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The BIOGRAPHER'S craft

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FOR WRITERS & READERS OF BIOGRAPHY

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A Tribute to James Atlas (1949–2019)

By Anne C. Heller

He could be seen among gatherings of biographers wherever we meet: at festivals and symposia, on prize committees, at literary parties, leading panels of his distinguished friends in explorations of their craft, gallantly introducing new biographers to colleagues and readers with a keen and generous word of praise. His standards were old fashioned, unusually high, and deeply literary, and his praise will be remembered and cherished by the unknowable number of lucky ones who received it and found in it new resources of stimulation and perseverance.

His own perseverance was legendary. James Atlas, who died of a rare chronic lung disease on September 4, at the age of 70, published two biographies, each the first on its subject. *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet* appeared in 1977, when Jim was 28, and was a finalist for the National Book Award. He had begun to conceive it on a winter's afternoon six years earlier at the Bodleian Library when, as a Rhodes Scholar studying under the great James Joyce biographer Richard Ellman at Oxford, he set aside *Finnegan's Wake* and asked the librarian to bring him Delmore's poems and stories, and then sat "marveling at the way [Delmore] managed to transform the idiom of immigrant Jews into the formal, echoic language of the English literary tradition."

Later, at the Beinecke Library at Yale, he got his first look at Delmore's papers, including a letter to the 25-year-old poet ("the exact age I was at this moment") from T. S. Eliot. Speaking for every electrified biographer with an archival box before him, Jim wrote, "I felt like Keats in his poem about discovering Chapman's translation of Homer, 'some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken.' I was there with the young poet, tearing open the envelope with eager hands, tipped off to the identity of its author by the return address, scanning it quickly, breathing hard as he came to the sentence about his poems, then setting the letter down gently on his desk and smoothing it out to read again and—or so I imagined—again and again and again. *T. S. Eliot* !"

Bellow: A Biography , the work of 10 years, appeared 23 years after *Delmore* . Stalled

First-time Biographers, Apply Now for the Rowley Prize!

Biographers International Organization (BIO) is now accepting applications for the Hazel Rowley Prize. The prize rewards a biography book proposal from a first-time biographer with: funding (a $2,000 award); a careful reading from an established agent; one year's membership in BIO (along with registration to the annual conference); and publicity for the author and project through the BIO website, *The Biographer's Craft* newsletter, etc. The prize is a way for BIO—an organization of biographers, agents, editors, and biography devotees—to advance its mission and extend its reach to talented new practitioners. The prize is open to all first-time biographers anywhere in the world who are writing in English; who are working on a biography that has not been commissioned, contracted, or self-published; and who have never published a book-length biography, history, or work of narrative nonfiction. Biography is defined for this

James Atlas (second from left on bottom) enjoying the company of other biographers at a 2017 NYU Biography Seminar meeting.

Drawing by Ken Krimstein

and stymied at times by Bellow—by the famous novelist's cat-and-mouse game of beckoning the biographer and then slyly rebuffing him—Jim took time to cofound and edit the celebrated Penguin Lives series, perhaps the best compendium of short biographies ever published, by superb writers of every description on subjects they were drawn to, including R. W. B. Lewis on Dante and Martin Marty on Joan of Arc. Wildly successful, the series continued to appear, later produced by Jim's firm Atlas & Company and published by Norton, HarperCollins, and Houghton Mifflin. *Bellow* was wildly successful, too, at first—and then less so. In his brilliantly candid book about biography, *A Shadow in the Garden* (Bellow's phrase for the biographer), Jim recalled reading the first, seemingly spectacular review of his book, by John Leonard in *The New York Times Book Review* : "It occupied two whole pages within [the *Review*] and showed, as always with Leonard, a tremendous depth of learning, casually displayed." And yet "a phrase from Leonard's review—'wary disapproval'—should have put me on alert; he was describing my general attitude toward my subject. Then there was this arresting sentence toward the end, after an ecstatic riff on his love of Bellow's prose: 'Atlas must have felt the same way before he began this long journey into knowing too much.' Yes, I thought: If only I could have preserved that innocence of early discovery." Soon "it all blew up. Flames of rage engulfed my book." Read now, the book is scintillating, meticulous, personable, mostly judicious, and a model of turning every page and tracking every breathing witness to a subject's life.

He wrote and published other books, including an early novel, *The Great Pretender* , which biographer and critic Phyllis Rose has recently urged everyone to read, or read again, and two memoirs, *My Life in the Middle Ages* and *The Shadow in the Garden: A Biographers Tale* , a practitioner's droll and learned history of our craft and his adventures in it.

He joined BIO early and gave it his all, as he did with every worthy literary enterprise. He knew everyone and had an ineffable glamour, gifts he deployed to help BIO thrive—adroitly matchmaking on panels and committees, advising on recipients of prizes, conceiving and inspiring an international BIO conference at the University of Groningen in 2018, and acting as the impresario of a series of fundraising dinners called the Biographers Circle, the first one of which took place last week, at the home of Gayfryd Steinberg and Michael Shnayerson in New York. He couldn't be there, not in body, but the elegant shadow of this diminutive but soaring figure of literary writer, esteemed editor, unstinting mentor, hilarious friend, and honorable combatant in the struggle to tell the story truly and well was palpable and, we trust, won't ever be forgotten.

Anne Heller is the author of Ayn Rand and the World She Made *and* Hannah Arendt: A Life in Dark Times *, which was commissioned and edited by James Atlas and published by Houghton Mifflin in 2015.*

[Editor's Notes: James Atlas's last published work was a review of Benjamin Moser's Sontag: Her Life and Work *for the the website Airmail. You can read it* ***here*** *. Also, BIO will soon offer a James Atlas Fellowship. Details to come. In the*

prize as a narrative of an individual's life or the story of a group of lives. Innovative ways of treating a life (or lives) will be considered at the committee's discretion. Memoirs, however, are *not* eligible. The deadline for applying is **March 1, 2020** . You can find more information about the prize and the application process here .

Apply for the Caro Research/Travel Fellowship

BIO is accepting applications for the Robert and Ina Caro Research/Travel Fellowship. BIO members with a work in progress may apply to receive funding to support research trips to archives and to places that are significant in the life of a particular biographical subject. The fellowship is restricted to supporting works of biography and not works of history, autobiography, or memoir. BIO welcomes submissions for non-print biographies such as documentary film.

The application deadline is **February 1, 2020** . In the spring of 2020, BIO will award either one $5,000 or two $2,500 fellowships, based on the assessment of three judges: Deirdre David, Marc Leepson, and Steve Paul. To apply, click here .

The Caro Fellowship, first awarded in 2018, is given in honor of Robert and Ina Caro, whose work demonstrates the significance of a sense of place in delineating character and the value of in-depth archival research.

meantime, you may donate to BIO in memory of James Atlas. ***Go to the BIO website*** *to donate online or by check.]*

Three Authors Join Tribute to Editorial Excellence Award-Winner Ileene Smith

Ileene Smith joins Tim Duggan, Robert Weil, Nan A. Talese, Jonathan Segal, and Robert Gottlieb as a winner of BIO's Editorial Excellence Award.

