive mentoring from Morris), Voeltz found her New Mexico stay especially helpful. During her residency at WISC, she met with some of the Southwest historians whose works she had already read, contacted Apache sources, explored the region's topography, and saw artifacts from Geronimo's time. Meeting with a representative of the Mescalero Apache tribe, Voeltz could ask a key question: "What should I

and Notes, we've posted some of the thoughts members have already shared on such topics as how COVID-19 has affected the release dates of their books, the idea of holding virtual book signings, and more. And taking a suggestion made by former BIO president Cathy Curtis, we're soliciting short pieces from members about their experience with coping with the crisis, which we'll run next month (and perhaps for as long as we're all cooped up). See the top box above this letter for more details.

This issue is a little thinner than I originally planned—no conference preview, no review of the Dorothy O. Helly Works-in-Progress Lecture and another author's talk. I don't know when our correspondents will once again be out in the field covering biography-related events, and the in-depth coverage we normally have of the conference is of course off the table. So, if you have an idea for an article you'd like to contribute in the coming months, send your pitches. Please keep in mind that we're looking for pieces that address the craft, with information all biographers might benefit from.

One follow up to an item in last month's issue: We noted that BIO member Eric K. Washington was a 2020 Brendan Gill Prize finalist for his *Boss of the Grips: The Life of James H. Williams and the Red Caps of Grand Central Terminal*. We didn't know at the time that Eric was the only biographer to win that honor. Congratulations again, Eric!

Yours,

Michael Burgan

know, what should I understand, if I want to write about this culture that is not my own?"

Finding a Focus

The impetus for exploring the intersection of the lives of Geronimo and Voeltz's great-grandfather, Captain Henry Lawton, came from Voeltz's grandmother. She suggested that Lawton's life was worth researching and writing about. A native of Indiana, Lawton joined the army at 18 and fought in the Civil War, the Indian Wars of the West, and the Philippine-American War of 1898. He died in combat during that latter conflict. Voeltz began examining her relative's life while working on an M.A. in nonfiction writing at Johns Hopkins University. She was struck by how "his life crossed paths with some really formative events for U.S. history during that entire era of the late 1800s."

Her literary agent convinced Voeltz that instead of giving Lawton's life a cradle-to-grave treatment, she should focus on one part of his life: the manhunt Lawton led to track down and arrest Geronimo and his Apache followers. But for Voeltz, the story is more than an adventure tale that follows the two men across the Southwest and into Mexico. She also wants to explore the two cultures at play. "Lawton and Geronimo come into the situation with completely different realities," Voeltz said. "And I want readers to feel that."

Part of Geronimo's reality was growing up in the Gila Mountains of southwest New Mexico. That's where he learned the survival skills that would help him elude capture for some four months in 1886, as Lawton and his men pursued the Apaches over mountainous desert terrain. For Lawton, a motivation in his life was uniting and then protecting the Union he loved.

Shared Traits

During her research, Voeltz learned that her great-grandfather and Geronimo had, as she put it, "a number of commonalities at a very deep human level." Both chose the warrior life and saw violent conflict at an early age—Lawton during the Civil War and Geronimo while taking part on raids. Both became respected leaders because of their military skill (while Geronimo's status was bolstered by his role as a medicine man). Lawton and the Apache chief also had strong family and community ties.

Finally, Voeltz said, both men "experienced profound loss in their lives, the kind of loss that knocks you loose from your foundation." Each lost a parent before the age of 10, and each lost their first three children. Despite those losses, Lawton and Geronimo also had great physical and psychological resilience. Voeltz said the chase through the mountains—the backbone of her story—"puts both of their physical resilience to the test, as well as their emotional resilience."

Challenges and Conundrums

Finding the sources to give each subject's perspectives and experience equal weight has presented Voeltz with some challenges. It's much easier for Lawton's side, as his letters to his wife are in the Library of Congress. They give Voeltz insight into his character as well as details about life on the trail. But for Geronimo's side of the tale, there are no written sources from his time when he was trying to evade Lawton. Voeltz is trying to piece together things by knowing how the Apaches

Feeling Stuck?

Whatever state your biography's in—vague idea, proposal, well underway—BIO's experienced biographers can help. BIO offers a one-hour coaching session via phone or email for the member discounted rate of $60. (Coaches may charge more for subsequent hours.) Email Michael Gately with a brief statement about the nature of your project and your goals for the one-hour session.

Bio Biographers International Organization

THE LATEST NEWS IN BIOGRAPHY

Presented by Biographers International Organization

January 2020

2020 BIO AWARD WINNER

Hermione Lee

Dame Hermione Lee, Professor Emeritus of English Literature, University of Oxford, is the winner of the 11th BIO Award, a prize bestowed yearly by the Biographers International Organization to a distinguished colleague who has made a major contribution to the advancement of the art and craft of biography. Lee will receive the honor on May 16, 2020 at the annual BIO Conference at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where she will also deliver the conference's keynote address. "I am delighted, honored, and amazed," Lee wrote BIO President Linda Leavell when informed she had won the BIO Award. "Thank you so much, and thanks to the committee. It is particularly exciting to be given this prize for the Life-Writing Centre here in Oxford as well as for my writing. I accept [it] with pleasure." READ MORE

Sign Up for the New BIO Quarterly Newsletter

Have you signed up to receive *The Latest News In Biography* quarterly newsletter? You can read the January 2020 issue, pictured above, here. We hope you will share the newsletter with your colleagues and readers. Please subscribe here.

Do you have biography news you would like to share for future newsletters? Let us know!

lived and traveled in the region at that time. In one example, she noted how Geronimo had been given tips when he was a boy on how to survive in a hostile environment—tips that likely came into play in 1886.

For the Apache side, Voeltz has also turned to accounts left by Apache scouts who traveled with Lawton and his men, though they were recorded years later, as told to white men. Geronimo, likewise, dictated an autobiography later in life to a white notetaker. Voeltz also relies on Apache oral histories, including some from men who lived with Geronimo after his capture.

Voeltz is also considering the language she uses. Geronimo has often been described as a renegade, but is that the proper word, she wonders: "Can you really be a renegade if you're traveling through a region that you perceive to be your own land?" And Voeltz has tried to find the proper description for Geronimo and his men, and has ended up using *Apaches*, *Indians*, and *Native Americans* interchangeably.

Perhaps her biggest conundrum, Voeltz said, is how to grapple with issues of privacy and taboo. She said, "To the Apache, one does not speak someone's name after that person has died. My book is full of the names of people who died. How do I navigate this?" Along with that, she is wrestling with how to do justice to Geronimo's world view, one that included his belief that he could communicate with the elements and stop time.