Three of Ileene Smith's authors will join her in a panel discussion when she receives BIO's 2019 Editorial Excellence Award on Wednesday, November 13. The authors are Wendy Lesser, whose *You Say to Brick: The Life of Louis Kahn* was a finalist for the 2018 PEN/Bograd Weld Award for Biography; James Kaplan, author of a highly acclaimed two-volume biography of Frank Sinatra and whose *Irving Berlin: New York Genius* will be published in November as part of Yale University Press' Jewish Lives series; and BIO board member Justin Spring, author of *The Gourmands' Way: Six Americans in Paris and the Birth of a New Gastronomy* . His previous biography, *Secret Historian* , was a finalist for the National Book Award, runner-up for the PEN/Bograd Weld Award for Biography, and winner of the Randy Shilts Prize for Non-Fiction. Spring also served as chair of the Editorial Excellence Award Committee. He said the works by the three panelists reflect Smith's great diversity as an editor. Smith told *TBC* , "I'm so grateful to BIO and to the many biographers I have worked with for this lofty recognition. Editing biography has always seemed its own reward."

The event honoring Smith will be held in the Skylight Room at the CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York City. It begins at 6:30 p.m. and includes a reception. The event is free but registration is required and is limited to 70 people. You can register here .

Residencies and Retreats Provide Time, Camaraderie

For many writers, going on a writing retreat or accepting a residency is a way to devote uninterrupted hours to their latest project, often in a remote, bucolic setting. Residencies and retreats may also give writers a chance to engage with other writers and artists, when they leave their desks for the day and gather for dinner or

Apply for the Swift Nonfiction Scholarship

Biographer and former BIO president Wayne "Will" Swift, an alumnus of Middlebury College, has established the Wayne S. Swift '69 Nonfiction Scholarship for the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference (BLWC). The fund, established in June 2019, provides scholarship aid for emerging writers of nonfiction, including history, biography, or memoir, to attend the 2020 BLWC in Ripton, Vermont, which will be held August 12–27. The Swift scholar will participate in a nonfiction workshop led by a distinguished writer, attend craft lectures and readings, and gain professional counsel from literary agents, editors, and publishers. Admissions information for the conference will be posted **on the BLWC website** in mid-October, with applications accepted through mid-February. There is no special application for the Swift Scholarship; all nonfiction writers accepted to the conference are eligible. The BLWC admissions committee will choose and notify the winner of the 2020 Swift Scholarship in the spring.

From the Editor

Not all writers can take the time for, or afford the expenses associated with, a writing retreat or residency. But, from my limited experience, a retreat or residency is a welcome break from the daily routine for writers in any genre. On my first retreat, more than 20 years ago, I was evening events.

Many organizations that offer retreats include nonfiction writers among their pool of applicants, often under the heading of "creative nonfiction," which opens the door for biographers to take part. In this look at residencies and retreats, *TBC* is highlighting just some of the opportunities for biographers to explore. They range from some of the best-known artists' residencies in the United States and Europe to more obscure residencies sponsored by smaller organizations. Some accept artists throughout the year, while others have two or three set periods of time or let residents choose the length of their stay. Most have an application fee and many require writers to pay their own way (from transportation costs to housing and meals). Some, though, cover all expenses or offer scholarships/fellowships to defray some or all of the costs. We have included approaching application deadlines for some of the listings. You can find more opportunities through the Alliance of Artists Communities and the database maintained by *Poets & Writers* . A resource for international residencies is Res Artis , a worldwide network of artist residencies.

(Thanks to Kitty Kelley, Theresa Kaminski, Linda Leavell, Susan Ronald, and Mahala Yates Stripling for their contributions to this article.)

The Anderson Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Red Wing, Minnesota, offers one-month residencies from May through October. Residents are provided with lodging, meals, and studio space. The application deadline for 2020 is February 15.

A.I.R. Studio Paducah , in Paducah, Kentucky, offers residencies that average between two weeks and three months. For a biweekly or monthly fee, residents receive a private apartment and studio space. The application deadline for 2020 is October 12, 2019, and for 2021 is February 15, 2020.

Bainbridge Island, Washington, is the home of the Bloedel Reserve , a 150-acre nature preserve. Its residency is geared toward writers whose work explores "the themes of nature and the human connection." There is no cost for residents, who are lodged in a home at the reserve, with a private bath and full kitchen. Residents are responsible for their own meals and travel expenses and are asked to give a workshop, lecture, reading, or another form of community outreach during their stay. For 2021 residencies, the application process opens in the summer of 2020.

The Bloedel Reserve is about an hour away from Seatte, via ferry.

The Brown Foundation Fellows Program , affiliated with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, offers residencies at the Dora Maar House in Ménerbes, France.

working on a play (which was never finished, but that's another story . . .) at an old farmhouse in Vermont. During the day I wrote; at night, I ate dinner and talked with the other artists there (I think most if not all were writers as well). The time with them reassured me that the struggles of trying to do writing projects, outside of the ones that paid the bills, was difficult for many of us. My second retreat was one I created, thanks to a small grant I received from the State of Connecticut. I used the money to go to Santa Fe and Taos. That trip was more productive as far as my output (though that time, I lacked the camaraderie of other writers). Being in those beautiful natural surroundings stirred the creative juices and also led me to move to New Mexico less than a year later (whether the surroundings are still fueling meaningful creative output is open to debate).

This spring, BIO board member Kitty Kelley passed on some information about a center in Virginia that offers residencies to artists. That tidbit, along with my reflections on my experiences, led to this month's article on residencies and retreats open to nonfiction writers. I also solicited information from other members on retreats they knew about or had attended. The responses I received are interspersed in the feature article. The list is far from exhaustive, but perhaps it will spur other members on to look for retreats or residencies that will help them do research or give them time to work on their latest biography.

Also in this issue, we have a tribute to James Atlas from Anne C. Heller. As you'll see, Jim was an integral part of BIO for many years, and he will be sorely missed.

Yours,

Michael Burgan

They take place from March through November and last from one to three months. Residents receive lodging, travel expenses, and a grant; the amount of the grant is based on the length of the stay. For fellowships during the period beginning on March 1 and ending on June 30, 2020, applications are due by October 15, 2019. For fellowships during the period beginning on July 1, 2020, and ending on November 30, 2020, applications are due by February 15, 2020.

The Camargo Foundation Core Program , located in Cassis, France, annually chooses 18 individuals or teams for residencies. Applicants fall into three categories: Scholars, who hold or are working toward a Ph.D.; Thinkers, who are professionals in creative and cultural fields; and Artists. Residencies last from six to 11 weeks in either the fall or spring. Residents receive a weekly stipend, as well as transportation costs to Cassis.

The Writers ' Colony at Dairy Hollow , in Eureka Spring, Arkansas, offers dates all year long for its residencies. The cost is $85 per night, with meals provided. Writers and other artists can stay from one week to three months. For 2021, nonfiction writers can apply for a fellowship if they are working on a project that focuses on how they or their subject have managed, and continue to manage, a mental illness.

The Djerassi Resident Artists Program , in Woodside, California, gives artists four- and five-week residencies during one of six different sessions. Residents receive lodging, meals, and studio space at no cost. Residents share communal dinners prepared by a chef Monday through Friday, but must prepare other meals with food provided by the program. For 2021 residencies, the application deadline is March 16, 2020.

MacDowell Colony , in Peterborough, New Hampshire, offers residencies of up to two months during three sessions: summer, fall, and winter/spring. Residents are provided with a private room, studio space, and meals. There are no residency fees. Travel grants as well as need-based stipends are available. For the summer 2020 session, applications are accepted October 15, 2019, through January 15, 2020. For the fall 2020 session, applications will be accepted February 15, 2020, through April 15, 2020.

Fellowships and Grants

Winning a fellowship or a grant can give biographers another opportunity to set aside time for research and writing. Many organizations offering these fellowships/grants give writers the freedom to go where and when they want, while others are very specific. BIO member Theresa Kaminski recently benefitted from one of the latter, a research grant given by the Resources Center of the Autry Museum of the American West. As she told *TBC* , the grant helped pay for about half of the total cost for travel to Los Angeles and lodging while she was there. Kaminski added, "It also provided access to a facility that is not yet open to

Bio Biographers International Organization

THE LATEST NEWS IN BIOGRAPHY

Presented by Biographers International Organization

September 2019

New Podcast Brings Biography to a Larger Audience

Veteran Broadcast Journalists • Sonja D. Williams & Lisa Napoli

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 premiere September 2019 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 !

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.

researchers." Without the access the grant gave her, Kaminski estimated that her forthcoming biography of Dale Evens would have been delayed by a couple of years.

For more information about grants and fellowships, go to the FundsforWriters website , which posts opportunities. One that would be of interest to some biographers is the Hodson Trust-John Carter Brown Library Fellowship, offered by the Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience and the John Carter Brown Library. The fellowship supports writers working on projects relating to the literature, history, culture, or art of the Americas before 1830. The deadline to apply for the current fellowship is **March 15, 2020** . More information is available here .

The Colony Barn hosts some of Millay's residents.

The Millay Colony for the Arts is located on the former estate of Edna St. Vincent Millay in Austerlitz, New York. It accepts six or seven residents each month from April through November. Residents are provided with a private room, studio space, and meals. The application deadline for August through November 2020 residencies is March 1, 2020.

For sessions that last from 18 to 25 days, the Ragdale Foundation offers residencies to 13 artists at a time. Located in Lake Forest, Illinois, Ragdale provides a private room and meals. The residency fee is $630 for an 18-day residency and $875 for a 25-day residency. Ragdale offers up to 30 fellowships each year and limited financial aid. Applications for 2021 are due by May 15, 2020.

The Staunton Hill Center for Thought, Creativity and Production, in Aspen, Virginia, offers workshops and symposia, as well as residencies. The latter usually last from two to eight weeks. The center's accommodations include 10 private rooms with baths and several bedrooms with shared bathrooms, along with a salt water pool, tennis court, and game room. (Note: as of press time, the center's website was unavailable. Email info@stauntonhillcenter.org for more information.)

The Thoreau Farm in Concord, Massachusetts, birthplace of Henry David Thoreau, offers a writers retreat in the room in which the writer was born. The room is available for $150 per day, or $75 per day for members of the Thoreau Farm Trust. The space is available Monday through Friday from May through October and seven days a week the rest of the year.

Feeling Stuck?

Whatever state your biography's in—vague idea, proposal, well underway—BIO's experienced biographers can help. BIO offers **a one-hour phone or email mentoring session for US$60** . (The cost of any additional sessions can be worked out with your mentor.) Email Cathy Curtis with a brief statement about the nature of your project and your goals for the one-hour session.

Sold to Publishers

Tom Bower
Untitled biography of Boris Johnson
sold to W. H. Allen
by Jonathan Lloyd at Curtis Brown

Graham Farmelo
Untitled biography of Stephen Hawking
sold to John Murray
by Robert Kirby at United Agents

C. M. Kushins
Beast: John Bonham and the Rise of Led Zeppelin
sold to Da Capo
by William Clark at
William Clark Associates

Lucy Worsley
Untitled biography of Agatha Christie
sold to Hodder & Stoughton
by Felicity Bryan at
Felicity Bryan Associates

Ellen Carol DuBois
For Women's Liberty
(Elizabeth Cady Stanton)
sold to Basic Books
by Sandra Dijkstra at Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency

A Fellowship Just for Biographers

The Mayborn/BIO Biography Hidden Figure Fellowship assists an aspiring author working on a book about a figure who merits a biography through action rather than fame. The fellowship provides for 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 home of James McGrath Morris and Patty Morris, a public reading, and a meeting with an agent. Time will also be set aside for consultation with biographer James McGrath Morris regarding research and writing techniques for a book on a hidden figure. Morris is the author, among other books, of *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. Details for the 2020 fellowship will be posted later in the year at the Mayborn website and in *TBC.*

Ucross is located on a 20,000-acre ranch.

The Ucross Foundation Residency Program , in Sheridan, Wyoming, hosts about 85 artists each year. Residencies can range from two to six weeks, though most are for one month. Lunch and dinners are prepared Monday to Friday by a professional chef, and food is available for residents to prepare their own meals at other times. There is no charge, but residents must provide their own travel to Sheridan.

The Vermont Studio Center , in Johnson, Vermont, offers two- to 12-week residencies year round. Applications are accepted at any time and applicants can apply for financial aid. Most residents receive some aid. The center also offers several fellowships, which cover the full cost of residency. Some also come with stipends. The application process for the fellowships opens six weeks before each of the three deadlines: February 15, June 15, and October 1. The center provides residents with a private room, studio space, and meals. The cost for a two-week residency is $2,200. The monthly cost is $4,250.

The Edith Wharton Writers-in-Residence Program is located at The Mount, Wharton's former home in Lenox, Massachusetts. The program offers two- or three-week residencies to three women during March. They receive a $1,000 stipend, work space at The Mount, and nearby lodging. Residents also take part in at least one panel discussion open to the public. The application process for 2021 will open during the summer of 2020.

Yaddo , in Saratoga Springs, New York, has been welcoming artists for almost 100 years. Its residencies run from two to eight weeks (most average five weeks) and are offered year round. Residents are provided with a private bedroom, work space, and meals. There is no fee for the residency and limited financial aid is available for other costs. The application process for residencies from May 2020 through February 2021 opens on November 1, 2019, and closes on January 5, 2020.

One BIO Member's Yaddo Experience

Carl Sferrazza Anthony
Camera Girl: How Miss Bouvier Used Imagination & Subversion To Invent Jackie Kennedy
sold to Gallery
by David Kuhn and Nate Muscato at Aevitas Creative Management

Kristin Marguerite Doidge
Nora Ephron: A Life
sold to Chicago Review Press
by Betsy Amster at Betsy Amster Literary Enterprises

Alexandra Popof
Ayn Rand: A Biography
sold to Yale University Press
by Don Fehr at Trident Media Group

Molly Ball
Pelosi
sold to Henry Holt
by Howard Yoon at Ross Yoon Agency

Liam Vaughan
Flash Crash
(Navinder Sarao)
sold to Doubleday
by Amelia Atlas at ICM

Catherine McNeur
Sister Scientists
(Margaretta Hare Morris and Elizabeth Carrington Morris)
sold to Basic Books
by Wendy Strothman at The Strothman Agency

Edward Shawcross
The Last Emperor of Mexico
(Maximilian)
Sold to Basic Books and Faber & Faber
by Patrick Walsh at PEW Literary

Brenda Jones and Krishan Trotman
Queens of the Resistance
(four separate books on Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Nancy Pelosi, and Maxine Waters)
sold to Plume
by Johanna Castillo at Writers House

Vaneesa Cook
The Politics of Sound: The Life and Times of Joan Baez
sold to Beacon Press
by Andy Ross at Andy Ross Agency

Ken Ellingwood
First to Fall: Elijah Lovejoy's Fight for a Free Press in the Age of Slavery
sold to Pegasus

Yaddo Revisited: Its Joys and Perils

by Mahala Yates Stripling

This mansion replaced the original home on the grounds, which burned in1891.