Voeltz will continue to sort out these and other concerns as she works on her book. In the meantime, her fellowship in New Mexico has prepared her for the next phase of research and writing, even as she juggles a full-time job and raising a family. After the fellowship, she said, "the pump is primed."

New Hidden Figures Fellowship Replaces Mayborn/BIO Fellowship

James McGrath Morris, the driving force behind the Mayborn/BIO Fellowship, is helping to launch a new fellowship program to assist aspiring authors working on a book about a lesser-known figure who merits a biography. The Santa Fe Hidden Figures Fellowship will provide a grant of $1,000, a two-week stay in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in a casita at the historic Acequia Madre House in cooperation with the Women's International Studies Center (WISC), dinner five nights a week in the Morris home, a public reading, and a meeting with a literary agent.

Fellows will also have time for consultation with Morris on research and writing techniques suitable for a book on a hidden figure. Morris is the author of, among other books, *The New York Times* bestselling *Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, The First Lady of the Black Press*, which was awarded the Benjamin Hooks National Book Prize, given annually for the best book on civil rights history.

The fellowship evolved from the Mayborn/BIO Biography Fellowship, which for the last nine years has provided a creative residency to biographers. "We felt it had run its course and there was a greater need for a different fellowship program," Morris said. "When I accepted the BIO Award in 2019, I said that BIO needs to find the way to support and foster works by those whose actions—rather than their fame—merit a biography. This new fellowship is an attempt to put that idea into action."

The fellowship is open to women writing about a hidden figure or to men writing about a female hidden figure. The selection will be made by a panel that will include a former Mayborn/BIO Fellowship recipient. Details on the application process will become available in late May.

Follow BIO on Facebook!

Get the latest BIO news and share questions and ideas with other biographers by following the BIO Facebook pages. We have both a page, which is visible to everyone, and a group, which has content visible only to people who elect to join it. Both are open to members and non-members like.

Sold to Publishers

Ray E. Boomhower
War Diarist: The Many Battles of Richard Tregaskis
sold to University of New Mexico Press
by Philip Turner at
Philip Turner Book Productions

Lisa Napoli
Susan, Linda, Nina & Cokie
sold to Abrams Press
by Dan Conaway at Writers House

Todd Goddard
Devouring Time: Jim Harrison, a Life
sold to Blackstone Publishing
by Philip Turner at
Philip Turner Book Productions

Katie Salisbury
Not Your China Doll
(Anna May Wong)
sold to Dutton
by Alia Hanna Habib at
The Gernert Company

Brendan Greaves
Truckload of Art:
The Life and Work of Terry Allen
sold to Hachette Books
by Meg Thompson at
Thompson Literary Agency

Daniel Bolger
The Panzer Killers
(Maurice Rose)
sold to Caliber
by E. J. McCarthy at
E. J. McCarthy Agency

Darrell Hartman

Levy Center Announces 2020–2021 Fellows

The Leon Levy Center for Biography has awarded five resident fellowships at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, including the second Leon Levy/Alfred P. Sloan Fellow for a biography on a figure from science. Each resident fellow receives a $72,000 grant, research assistance, writing space, and full access to research facilities. The five Leon Levy Biography Fellows for 2020–2021 are:

Nicholas Boggs

Miriam Horn

Nicholas Boggs is currently a clinical assistant professor in the Department of English at New York University. He earned a B.A. from Yale and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. He is co-editor of James Baldwin's collaboration with French artist Yoran Cazac, *Little Man, Little Man: A Story of Childhood* (2018). He received the 2019 Robert and Ina Caro Travel and Research Fellowship from Biographers International Organization. His writing has appeared in the anthologies *James Baldwin Now* and *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin*. Boggs is working on a literary biography of James Baldwin, which will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Miriam Horn, this year's Leon Levy/Alfred P. Sloan Fellow, is the author of *Rebels in White Gloves: Coming of Age with Hillary's Class—Wellesley '69* (Random House, 1999); the *New York Times* bestselling *Earth: The Sequel, The Race to Reinvent Energy and Stop Global Warming*—coauthored with Environmental Defense Fund president Fred Krupp—(Norton, 2008); and *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman; Conservation Heroes of the American Heartland* (Norton, 2016), which *Kirkus* named a Best Book of the Year. She is working on a biography of naturalist George Schaller, which will be published by Penguin.

Top Of The World
(Adolph Ochs and
James Gordon Bennett)
sold to Viking
by Farley Chase at
Chase Literary Agency

Jeffrey Simon
The Forgotten Terrorists: The Rise and Fall of the Galleanists
sold to Potomac Books
by Jill Marsal at
Marsal Lyon Literary Agency

Derek Baxter
In Pursuit of Jefferson: Traveling Through Europe With the Most Confounding Founder
sold to Sourcebooks
by Amanda Jain at BookEnds

Please Keep Your Info Current

Making a move or just changed your email? We ask BIO members to keep their contact information up to date, so we and other members know where to find you. Update your information in the Member Area of the BIO website.

Membership Up for Renewal?

Please respond promptly to your membership renewal notice. As a nonprofit organization, BIO depends on members' dues to fund our annual conference, the publication of this newsletter, and the other work we do to support biographers around the world. When renewing, please make sure the contact

Susan Morrison

Lance Richardson

Susan Morrison has been the Articles Editor of *The New Yorker*for 22 years. Previously, she served as editor-in-chief of *The New York Observer*, and was an original editor of *SPY Magazine*. Morrison is the editor of the book *Thirty Ways of Looking at Hillary: Reflections by Women Writers*, and she is at work on a biography of Lorne Michaels for Random House.

Lance Richardson is the author of *House of Nutter: The Rebel Tailor of Savile Row*, which appeared on several "notable books" lists of 2018. His journalism has been published in print and online in *The Guardian*, *Slate*, *The New Yorker*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and several international iterations of *GQ*. Richardson is also the recipient of the 2020 Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship. He is currently working on a biography of Peter Matthiessen—writer, naturalist, Zen *roshi*;—to be entitled *True Nature: The Pilgrimage of Peter Matthiessen,* which will be published by Pantheon.

Francesca Wade

Francesca Wade is an acclaimed literary critic who writes for the *London Review of Books*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Paris Review*, *The Guardian* , and *The New Statesman*. She is editor of *The White Review* and winner of the Biographers' Club Tony Lothian Prize. Her first book, *Square Haunting*, was published in 2020 by Faber in the United Kingdom and by Tim Duggan at Crown in the United States. Wade is working on a biography of Gertrude Stein.