Photo by Mahala Yates Stripling

On my third try, I received a residency at Yaddo (rhymes with "shadow") in the spring of 2009. The train from Penn Station took me to Saratoga Springs, New York, where I enjoyed a memorable two weeks on this 400-acre wooded estate. I was there on both a personal and scholarly mission as writer and researcher to understand the experiences of my biography subject, Richard Selzer, who had been there 10 times. He first went in 1977 as an ecstatically healthy Yale surgeon-writer at the beginning of the literature and medicine movement. He last went in 1992 to seek its restorative powers after contracting Legionnaire's disease, which two years earlier had resulted in a near-fatal 23-day coma. What we had in common was Yaddo's promise of a nurturing environment for artists of all kinds.

Founded in 1900 as an artist's community, by Spencer and Katrina Trask who had no surviving children, Yaddo consists of an English-style mansion with a cupola and several outer buildings. I slept in an antique brass bed in a suite called "Spencer's den" on the second floor of the expansive main house. Overhead was inspirational artwork and a black iron chandelier. A large desk next to a tall oscillating fan was an ideal workstation for a writer; natural light streamed in through the wall of windows. Rumor had it that the back staircase was a means of egress for the lord of the manor to see his mistress at night. I was given a bat net and cautioned to sleep with my head under the covers. I kept the light on.

Every morning, I joined 30 other artists—writers, painters, musicians—for breakfast and conversation that included juicy gossip and helpful shoptalk. Thankfully, no one in this particular group was jockeying for fame. The attentive staff served my special-request breakfast plate of poached eggs and toast decorated with a violet and a mandarin orange slice. For those who found conversation a distraction rather than a stimulant, there was a "silent" table.

The rest of the day, the residents, who took their box lunches with them, were free to create in solitude. But one scofflaw, a young London barrister turned fiction writer, bounded down the grand staircase from his third-floor room every midday and banged out the same two dozen notes of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" on the grand piano in the music room. He surely could have found other ways to relax, rather than breaking the rules.

The peculiarities of one short story writer from Yale included bringing her own rug and working on papers spread out in rows on her floor. Another artist's project was interweaving fabric into a massive piece that required an 8-foot step ladder, which she gradually lowered. A 70ish sculptor enlisted several sinewy young men to pose as upper body models for her work.

In the evening, we convened for cocktails on the veranda with lively exchanges between people from all over the world. Following a leisurely dinner, we told stories and played games. Some found romance; others took a two-mile walk around the area, wearing high socks over pants legs to guard from ticks. One

by Todd Shuster and Justin Brouckaert at Aevitas Creative Management

Manjit Kumar
Fellowship of Rivals
(Isaac Newton, Robert Hooke, Gottfried von Leibniz, Christopher Wren, Edmond Halley, and other members of London's Royal Society)
sold to Dutton and Bloomsbury UK
by P. J. Mark and Will Francis at Janklow & Nesbit

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 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.

special evening at twilight, a band of 20 walked down the misty road en masse, passed a mossy pond, and then climbed up a hill to the stone tower chapel. I read from my work and others performed skits or played instruments.

While Yaddo is private property, curious intruders who knew its reputation as the retreat of Truman Capote, James Baldwin, and Flannery O'Connor parked below the rose garden hoping to spot famous contemporary artists. I noticed how the groundskeeper warned them off by pointing out deer droppings, suggesting the presence of tick-borne diseases.

In this invigorating community—dubbed by Selzer "the Yaddish"—everyone exercised a particular craft . I spent the first part of the day at my desk entering the research I had just gotten from the Selzer Archive into my computer and creating an outline for the second part of my biography. In the afternoon, I photographed relevant scenes, walking the distance from Pine Garde, a woodsman's cottage at one end of the estate, to Hillside, a studio set in a grove of black locust trees. Late one night in 1980, Selzer sprinted down this moonlit path, wearing only pajama bottoms, to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the Pulitzer Prize-winner John Cheever, saving his life. [Read more about the episode in an excerpt from Stripling's biography of Selzer .]

Yaddo gave me both structure and time, and I learned that with this freedom to create in a supportive environment I could look critically at my work. Ten years later, I have a nearly complete manuscript of *Doctor of Arts: The Life of Richard Selzer, Who Transformed the Literature of Medicine* , and I am moving on to the next step of seeking publication.

Postscript: In 2019, with a $7.6 million investment, renovations to the mansion were completed. It included sealing the exterior envelope with 15 tons of mortar and adding a new roof. There are no more bats. It's less frightening now, assuring the comfort of artists for another century, but I'm glad I was there to experience the Edgar Allan Poe (*The Fall of the House of Usher*) mystique.

Mahala Yates Stripling, who earned her Ph.D. from Texas Christian University in 1997, has worked on the Selzer biography for 25 years. She remains excited about what she has to say as she completes the manuscript. You can visit her website here .

BIO Member Offers Two-Week Residencies in England

Susan Ronald and her husband, D. A. B. Ronald (also a biographer), are offering up to four two-week residences during July and August 2020, at their home in Devon, England, for what Susan called "a select group of serious biographers."

The home is set on five acres. Residents will stay in private rooms located in a separate coach house built in 1892 and refurbished in 2016. The rooms are equipped with desks, internet service, private bathrooms, TV, a mini-fridge, and tea/coffee-making supplies. An additional double bedroom (with private bathroom) is available in the main house. There would be up to three additional bedrooms available at a friend's holiday rental home, about 400 steps from the Ronalds' property, also recently renovated. Significant others of the biographers attending are welcome so long as they do not impede the progress of those attending the residence.

Susan noted, "We aim to tailor the residency for each of the biographers, and only those who are working on a current project will be accepted. Biographers would need to apply to us in writing explaining their needs and expectations. A maximum of seven biographers can be accepted at once in single occupancy, subject to availability."

The residency would include group:

Biographer's Diary

By Cathy Curtis

Whether to Boldly Go Where Others Have Given Up

Several years ago, having discovered the comfortable accommodations of the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts in New York, I considered writing a biography of the singer and actress Judy Holliday (1921–1965), whose small archive is housed there.

In her heyday, she was known for her performances in the Broadway musical and film *Bells Are Ringing* (1956, 1960) and her Academy and Golden Globe awards for best actress in the film *Born Yesterday* (1950). Earlier, her stint with a nightclub act called The Revuers drew loyal audiences from the downtown art and music world.

The creaky plots of *Bells Are Ringing* and *Born Yesterday* were saved by Holliday's personal charm, but her career faltered after that. She tried to make a go of a singing career, but her voice was small and unremarkable.

Well, perhaps this would be the story of an actress who had her moment of glory and never quite found her footing afterward?

But despite Holliday's struggles (overbearing mother, romantic problems, cancer) in her all-too-

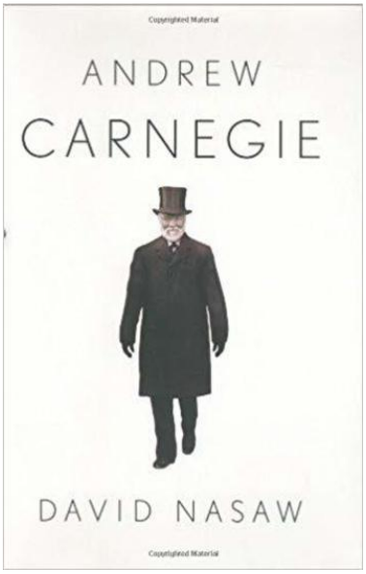
- breakfast
- a light lunch
- tea/coffee breaks (x two)
- dinner (with two glasses of wine)

(Residents who want to eat out in the village or further afield are free to do so, but at their own expense.)

- private sessions of one hour with one of us each day
- group sessions over meals

Those who simply wish for a very quiet space, where their meals and tea/coffee breaks can be thrust under their door, are also welcome.
The two-week course inclusive of the above will cost $3,300 per person. Significant others staying in the same bedroom will cost an additional $200 to cover the cost of food and beverage. This does not include airfare or transfers or the train to Tiverton Parkway in Devon (two hours from London's Paddington Station). The Ronalds will arrange pick up for the biographers at the train station. The application deadline is **January 31, 2020** , and the Ronalds plan to notify applicants within 30 days. Applicants should send an email to Susan Ronald in which they explain what they would like to get from the residency and provide a writing CV/résumé.

Lives and Times: Biography in Context



David Nasaw's *Andrew Carnegie* won the New-York Historical Society's American History Book Prize.

by Jane Lincoln Taylor

On September 25, David Nasaw gave the 12th annual Leon Levy Lecture on Biography at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Nasaw, twice a Pulitzer Prize finalist, just retired as the Arthur N. Schlesinger Professor of History at the university and has mentored dozens of biographers.
His talk, "My Three Moguls," began with reflections on the biographer's art and craft. Nasaw then discussed his studies of wealthy, powerful men who were shaped by, and shaped, the times they lived in: *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* , *Andrew Carnegie* , and *The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Turbulent Times of Joseph P. Kennedy* .
"I am here to proclaim that biography as scholarly craft and literary art is stronger than ever," he began (giving, in passing, a salute to BIO). He believes the field is in great shape, stating that even "long and multivolume biographies are flourishing."
Life stories can strike fear in the hearts of potential subjects, he said. J. M. Barrie put a curse on his future biographers, and George Eliot called biography "a disease." Nasaw noted, "Subjects of biography have interests that are not the same as those of their biographers. That's why I write about dead people," he added

brief personal and professional lives, I couldn't find the "through-line"—to borrow a theatrical term—that would make the book come alive. Based on the meager contents of her archive, she appeared to lack the sort of psychological depth that makes a subject interesting to me.
Knowing that another writer who attempted a biography of Holliday had given up helped me decide to look elsewhere for a new subject.
Recently, someone I was mentoring wrote to me to say that she had decided to abandon the project she had been wrestling with for several years. The subject was a man who achieved significant humanitarian goals but who also exhibited a shocking lack of decency in a certain political alliance.
I was trying to help my "mentee" think about how to understand this guy's motivations, how to find the key to his two-faced approach to life. But even though she had already invested a great deal of time and money in the project, it just seemed impossible to pursue further. What helped her make this decision was the knowledge that several other would-be biographers had tried and failed to come to terms with him.
So what should *you* do if you discover that you would not be the first one to walk away from a subject who is giving you a hard time? Of course, there is the serious possibility that you are giving up too soon, without spending enough time trying to find a viable approach.
But it may be that you simply are not the right person for the job, unable to match your skills to this kind of problem. Perhaps biography is not the ideal genre for your subject, whose achievements might be better dealt with in a book that takes a larger with a smile.
Nasaw called biography "the perfect vehicle for writing history. We live in a river of time, and the only way to know where we are on the river is to know where we've come from. We tell stories about our journeys that define us, create us, connect us, and make us human." Biographies are works of historical imagination, he said. In constructing them we rely on evidence, but "the evidence does not speak for itself—we have to force it to speak to us. We are bound by our evidence—and compelled to write beyond it."

Context Is Key

"You can't write a life," Nasaw said, "without writing a 'Life and Times.'" Exploring his subjects' larger worlds was essential to Nasaw's portraits of, as he called them, "three rich, powerful white guys"—all game-changers and disruptors. "Why in Clio's name did I end up writing white-man-mogul biographies?" he added. Intrigued by presidential candidate Ross Perot's surprisingly high support, Nasaw wanted to explore how capital is deployed to buy power. Perot's story raised questions about media, money, culture, and politics, and Nasaw saw parallels with another politically inclined businessman: publisher William Randolph Hearst.
Hearst's newspapers—and later his real estate holdings, film companies, magazines, radio stations, and news services—were wildly successful. A two-time congressman, he used his empire to help him "find (or invent) more dirt on enemies than they had on him," Nasaw said. Over time Hearst grew more conservative; once a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt, he became an enemy, in part because FDR advocated raising taxes on millionaires. But Hearst's readers were Roosevelt fans, and his change of heart alienated them (and advertisers), as did his isolationist stance and refusal to criticize Hitler.
Another of Nasaw's subjects, who like Hearst was a successful businessman and Harvard graduate, founded a political dynasty. Joseph Kennedy, unwelcome in banking as an Irish Catholic, turned to the movies. Taking over studio after studio, he was paid largely in stock options and, Nasaw discovered, made a fortune through market manipulation.
American bigotry precluded a political career for him, but not for his children. Kennedy supported FDR, who named him chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. "Outlawing the tricks of the trade he had used to make his own fortune," Nasaw said, Kennedy used the position to protect capitalism. Then, "having cleaned up Wall Street," he moved his money into real estate. As ambassador to Great Britain, he preached appeasement of Hitler. Losing his reputation, he retreated from public life, focusing on helping his son Jack become president.

Would-Be World-Changers

Nasaw's third mogul was Andrew Carnegie, who made millions in steel and then gave them away, founding libraries and supporting education, research, and world peace. His generosity, Nasaw pointed out, had complicated underpinnings. To keep profits high, Carnegie kept labor costs low. His employees worked 12 hours a day, six and a half days a week, for minimal wages and in terrible conditions. (After his success in Pittsburgh, he moved to New York, avoiding the air his factories had befouled.) He reinvented himself as a public intellectual and peace activist, but ultimately was broken by his failure to use his resources to stop war.
"My three moguls converted economic power into political and cultural power. But the changes they wrought were not the changes they sought," Nasaw concluded. "None of them could get what he wanted. Their attempts and failures to change the world shine a bright light on their times—and ours."

Jane Lincoln Taylor is a freelance editor and writer with a particular interest in biography.

view of the historical moment in which he or she operated. In any case, with a world full of people to write about, it makes sense not to linger too long with a biographical subject who stubbornly remains an enigma.

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Shorts

Janice P. Nimura to Give Helly Lecture

Janice P. Nimura received a Public Scholar Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of her book on Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell .

The fall 2019 Dorothy O. Helly Works in Progress Lecture, sponsored by the Women Writing Women's Lives Seminar, will be given by Janice P. Nimura, author of the highly regarded *Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back* . Nimura will discuss *Sister Doctors: Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell* , her forthcoming (W. W. Norton, 2021) biography of America's first woman doctor and her lesser-known sister Emily. Describing *Sister Doctors* as an effort, in part, to "rescue Elizabeth from the sanitized hagiography of the sixth-grade biography shelf," Nimura plans to delve into such matters as the challenge of finding a new story to tell, searching for the "through-line" amid mountains of archival material, and bringing in such important background topics as 19th-century medicine, religion, women's rights, and the Civil War, without sacrificing narrative momentum. Free and open to the public, the lecture takes place on Monday, October 21, from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., in Room 9204/9205 at the CUNY Graduate Center. The center is located at 365 Fifth Avenue at 34th Street, New York, NY. Go here for more information.

Eve Kahn has been a regular contributor to *The New York Times* and other major publications.

Photo by Katherine Lanza

Member Interview

Six Questions with Eve Kahn

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

My first book, *Forever Seeing New Beauties: The Forgotten Impressionist Mary Rogers Williams, 1857–1907* , is just out from Wesleyan University Press. I'm lecturing October 6, at the Portland, Connecticut, Historical Society and on October 27, at the Boston International Fine Art Show. Mary was a baker's daughter from Connecticut who taught art at Smith College but loved best being on the road in Europe. She hiked, biked, and took trains from the Arctic Circle in Norway to Paestum south of Naples, sketching all the way and writing home gorgeously about her experiences. My book is based on thousands of pages of her letters, plus hundreds of drawings and luminous paintings and pastels, that a friend

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To contact any of our correspondents, click here .

tucked away in storage.

What person would you most like to write about?
My next book has got to be about the writer Zoe Anderson Norris (1860–1914), a Kentucky native who reinvented herself in middle age as a New York-based novelist, short-story writer, investigative journalist, and magazine publisher. She lived on the Lower East Side and published a semi-monthly magazine, *The East Side* , documenting the sufferings of poor immigrants. And she had fun, too, running riotous weekly dinners for a group of literati that she organized, the Ragged Edge Klub. She was known as the Queen of Bohemia.

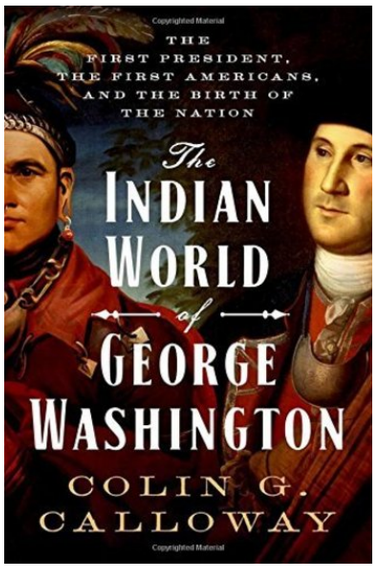
What have been your most satisfying moments as a biographer?
Mary Rogers Williams died suddenly, with no survivors really able to promote her legacy. In 2012, in a funny way that I explain in my book's introduction, I stumbled upon her archive that no one had looked at in a century. Then I cold-called any descendants I could find of anyone who knew her. Sometimes they had something great—granddaughters of one of her neighbors, for instance, have six of her pastels on their walls. Mary was modest and self-deprecating—she called people who liked her paintings and writings "sad flatterers," and I think that's what she'd consider me for bringing her into the limelight, however much she deserves it! And in the seven years I've worked on her story, numerous other historians have been working on women artists of approximately Mary's time—Ida O'Keeffe, Hilma af Klint, Agnes Pelton, Jane Peterson, they've had acclaimed shows and books. I somehow ended up part of a trend!

What have been your most frustrating moments?
Advice to budding art historians: don't ever research an artist who signed their works "M. R. Williams" or "M. R." anything! When I web-surf in search of her paintings, the phrase "signed M. R. Williams" brings up every letter ever digitized that was signed by a "Mr. Williams"!

One research/marketing/attitudinal tip to share?
Every time anyone shows any interest in your project, and any time anyone does you a research favor, record their name somewhere, even if it's just on a scrap of paper in a folder. I did that for Mary even before I had my book contract, just to be sure to alert people to any research developments. I hadn't realized that years later I would be making my life easier; I'd created the raw material for my book's acknowledgements section, plus the list of journalists and other prominent people for the publisher to send review copies, and the list of potential lecture venues. I'm filing away names now for anyone interested in Zoe.

What genre, besides biography, do you read for pleasure and who are some of your favorite writers?
For me, work and pleasure, it's all the same! I review books about architecture and design for *The New York Times* ' Design section, it's a dream freelance gig. I recently got to rave about Sarah Broom's haunting memoir centered on her New Orleans childhood home, *The Yellow House* (Grove Press), and the historian Brian Coleman's spectacular coffee-table book, *Zuber: Two Centuries of Panoramic Wallpaper* (Gibbs Smith), about the French manufacturer Zuber's 18th-century wallcoverings that depict ruins, battlefields, jungle outposts. I like books that transport me—writing about Mary immersed me in a baker's daughter's view of 19th-century Europe and the art world, and now Zoe's bringing me to see the heartbreak of New York's early 1900s slums.

Prizes



The Indian World of George Washington was also a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award for nonfiction.

George Washington Book Prize
Colin Calloway has won the $50,000 George Washington Book Prize for *The Indian World of George Washington* : *The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of the Nation* . The prize, which recognizes books on early American history, is sponsored by Washington College, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and George Washington's Mount Vernon.

Andrew Carnegie Medals
Three biographies made the nonfiction longlist for the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence:

- *American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy and the Great Space Race* by Douglas Brinkley
- *Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee* by Casey Cep
- *Becoming Dr. Seuss: Theodor Geisel and the Making of an American Imagination* by Brian Jay Jones

You can see all the books on the fiction and nonfiction longlists here . Six finalists will be announced on November 4, and the two winners will be announced during the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting & Exhibits in Philadelphia, on January 26.

***Financial Times* Business Book of the Year**
The shortlist for the *Financial Times* and McKinsey & Company Business Book of the Year award includes two biographies: *Kochland: The Secret History of Koch Industries and Corporate Power in America* by Christopher Leonard and *The Man Who Solved the Market: How Jim Simons Launched the Quant Revolution* by Gregory Zuckerman. The winner of the prize receives £30,000 ($36,902) and the runners up receive £10,000 ($12,301). You can see the complete shortlist here .

Cundill History Prize
Two biographies made the shortlist for the Cundill History Prize: The Plutarch Award-winning *Frederick Douglass: American Prophet* by David W. Blight and *American Eden: David Hosack, Botany, and Medicine in the Garden of the Early Republic* by Victoria Johnson. The prize, administered by McGill University in Montreal, is worth $75,000. Three finalists will be named on October 16, 2019, and the winner will be announced on November 14. You can see the entire shortlist here .

Obituaries

Jean Edward Smith
Jean Edward Smith, a biographer of U.S. presidents and other leading figures in the country's history, died September 1, in Huntington, West Virginia. He was 86.

Born in Washington, D.C., Smith graduated from Princeton University, then spent seven years in the army before earning a Ph.D. in public law and government from Columbia University. He began his academic career at Dartmouth before moving on to the University of Toronto, where he taught for 35 years. His last teaching stint was at Marshall University. Smith published his first biography, on General Lucius Clay, in 1990. His subsequent subjects included Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John Marshall. His 2008 biography of Franklin Roosevelt won the Francis Parkman Prize for history. Smith's last book, *The Liberation of Paris: How Eisenhower, de Gaulle, and von Choltitz Saved the City of Light* , was published in 2019.