Shorts

Authors, Publishers, Challenge Internet Archive Over Expanded Access
Several organizations are offering expanded access to their digital resources during the COVID-19 shutdown (see our report in this month's "Research Tips"). But not

information we have for you is up to date.

Are You a Student?

Or do you know one who is interested in biography? BIO now has a special student membership rate. Visit the BIO website to find out more.

Biographer's Diary

By Cathy Curtis

The 100,000-Word Biography?
Many biographies, including a large proportion of the ones written by highly esteemed authors, have been published as doorstopper-sized books. If you are an expert in your field, writing about a major figure, your publisher may still give you the freedom to write a 250,000-word tome that follows your subject's every documented move from cradle to grave.

But times have changed. New contracts are likely to impose a strict limit on length. The coronavirus adds another layer of concern, with the reports of possible future paper shortages. Nonetheless, we need not passively agree to proposed word counts that don't make sense.

During contract negotiations last year, my editor initially stipulated that my next book—the everyone is happy about the Internet Archive's decision to create a "National Emergency Library." As reported by Publishers Marketplace, the Association of American Publishers and the Author's Guild criticized the archive's move to make it easier for people to "borrow" its 1.4 million titles, which focuses on books published from the 1920s to the 1990s. Maria A. Pallante, president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers, called the expanded access an "aggressive, unlawful, and opportunistic attack on the rights of authors and publishers in the midst of the novel coronavirus pandemic." Pallante said the move undermines copyright and will lead to a loss of revenue for publishers and authors. The Authors Guild echoed those sentiments, decrying the Internet Archive's using the "emergency" to lend more copyrighted materials. In 2019, the Guild and the United Kingdom's Society of Authors challenged the archive's legal right to share copyrighted material without authors' permissions, while the archive said its lending policies were covered under the concept of controlled digital lending. The National Emergency Library goes beyond that, however, as the Internet Archive is suspending waiting lists for books during the COVID-19 crisis. The Authors Guild has instructions for writers who want to remove their books included in the National Emergency Library.

Website Highlights Black History's Hidden Figures

Businessman Wilson Lovett, politician Oscar DePriest, and attorney Elsie Austin are just a few of the hidden figures of African American history who turn up in the web project Black Quotidian, the effort of Dartmouth College history professor Matthew F. Delmont. The online resource got its start as Delmont looked for new ways to teach black history in the era of Black Lives Matter. Starting in January 2016, Delmont published daily, over the course of one year, an article from the black press that originally ran on the date of his post. He also offered commentary on the articles he ran. His sources included such important newspapers as *The Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and Delmont tried to focus on the "ordinary aspects of African American history," though some well-known figures shared the platform with the hidden ones. On the Black Quotidian website, launched in 2019, Delmont includes his original posts, contributions from other scholars, and relevant video and audio clips, such as a newsreel of Marian Anderson's historic performance at the Lincoln Memorial.

Boswell Festival Postponed

Scotland's Boswell Festival, originally planned to take place May 8–10, has been postponed until October. Named for James Boswell, the festival bills itself as "the world's only festival of biography and memoir." The festival is trying to reschedule as many authors as it can for the new dates. You can see who was scheduled to have taken part in May here.

Member Interview

Six Questions with

first biography of a significant literary figure who lived to be 91 and was productive until nearly the end of her life—was to be no more than 100,000 words. This was deemed the optimum length to make the book saleable.

I had to push back. In addition to telling the story of the writer's eventful life before, during, and after her marriage to a famous poet, I needed to demonstrate the value of her essays and works of fiction. She was an intellectual as deeply committed to progressive politics as she was to classic and contemporary literature—a redoubtable combination that would involve a considerable amount of explanation and interpretation on my part.

So I told my agent that the book absolutely had to be longer. An agreement was finally reached for 120,000 to 130,000 words, including notes and bibliography.

Some biographers who accept a stipulated word count blithely zoom past the limit, and hope for editorial leniency. Others write their books without paying attention to length and then painfully self-edit before submission. My strategy is to pare down each chapter in the process of writing it. Even so, I had to comb through the penultimate draft to eliminate relevant but not absolutely essential material to conform to the contracted word count.

Complicating matters was my lengthy bibliography. As my subject's first biographer, I cited both the original version and the reprints of each of her dozens of essays and short stories—only a few of which are anthologized—in addition to her interviews, major reviews of her work, and other secondary sources. Because

Mahala Yates Stripling

Mahala Yates Stripling with her subject Richard Selzer in 1993. You can find out more about Stripling and her work at her website.

What is your current project and at what stage is it?

After 25 years of researching and writing, I have a nearly complete manuscript of *Your Subject is a Storyteller, the Life and Writings of Richard Selzer, Who Transformed the Literature of Medicine.*

Richard Selzer (1928–2016) was one of the first doctor-writers to understand the power of fiction in medicine. He told stories that showed how a doctor related to his patient whose daily pain and suffering was at the heart of humanity. Seeing the body as sacred space, he wrote about their infectious diseases and heart transplants, making patients real in a technological age.

Selzer's literary art will far outlast the thousands of operations he performed over 30 years as a Yale-New Haven Hospital surgeon. His stories and essays are a mainstay in medical school curricula, influencing others to write and advancing the literature and medicine movement. While he lived a good life, humbly serving others, his work subsumed what he wanted most: romantic love.

Who is your favorite biographer or what is your favorite biography?

I have several long rows of alphabetized biographies from Adams to Williams, and I revisit the one in the middle—Robert K. Massie's *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (Modern Library, 2012). It tells the fascinating story of a man who brought Russia into the modern age.

A new favorite is *The Willoughbys* (Camden, 2019), set in Elizabethan England. After an introduction by editor Jo Ann Cruz, I learned from letters that Elizabeth Willoughby, who was pregnant 12 times without producing a surviving male heir, faced dire consequences for disobedience to her husband.

What have been your most satisfying moments as a biographer?

Getting to know my living subject, his colleagues, and his world. From 1993 to 2016, I interviewed Selzer in his home, at the Sterling and Beinecke libraries at Yale, at Mory's for lunch, or in the Elizabethan Club for high tea. Speaking without hesitation about his life and work, he imposed no restrictions on me, nor did I give him or his family right of approval of the manuscript. I did, however, nod in agreement to one request: that he not lose the affection of his readers.

This challenged me when I wrote about how a priest molested him when he was 12, just after his father died. Selzer anachronistically said, "It was just a happen" (Dickinson), and the molester was "only taking what he needed." I knew this would not sit well with my readers. That this trauma never left him is clear in the story Selzer wrote at the age of 75, "The Garden, The Garden," which was a way for me to resolve the issue.

I had another decision to make about viewpoint. Because the last half of this biography was written in real time, do I include myself, to add warmth? Or do I use a third person POV, as academically trained?

What have been your most frustrating moments?

I applied three times for an NEH grant and keep my grants.gov login current, so

this brilliant author has been sadly overlooked in recent decades, and because it was impossible to discuss the full range of her work, it was important to demonstrate its enormous breadth in this list.

The point I want to make here is twofold. We should not be shy about fighting for the space we require to tell our subject's story in adequate depth and detail. Yet we must guard against the old-fashioned notion that every move he or she made is worth putting into our books. Remaining alert to readers' interests and attention spans helps avoid the paradox of introducing tedium into a life that we chose specifically because it was compelling and significant.

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BIO's Board of Directors

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Advisory Council

hope abides. I continue to look for a publisher or agent.

When research piles up, I take Alice Walker's advice, "Keep your factory in order." Right now I'm reorganizing my materials, paper and digital, that will go into a secondary collection in the Selzer Archive at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. I have a plethora of audio- and video-taped interviews to make available to future researchers.

If you weren't a biographer, what dream profession would you be in, and why?

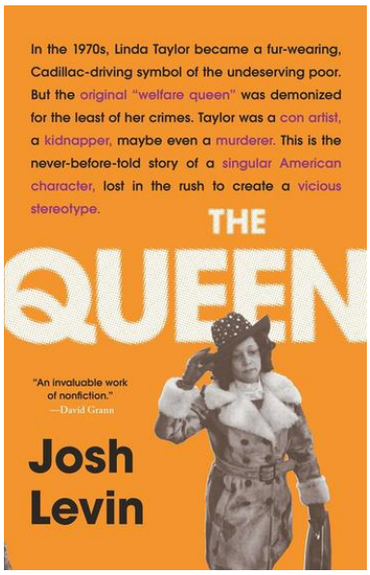
Trial attorney, because preparation and persuasive language is everything. Given the stress, I would have crashed early on. Instead, I am a rhetorician who presents evidence convincingly with carefully chosen words.

What genre, besides biography, do you read for pleasure and who are some of your favorite writers?

When a Christopher Buckley novel comes out, my husband gives it to me to relax my brain a little. My favorite, *The Relic Master* (Simon & Schuster, 2015), has blissfully short chapters about a 16th-century hunter of relics and other oddball characters who deliver a laugh a minute.

Poetry, too. I've memorized Gerald Manley Hopkin's "Pied Beauty" simply for the pleasure of having the alliteration run through my head.

Prizes



The Queen made a number of Best Book lists for 2019.

National Book Critics Circle Awards

Josh Levin won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography for *The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth*. Award judge Elizabeth Taylor called the book "a feat of investigative reporting matched with a deep understanding of history." The awards ceremony and reception, originally scheduled for March, will now be held in September. You can see the winners in the other five categories here.

Bancroft Prizes

Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age by Lizabeth Cohen won one of two Bancroft Prizes in American History and Diplomacy. The other winner was *Illusions of Emancipation: The Pursuit of Freedom and Equality in the Twilight of Slavery* by Joseph P. Reidy. Given by Columbia University, the prizes are worth $10,000 each.

Mark Lynton History Prize

Kerri K. Greenidge's *Black Radical: The Life and Times of William Monroe Trotter* won the Mark Lynton History Prize. The prize, worth $10,000, is one of four that comprise the J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project Awards, given by Columbia University. The judges called Greenidge's book "the most complete biography yet of one of the most interesting African American intellectual leaders of the early 20th century." You can see all of this year's Lukas Prize Project Award winners here.

Debby Applegate, Chair
Taylor Branch
Douglas Brinkley
Robert Caro
Ron Chernow
Tim Duggan
Amanda Foreman
Irwin Gellman
Annette Gordon-Reed
Michael Holroyd
Eric Lax
David Levering Lewis
Andrew Lownie
Megan Marshall
John Matteson
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Marion Meade
Andrew Morton
Arnold Rampersad
Hans Renders
Stacy Schiff
Martin J. Sherwin
Gayfryd Steinberg
T.J. Stiles
Jean Strouse
Will Swift
William Taubman
Terry Teachout
Ike Williams

The Biographer's Craft

Editor
Michael Burgan

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James McGrath Morris

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Margaret Moore Booker

Correspondents
United Kingdom
Andrew Lownie

Netherlands
Hans Renders

India

Slightly Foxed Prize

The Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize went to Jonathan Phillips for his *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin*. Presented by The Biographers' Club of London, the prize goes to the best book published by a first-time biographer or memoirist. The prize is sponsored by the literary quarterly and independent publisher Slightly Foxed and is worth £2,500 ($2,919).

Anisfield-Wolf Awards

Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century by Charles King won the nonfiction category of the Anisfield-Wolf Awards. Given by the Cleveland Foundation, the awards honor books that confront racism and explore diversity. You can see all of this year's winners here.

Lambda Literary Awards

The finalists for the Lambda Literary Awards, honoring the best LGBTQ writing, have been announced. *Sontag: Her Life and Work* by Benjamin Moser is a finalist in the Lesbian Memoir/Biography category. The LGBTQ Nonfiction category includes two biographies as finalists: *Bloodflowers: Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Photography, and the 1980s* by W. Ian Bourland and *Why Karen Carpenter Matters* by Karen Tongson. Winners in all categories for the "Lammys" will be announced in June. You can see all the finalists here.

Hazel Rowley Fellowship

Lance Richardson is the 2020 Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship winner for his proposed biography of writer and naturalist Peter Matthiessen. The judges also gave a Highly Commended award to Gabrielle Carey for her work on writer Elizabeth von Arnim. The fellowship, open to Australian citizens and permanent residents, provides $15,000 AUD ($8,710) to a biographer to develop a proposal or further a work-in-progress. The fellowship is named for late BIO member Hazel Rowley, who was born in England, raised in Australia, and lived for a time in the United States. BIO's Hazel Rowley Prize, for the best proposal by a first-time biographer, is named for her.

Spur Award

Nighthawk Rising: A Biography of Accused Cattle Rustler Queen Ann Bassett of Brown's Park by Diana Allen Kouris won the Best Western Biography category in the Spur Awards. Two finalists were also named: *Washington Territory's Grand Lady: The Story of Matilda (Glover) Koontz Jackson* by Julie McDonald Zander and *Political Hell-Raiser: The Life and Times of Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana* by Marc C. Johnson. The Spur Awards are given by the Western Writers of America and honor writing about the American West in numerous categories. You can see all of this year's winners and finalists here.