Elaine Feinstein

Elaine Feinstein, a poet, novelist, and playwright who also wrote several biographies of poets, died September 24. She was 88.

Born in Bootle, Lancashire, England, Feinstein began writing poetry at an early age. She graduated from Cambridge University and read for the bar in London before turning to a literary career. She worked as an editor and lecturer before publishing her first poetry collection in 1966. In her work, Feinstein often drew on her Russian-Jewish heritage. She translated the works of several Russian poets, and the subjects of her biographies included Alexander Pushkin, Marina Tsvetayeva, and Anna Akhmatova. Feinstein was a member of the Royal Society of Literature.

Writer's Life

Publishers Adding Morality Clauses in Some Contracts

With authors among the people facing accusations of sexual or other misconduct, several major publishing houses are putting morality clauses in the contracts offered to writers, Carrie V. Mullins reported for the website Electric Lit . The clauses give publishers an easy way to terminate agreements with authors without a court battle. Mullins noted the "vague language" found in the clauses: "For example, if an author's conduct results in 'sustained, widespread public condemnation . . . that materially diminishes the sales potential of the work' (in the words of one publisher's contract) or 'ridicule, contempt, scorn, hatred, or censure by the general public or which is likely to materially diminish the sales of the Work' (in the words of another), a publisher can cancel a book and, in some cases, demand the return of any advance payments." Earlier in 2019, the Authors Guild came out against the morality clauses, saying in part, "The ambiguity and subjectivity of these clauses make them ripe for abuse. Publishers should not have the sole discretion to decide whether accusations are true. And, if the accusations are not true, they should not subject the author to termination."

I have no taste for either poverty or honest labor, so writing is the only recourse left for me.
—Hunter S. Thompson

Writers Should Focus on Book Sales to Libraries

Are writers getting all the information they need about sales of their books to libraries? Steven Potash, CEO of OverDrive, a distributor of ebooks and other digital media, says maybe not. In an op-ed for the website Perspective on Reading

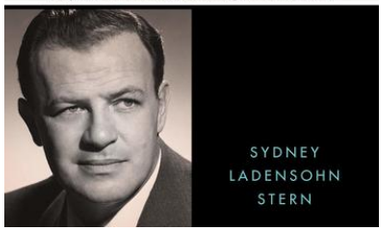
, Potash wrote, “Every author and agent should be receiving information from the sale of their ebooks and audiobooks to public libraries, schools, universities and other institutions.” He said that publishers can access very detailed information about ebook and audiobook sales, but authors and their agents may need to ask for it, to make sure they are getting their share of those royalties. Potash said writers should ask two questions: “Does my royalty report include itemization of units sold and revenue earned from library, school, and institutional sales?” and “At what price and under which access models are my titles available for libraries and schools to purchase?” Potash further explained, “Many authors and agents may not realize that digital editions of books are sold and licensed differently than physical editions. With a physical copy, there is just one copy that is checked out over and over again. Digital editions allow for multiple ways to sell access for lending. These lending models affect what libraries pay, which, in turn, ultimately affects an author’s revenue and royalties.”

A word after a word after a word is power.
—Margaret Atwood

Libraries Need Easier Access to Ebooks
On a related topic, former American Library Association (ALA) president Sari Feldman wrote in an op-ed for *Publishers Weekly* that some publishers are limiting libraries’ access to ebooks. They are delaying distributing books in digital format to the libraries or limiting how many digital copies libraries can buy, in an effort to boost their ebook sales. Feldman noted that libraries were already paying higher prices for digital books than consumers, which limits how many copies they can afford. The publishers’ new embargoes, she wrote, will only extend patrons’ wait times for the most popular new titles. Adding to the problem, Amazon is trying to negotiate exclusive deals for books distributed through Audible, its audiobook arm. The deals would prevent libraries from getting access to those books. “We have reached a tipping point,” Feldman wrote. “Access to digital content in libraries is more than a financial issue; it is an equity issue. Ask yourself this: if libraries are effectively shut out of performing their traditional roles in the digital realm, do you trust Amazon to be the public’s open and fair discovery engine?” Right now, Macmillan is the only Big Five publisher with an embargo. The ALA has an online petition protesting the embargo, which is scheduled to take effect on November 1, 2019.

There are hours and hours when a writer’s time isn’t worth the paper he is not writing anything on.
— E.B. White

Member News and Notes



October’s harvest of new books includes six by BIO members: *The Brothers Mankiewicz: Hope, Heartbreak, and Hollywood Classics* by **Sydney Ladensohn Stern** ; *Forever Seeing New Beauties: The Forgotten Impressionist Mary Rogers Williams, 1857–1907* by **Eve Kahn** ; *Jerome Robbins, by Himself: Selections from His Letters, Journals, Drawings, Photographs, and an Unfinished Memoir* by Jerome Robbins, edited and with commentary by **Amanda**

Sydney Ladensohn Stern's previous books include a biography of Gloria Steinem.

Vaill ; *Boss of the Grips: The Life of James H. Williams and the Red Caps of Grand Central Terminal* by **Eric K. Washington** (which received a starred review from *Kirkus*); *The Lost Brothers: A Family's Decades-Long Search* by **Jack El-Hai** ; and *Boy on the Bridge: The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success* by **Andrew Marble** . Andrew recently reviewed *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead* by Jim Mattis and Bing West for the Washington Independent Review of Books. In paperback, we missed the September publication of *Overtaken by the Night: One Russian's Journey through Peace, War, Revolution, and Terror* by **Richard G. Robbins Jr.** Out this month is *Arthur Vandenberg: The Man in the Middle of the American Century* by **Hendrik Meijer** . In 2018, **John A. Farrell** conducted an interview with Hank about the book, which we were not able to run at that time; you can read it here . **Bob Batchelor** discussed his *The Bourbon King: The Life and Crimes of George Remus, Prohibition's Evil Genius* with Deborah Kalb for her Books Q&A blog and was interviewed on WFLO Radio , out of Farmville, Virginia. Bob also discussed the book at Cincinnati's Taft Museum's "Lunch & Learn" series, appeared on that city's WKRC-TV and WCPO-TV, and spoke and signed books at the Kentucky's Edge Bourbon Conference and Festival. **Susan Ronald** made several appearances recently to discuss her *Condé Nast: A Man and His Empire – A Biography* . The stops included the Harry Bennett Branch of The Ferguson Library in Stamford, Connecticut, the New England Historical Genealogical Society in Boston, and the Brooklyn Book Festival. Susan also appeared on Book TV . Like Susan, **Brian Jay Jones** also spoke at the New England Historical Genealogical Society, discussing his *Becoming Dr. Seuss: Theodor Geisel and the Making of an American Imagination* . Before the event, *The Boston Globe* featured Brian and the book. The Massachusetts Book Awards, sponsored by the Massachusetts Center for the Book, listed **Ray Shepard** 's *Now or Never!: 54th Massachusetts Infantry's War to End Slavery* as a "Must Read." Joining Ray on the list was **Megan Marshall** , for her *Elizabeth Bishop: A Miracle for Breakfast* , and **Julie Dobrow** , for her *After Emily: Two Remarkable Women and the Legacy of America's Greatest Poet* . The awards recognize significant works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's/young adult literature published by Massachusetts residents or about subjects relating to the state. In September, **Patricia Bell-Scott** , who appears in the new documentary *Breaking the Silence* , about the southern writer and human rights activist Lillian Smith, participated in a post-screening panel discussion about the film at the University of Georgia Hargrett Library. **Theresa Kaminski** completed a three-week research fellowship at the Resources Center of the Autry Museum of the American West. Theresa told us, "I am the first author to access its Roy Rogers-Dale Evans collection for my forthcoming biography for Globe Pequot Press, currently titled *Dale Evans: Queen of the West* . " Theresa a lso just submitted to the same press her manuscript currently titled *Dr. Mary Walker's Civil War* , about the only female recipient of the Medal of Honor. The Children's Book Guild of Washington, D.C., has named **Catherine Reef** the Nonfiction Award Winner for 2020. In announcing the award, the Book Guild said that Catherine's books "offer an in-depth study of legendary figures who represent different eras and fields of endeavor such as Queen Victoria, Frida and Diego, and Sigmund Freud" and noted that 21 of her books have