INDIES Book of the Year Awards

Here are the finalists in the Biography category for the INDIES Book of the Year Awards:

- *Citizen Akoy: Basketball and the Making of a South Sudanese American* by Steve Marantz
- *Gentleman in the Shadows: Benjamin C. Evans Jr. and the Central Intelligence Agency* by Douglas A. Wissing
- *Gertrude Stein Has Arrived: The Homecoming of a Literary Legend* by Roy Morris Jr.
- *The Showy Town of Savannah: The Story of the Architect William Jay* by

Ashok R. Chandran

Australia/New Zealand
Todd Nicholls

United States
Pat McNees
(Washington, D.C.)

Dona Munker
Jane Lincoln Taylor
(New York)

Felicity O. Yost
(Hawai'i)

To contact any of our correspondents, click here.

John D. Duncan and Sandra L. Underwood

- *A Forgotten Hero: Folke Bernadotte, the Swedish Humanitarian Who Rescued 30,000 People From the Nazis* by Shelley Emling
- *According to Kate: The Legendary Life of Big Nose Kate, Love of Doc Holliday* by Chris Enss
- *Missing: A World War II Story of Love, Friendships, Courage, and Survival* by Kenneth D. Evans
- *Stronger Than Death: How Annalena Tonelli Defied Terror and Tuberculosis in the Horn Of Africa* by Rachel Pieh Jones
- *Yves Saint Laurent: A Biography* by Laurence Benaim
- *Boy on the Bridge: The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success* by Andrew Marble

Marble's book is also a finalist in the War and Military category, as are these biographies: *Colin Powell: Imperfect Patriot* by Jeffrey J. Matthews and *General in Command: The Life of Major General John B. Anderson, From Iowa Farm to Command of the Largest Combat Corps in World War II* by Michael M. Van Ness.

Sponsored by *Foreword Reviews*, the INDIES recognize the best books published by small, indie, and university presses, as well as by self-published authors.

Call for Applications/Submissions

Note: All deadlines, and other information provided below, were correct as of press time. Check the websites for updates reflecting the impact of COVID-19.

PEN America Writers' Emergency Fund

Because of the financial hardships many people are experiencing due to COVID-19, PEN America is offering grants of $500 to $1,000 to professional writers in a wide range of genres. PEN's definition of *professional* is found in the application guidelines. Applicants do not have to be members of PEN America, but they must be based in the United States.

Turkey Land Cove Foundation Residencies

The Turkey Land Cove Foundation of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, offers women artists and writers residencies of one to three weeks. The foundation provides room and board and some travel expenses. The application for the Fall session, which runs from September 15, 2020, to January 31, 2021, is **May 1, 2020**. Learn more about the residency and application process here.

Gomes Memorial Book Prize

The Massachusetts Historical Society is accepting submissions for its Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize, which goes to the best book about Massachusetts history published in 2019. The prize is worth $1,500. Authors can submit directly or through their publisher. The deadline is **May 20, 2020**. Submission details are available here.

Wellstone Center in the Redwoods Fellowship

The Wellstone Center in the Redwoods, in Soquel, California, offers two-week fellowships for fiction and creative nonfiction writers. The fellowship provides room and board as well as activities such as hiking and yoga. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. Go here for more information.

Research Tips

Online Sources Increase Free Access

The spread of COVID-19 has led some libraries to promote or increase access to their digital holdings. In New York City, library card holders can get ebooks, audiobooks, and access to databanks using the library's SimplyE app. New Yorkers without a card can use the app to get one. The Los Angeles Public Library offers access to its digitial collections to anyone through a service called TESSA. JSTOR, which provides online access to books and academic journals, has expanded access to books and journals to participating academic institutions, but not to the general public. Project MUSE, which also offers access to journals and books, also has content available for free.

Key West Literary Seminar Audio Archives

For more than 30 years, some of the world's best-known authors have spoken at the Key West Literary Seminar—and the seminar recorded their talks. Now, researchers can access sessions from more than 500 writers, from E. L. Doctorow and Gore Vidal to Jamaica Kincaid and Annie Proulx. Some of the audio files are available immediately, while others require an email request. You can see all the authors available here.

Obituaries

Richard Reeves

Richard Reeves, a journalist who also wrote books on U.S. history and politics, died March 25, in Los Angeles. He was 83.

Trained as an engineer, Reeves began his journalism career by helping to start a local weekly paper in New Jersey. He eventually became chief political correspondent for *The New York Times* and wrote for several national magazines. Many readers knew him best from his twice-weekly syndicated column that appeared in newspapers across the country for 35 years. Among his books were biographies of several U.S. presidents: John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. Reeves also wrote a biography of scientist Ernest Rutherford.

Patricia Bosworth, April 24, 1933–April 2, 2020

Patricia Bosworth, the prize-winning biographer of Diane Arbus, Montgomery Clift, and Jane Fonda, died of COVID-19 in her home city of New York on Tuesday, April 2, at the age of 86. The daughter of civil-rights lawyer Bartley Crumb and famed hostess "Cutsie" Bosworth Crum, Bosworth also published memoirs of her childhood in San Francisco and young adulthood in New York, *Anything Your Little Heart Desires* and *The Men in My Life: Love and Art in 1950s Manhattan*, which reviewers likened to stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald. She was a founding member of the New York University Biography Seminar and an active, vibrant, generous colleague to fellow biographers, journalists, photographers, and actors. "She had a thousand close friends," said a biographer who was one of them. She will be missed by all who knew her.—Anne C. Heller

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Writer's Life

Challenging the Big Boy

As more of life goes virtual in the time of coronavirus, authors and readers can support independent bookstores through the website **Bookshop.org**. The site shares a percentage of its profits with the indie stores and, in return, the stores promote the Bookshop platform. (As of early April, contributions to the indie stores were about $315,000, fueled by growth since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.) The site also gives small stores lacking ecommerce capabilities the chance to begin to compete with Amazon and earn commissions through its sales. Authors can also affiliate with the site, so that books they market through their own websites are sold through Bookshop, adding to the pool of money that goes to the small stores. You can see an example of an author's page **here**. At the end of March, Simon & Schuster announced it would add its publishing weight to help Bookshop by adding "Buy" buttons on all of its websites that link to Bookshop. The publisher is also suggesting its authors do the same on their websites. Bookshop.org is in beta now, and it hopes to add ebooks and audio books shortly. The challenge, though, will be competing with the steep discounts Amazon often offers.

Capture your reader, let him not depart, from dull beginnings that refuse to start.
—Horace

Taking the Serial Comma Seriously

Here at *TBC* we've long lobbied for the use of the serial, or Oxford, comma, knowing we are, seemingly, in the minority in the publishing world. Writing for ACES: The Society for Editing, Yashmyn Jackson explored one field that takes that last comma, and others, very seriously—the law. Jackson, an attorney-turned-editor, discussed several cases in which the omission of the serial comma, or a comma between certain adjectives, created ambiguity and led to one side losing its case. Grammar nerds can read more here.