received significant distinctions. **Karen Christensen** shared some articles she recently wrote about "hidden figures," one that just appeared in *The Author* , and a review for the journal *Logos* of "Thanks for Typing: Wives, Daughters, Mothers, and Other Women Behind Famous Men," a conference held in March at the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing. Karen was interviewed on the Beyond the Book podcast about the paper she presented at the conference, "Jumped-Up Typists," about two secretaries who became two literary wives: Sophia Mumford, wife of the American historian and philosopher Lewis Mumford, and Valerie Eliot, second wife of T.S. Eliot. **Heath Lee** spoke about her *The League of Wives: The Untold Story of the Women Who Took on the U.S. Government to Bring Their Husbands Home* on POW/MIA Day at the Air Force Museum in Palm Springs, California, and at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. **Marc Leepson** discussed his *Desperate Engagement: How a Little-Known Civil War Battle Saved Washington, D.C.* at the Civil War Conference sponsored by the Mosby Heritage Area Association, held at the Middleburg, Virginia, Community Center. Marc also reviewed Tim O'Brien's first book in 17 years, *Dad's Maybe Book* , for the current issue of *The VVA Veteran* magazine. You can read the review here . Congratulations to **Brian Jay Jones** and **Douglas Brinkley** for making the nonfiction longlist for Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence—Brian for his *Becoming Dr. Seuss: Theodor Geisel and the Making of an American Imagination* and Douglas for his *American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy and the Great Space Race* .

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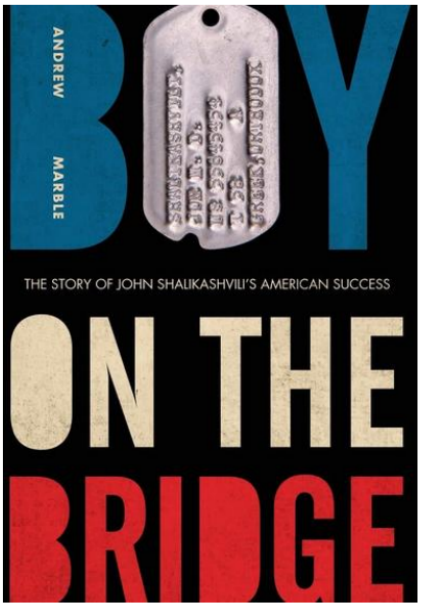

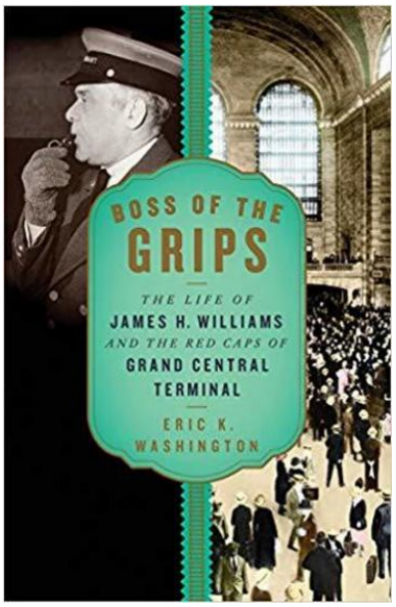

Boy on the Bridge: The Story of John Shalikashvili's American Success
by Andrew Marble
(University Press of Kentucky)

The Brothers Mankiewicz: Hope, Heartbreak, and Hollywood Classics
by Sydney Ladensohn Stern
(University Press of Mississippi)

Forever Seeing New Beauties: The Forgotten Impressionist Mary Rogers Williams, 1857–1907
by Eve Kahn
(Wesleyan University Press)

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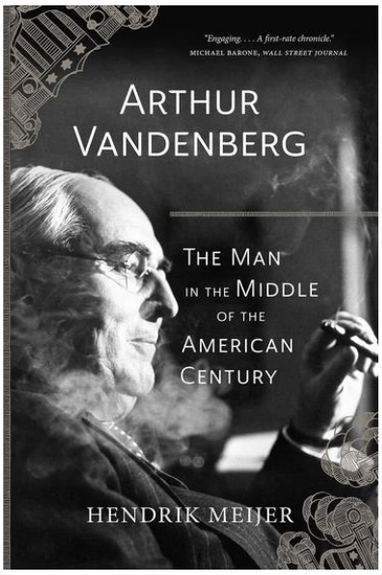

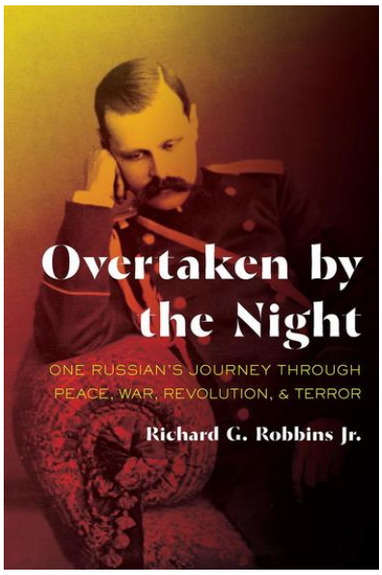

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Amanuensis

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).

[Marion] Turner's book is the first full biography of Chaucer for a generation, and the first written by a woman. "There's been a long tradition of almost toxically masculine biographies. I would not say that is true of all biographies, and not of more recent ones, but there are lots which have really focused on a chummy masculine response to Chaucer," the academic said.
. . . . But Turner says she has taken a different approach, for example by focusing more on Chaucer's daughter: "I don't know if that's because I'm a woman or because I'm writing in the 21st century." Her biography digs into the details of the London nunnery where Chaucer's daughter Elizabeth lived, St Helen's Bishopsgate, finding that far from being a quiet and refined space, an inspection urged that nuns should refrain from "daunsyng and revelyng" except at Christmas and other "honest tymys of recreacyone," and complained that "there is moche coming in and owte unlefulle tymys." The nunnery was a five-minute walk from where Chaucer was living at the time, and "it would be extraordinary if he didn't visit her there," said Turner.

"One striking thing about the women Chaucer knew was that they were very independent. His wife always had a job, always had her own salary . . . she seems to have lived independently from him for quite a lot of their married life," she said. "People can write sympathetically about women and it doesn't mean they treat them sympathetically in life, but in Chaucer's poetry he is notably extremely sympathetic to women." [more]

Alison Flood, "The Teenage Dandy's Tale: How a Female Biographer Saw Chaucer Afresh"

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