As a writer, whether you are writing fiction, non-fiction, or poetry, you must be responsible for accurate factual information about how a thing works, if you're writing about it. You will have to be well informed about such things as the weather, biology, botany, human nature, history, technology, such matters as color spectrums and the behavior of light waves etc. etc. This means that, over time, you will learn a good deal.
—Lydia Davis

Writers at Work

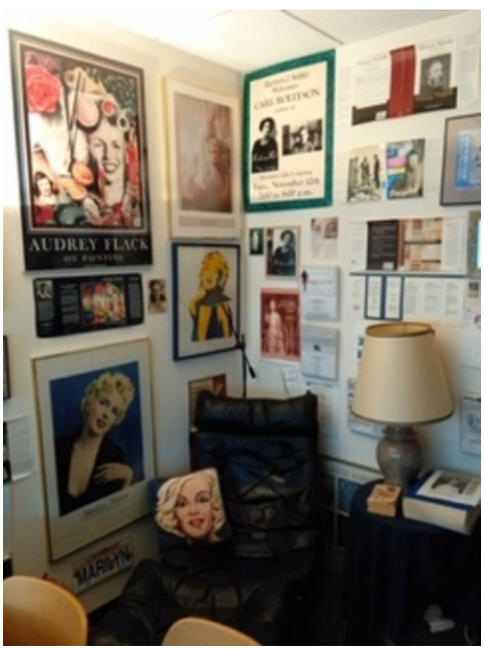
How do biographers do what they do? Or more precisely, how do they organize the space where they conceive of projects, go through notes, write and rewrite their books? With "Writers at Work," *TBC* offers glimpses into the working spaces of fellow biographers, with the writers describing what works for them and perhaps offering tips on what others should or shouldn't do.

This month, Carl Rollyson shows us several spots where he's crafted his biographies.

Please share with us pictures of where you work, so we can include them in future issues.

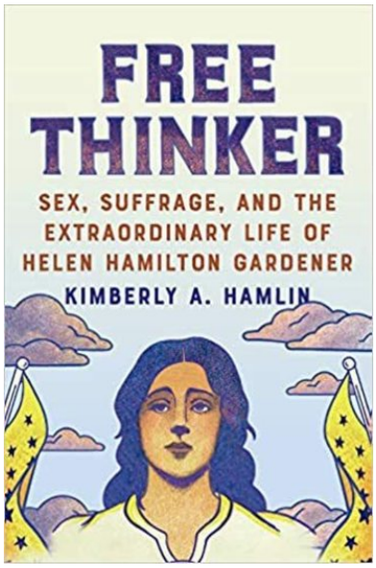
Cark Rollyson: This porch attached to the back of my home encloses me in my own world. No neighbors can be seen, and I can hear the birds and the bees and other wildlife.

Spring and fall I write in my sun shed. It is in the woods where I can hear the birds sing and catch a reflection of the light not available in my house, which blocks off part of the sun because of the porches front and back



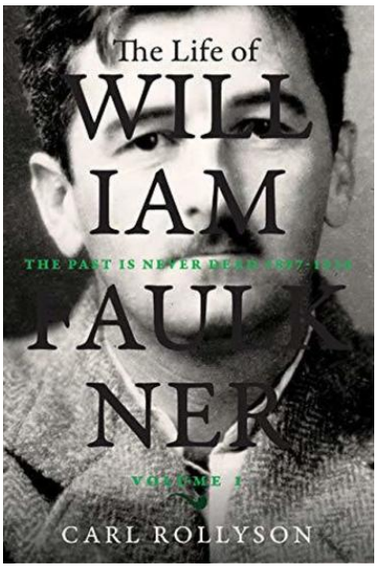
I wrote parts of all my biographies in my Baruch College office. Students enjoyed coming in and looking at the walls and wall-length bookshelves—across the corner pictured here.

Member News and Notes



Kimberly Hamlin's previous book was *From Eve to Evolution: Darwin, Science, and Women's Rights in Gilded Age America*.

Last month, we missed the publication of **Kimberly Hamlin**'s *Free Thinker: Sex, Suffrage, and the Extraordinary Life of Helen Hamilton Gardener*. Gardener played a key role in getting the Nineteenth Amendment through Congress. Kimberly wrote an op-ed for *The Washington Post* last month, "The Problem with Women's History Month in 2020." She also discussed her new book on the American Freethought podcast; her interview starts at the 10:13 mark. Out in April is *The Silver Swan: In Search of Doris Duke* by **Sallie Bingham**. In paperback, we missed the new edition of *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C. J. Walker* by **A'Lelia Bundles**. The book came out in conjunction with the premiere of a four-part drama based on the book on Netflix. Since then, A'Lelia has been discussing the show, called *Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C. J. Walker*, and her book. Interviews with her appeared in *O: The Oprah Magazine*; on the website Bustle; and on HuffPost. Out in paperback this month is *The League of Wives: The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home* by **Heath Lee**. For Women's History Month, the *Today* show picked an interview Heath did about the book on the What's Her Name podcast as the number one women's history podcast. You can listen to it here. Heath recently appeared on WFXR TV in Roanoke, Virginia, to discuss the book. Last month, we noted the publication of *Radical Spirits: India's First Woman Doctor and Her American Champions* by **Nandini Patwardhan**. Nandini held a book launch for her work in Raleigh, North Carolina. She told us, "Having worked on it for almost a decade, I am excited about finally introducing the book to the world." You can read excerpts from the book on her website and listen to an interview she did for the Nonfiction4Life podcast. Look for an article from Nandini about her experiences as an "indie" author and publisher in the May issue of *TBC*. **Celia Stahr** also had a book launch last month, at San Francisco's Book Passage, for her *Frida in America: The Creative Awakening of a Great Artist*. Celia said, "The audience was warm and asked interesting questions. This is my first published book and it was a bit overwhelming to see *Frida in America* in the middle of the new nonfiction section. Topping the list of this month's "Sold to Publishers" column is **Ray E. Boomhower**'s *War Diarist: The Many Battles of Richard Tregaskis*, about the author of the World War II bestseller *Guadalcanal Diary*. Joining Ray is **Lisa Napoli**, who sold her *Susan, Linda, Nina & Cokie*, a group biography of four beloved, pioneering broadcasters whose voices have defined public radio. **James McGrath Morris** published an article about Tony Hillerman, the subject of his forthcoming biography, in *Pasatiempo*, the weekly arts magazine of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. **Robert Caro** was interviewed on NPR's *Fresh Air*. **Lois Banner** wrote an article for *Ms.* called "Winning the Vote: Momentum and Division." For Women's History Month, **Marlene Trestman** answered three questions for the History in the Margins blog. **Beverly Gray** was interviewed for the B-Movie Bonanza podcast, discussing her time working for the king of the B's, Roger Corman. Beverly also wrote about her experience working at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan, for *Air & Space* magazine. **Tom Chaffin** discussed his writing career and his latest book, *Revolutionary Brothers: Thomas Jefferson, the Marquis de Lafayette and the Friendship that Helped Forge Two Nations*, in an interview for *Georgia State University Magazine*. Tom is an alumnus of the school. **Julia Flynn Siler** was scheduled to be part of a delegation from San Francisco to attend CSW64, the Commission on the Status of Women. The event was cancelled due to COVID-19. Julia was slated to discuss the pioneering efforts to combat human trafficking detailed in her *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Against Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown*. **Bernice Lerner** wrote "Why Holocaust Fiction?" for the History News Network. You can read an excerpt from *All the Horrors of War: A Jewish Girl, a British Doctor, and the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen,* Bernice's new book, here. Joshua Kendall wrote "America's Devastating First Plague and the Birth of Epidemiology" for *Time*.

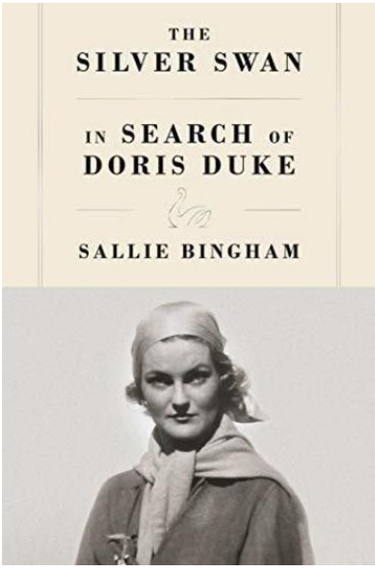


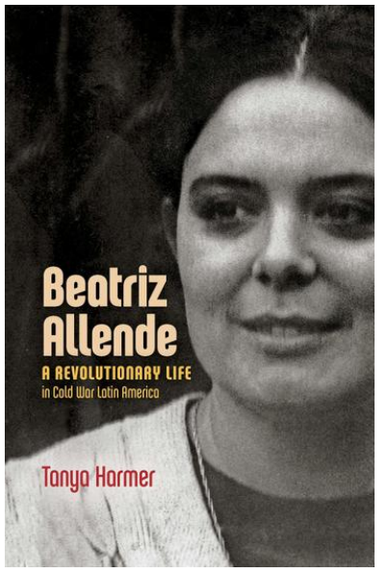
Volume two of Carl Rollyson's biography of William Faulkner will be published in September.

With two new books out, **Carl Rollyson** has been a busy biographer. For LitHub, he wrote an article about researching the hidden loves of William Faulkner and Sylia Plath, the subjects of *The Life of William Faulkner: The Past Is Never Dead, 1897–1934* and *The Last Days of Sylvia Plath.* Carl also talked about the Plath book for the blog The Page 99 Test, and the trailer for the book was featured on Shelf Awareness. An excerpt from Carl's Faulkner book appeared on LitHub. Carl also wrote "Old Rowan Oak: William Faulkner's Conservatism" for the online journal The Imaginative Conservative. BBC Radio 4 is airing audio excerpts of **Claire Tomalin**'s *Charles Dickens: A Life*. You can listen to the first two episodes here. **Bob Batchelor** spoke about his *The Bourbon King: The Life and Crimes of George Remus: Prohibition's Evil Genius* at the Newport Syndicate in Newport, Kentucky. Bob also spoke about the book on *Cincinnati Edition*, which airs on WVXU FM in Cincinnati. **Jon Meacham** published several op-eds last month. His "Choosing a President Under a State of Siege" ran in *The Washington Post*, while *The New York Times* ran his "We Can't Let Coronavirus Postpone Elections." Jon also contributed the essay "Great Leadership in a Time of Crisis" to *The New York Times Book Review*. For the last two years, **Patrick Parr** has been writing an almost monthly column about historical figures of the West visiting Japan for the first time. His most recent article was on Douglas MacArthur's 1905 visit to Japan. This and his other biographical portraits are available here. **Andrew Marble** interviewed **Diane Diekman** for the website associated with his *Boy on the Bridge: The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success*. Andrew, in turn, was interviewed by Deborah Kalb for her Book Q&As blog. As COVID-19 tightened its grip on the United States, several BIO members turned to Facebook to share their experiences and to see how others were weathering the crisis. For instance, **Anya Jabour** wrote: "My book (*Sophonisba Breckinridge: Championing Women's Activism in Modern America*) came out in the fall, but I have had to postpone several events and am looking into livestreaming another. But I also got a troubling message that the distribution center may close, which would mean no books for any new (not yet scheduled) events. My press (University of Illinois Press) is holding a virtual book fair, offering discounts of 40 percent off with code CONF40. I will be holding my very first live-streamed book reading/signing/sale at my local book store next weekend! Since the bookstore owner and I have both never live streamed before, it's an experiment! But perhaps I'll actually get MORE "traffic" since non-Missoulians can come, too?" **Carl Rollyson**: "No delays for my Plath and Faulkner books. My publisher at Virginia is setting up online events. I had a wonderful response to my Crowdcast event set up by Politics and Prose for my Faulkner biography." **James McGrath Morris**: "I'm urging the Authors Guild to set up interactive virtual book events with links to obtain signed copies. A store in Chicago used to do this years ago. The model I have in mind is something the Lincoln Bookstore in Chicago did. The author did a talk and then signed books (you could see the author sign yours) and then the store shipped them." **Brian Jay Jones**: "I had a long conversation about all this with my publicist at Dutton, who told me that all the major publishers in NYC have cleared out and are working from home, at least for the time being. They're all still working, still editing manuscripts (I don't know if they're ACQUIRING at the moment, however) and books are still produced and published as scheduled (I selfishly asked that question because the paperback version of my book is scheduled for May). But it's the author events and PR that are really taking it in the teeth at the moment. I feel absolutely terrible for those with books dropping right now—especially first timers, who really need and deserve the boost (I've been trying to push out a few on Twitter). If you do have a publicist you're working with at your publishing house, by all means encourage online events, as James mentioned above. One thing I'd also encourage is going on podcasts (and, if possible, radio remote). I'm still doing them regularly (I'll be forever grateful there are a jillion Star Wars podcasts where I can gab about George Lucas) and while it's hard to gauge ROI, you DO get to talk with those who have a genuine interest in your subject, there's no time limit, and you can do it right from the comfort of your social distancing. They're also almost ALWAYS looking for great content, and getting to speak with a real author is a boost for them as well." **Bob Batchelor**: "I've had a handful of events cancelled/postponed. . . . One had 300+ registered attendees, so sales definitely took a hit there. Still getting many podcast requests, but seems to be little to no ROI on those, truthfully, though it's nice to discuss the work with smart audiences. **Kate Buford** and **Abigail Santamaria**, founders of Biography by Design, reached out to their mailing list to remind people of how "the power of stories—our own and others'—can be a source of strength in these unprecedented times" and offered prompts to help people share stories with friends and family. Congratulations to **Nicholas Boggs**, **Miriam Horn**, and **Lance Richardson** for being named Leon Levy Center Fellows for 2020–2021. Lance also won the 2020 Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship. Congratulations also to **Andrew Marble**, whose *Boy on The Bridge: The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success* is a finalist for the INDIES Book of the Year Awards in the Biography and War and Military categories.

Send Us Your News!

In Stores





The Silver Swan: In Search of Doris Duke
by Sallie Bingham
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Coffeeland: One Man's Dark Empire and the Making of Our Favorite Drug
by Augustine Sedgewick
(Penguin Press)

Odetta: A Life in Music and Protest
by Ian Zack
(Beacon Press)

The House of Kennedy
by James Patterson and Cynthia Fagen
(Little, Brown)

The Good Assassin: How a Mossad Agent and a Band of Survivors Hunted Down the Butcher of Latvia
by Stephan Talty
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Square Haunting: Five Writers in London Between the Wars
by Francesca Wade
(Tim Duggan Books)

Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington
by Ted Widmer
(Simon & Schuster)

Ride the Devil's Herd: Wyatt Earp's Epic Battle Against the West's Biggest Outlaw Gang
by John Boessenecker
(Hanover Square)

Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell
by Tom Clavin
(St. Martin's Press)

Beatriz Allende: A Revolutionary Life in Cold War Latin America
by Tanya Harmer
(University of North Carolina Press)

Borrowing Life: How Scientists, Surgeons, and a War Hero Made the First Successful Organ Transplant a Reality
by Shelley Fraser Mickle
(Imagine)

The Last Habsburgs: A Dynasty Shattered by the First World War
by Martin Levy
(Amberley)

Robert the Bruce: Champion of a Nation
by Stephen Spinks
(Amberley)

The Emperor Jahangir: Power and Kingship in Mughal India
by Lisa Balabanlilar
(I.B. Tauris)

No Man's Land: The Trailblazing Women Who Ran Britain's Most Extraordinary Military Hospital During World War I
by Wendy Moore
(Basic Books)

Something of Themselves: Kipling, Kingsley, Conan Doyle and the Anglo-Boer War
by Sarah LeFanu
(Oxford University Press)

Conan Doyle's Wide World: Sherlock Holmes and Beyond
by Andrew Lycett
(Tauris Parke)

Hollywood Double Agent: The True Tale

The Inevitability of Tragedy: Henry Kissinger and His World
by Barry Gewen
(W. W. Norton)

Calder: The Conquest of Space: The Later Years: 1940–1976
by Jed Perl
(Knopf)

Warhol
by Blake Gopnik
(Ecco)

Becoming Kim Jong Un: A Former CIA Officer's Insights into North Korea's Enigmatic Young Dictator
by Jung H. Pak
(Ballantine)

Pelosi
by Molly Ball
(Henry Holt)

Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Lesson for Our Own
by Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
(Crown)

The Planter of Modern Life: Louis Bromfield and the Seeds of a Food Revolution
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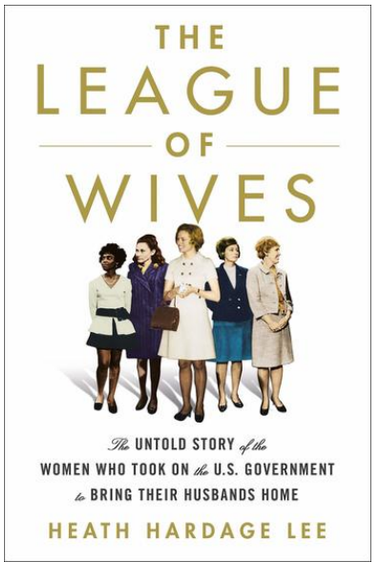

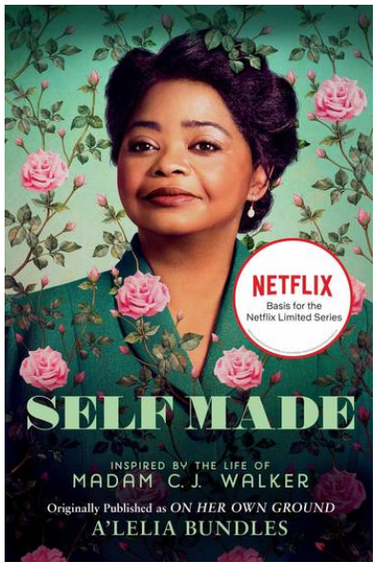

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Amanuensis

Amanuensis: A person whose employment is to write what another dictates, or to copy what another has written. Source: *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* (1913).

It would be impossible for me to write a biography of any composer whose music I did not love. The preferred role of any biographer is surely that of counsel for the defence. There are many biographers who like to play counsel for the prosecution, but they generally fail, and the reason is simple. A prosecutor meets closed doors. A defender is invited to enter them.

Modern biography is quite different than it used to be in the 19th century. Nowadays the transmission of sources is very important. I knew that once I embarked on this project that I would have to travel in search of documents in foreign archives. The problem with earlier biographies, and particularly with Chopin is that—in the absence of scientifically verifiable information about his life and his work—his earlier biographers rushed to fill this vacuum with fantasy and fiction.

One of the most famous [false] stories has been immortalized by Hollywood in *A Song to Remember*. Chopin's about to leave Warsaw forever as a result of the 1830 November uprising, which was crushed by the Russians. Chopin got out just in time. His confrères gave him a sample of Polish earth to take with him so that it could be buried with him whenever and wherever he died. We know that never took place, so that's one story that had to be jettisoned.

Another one is the famous deathbed note that he was supposed to have scribbled to his doctors before he died to have his body opened because he feared being buried alive. That's also a fantasy. We know that this particular note was written years earlier by Chopin's father on his deathbed. [more]

"Alan Walker Demystifies the Storied Life of Fryderyk Chopin"

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