

Whatcom Writers & Publishers

June 2012

www.whatcomwritersandpublishers.org



Meeting Place: Windows on the Bay

2625 S. Harbor Loop (Bellingham Yacht Club Building), Squalicum Harbor
Wednesday, June 20 ~ 6:00 p.m.

This is a dinner meeting and reservations are required

RSVP and Pay by Credit Card thru PayPal

(see www.whatcomwritersandpublishers.org for instructions—move to bottom of page—click on Reservation box)
For more info, contact Carolyn at: 714-8901 or cdleeper@hotmail.com

Dinner: \$16.00 (Includes tax & gratuity)

Buffet Menu: Wraps: Asian Chicken, Steak & Gorgonzola or South Western Vegetarian
Mixed Green Salad, Fresh Cut Seasonal Fruit
Homestyle Baked Beans Seasoned with Bacon, Pasta Primavera
Assorted Homestyle Cookies

Speaker: Lyssa Browne

“The How and Why of Audiobook Production”

Lyssa will discuss the background of audiobooks, the current state of the industry, the basics of production, and what really goes on in the recording studio. She will share her thoughts on choosing the right narrator, tips on narrating a book, and some ideas about marketing and distribution.

Lyssa Browne is a co-owner of *Cedar House Audio Productions*, a full service spoken word audio production company focusing on audiobooks, podcasts, and video game voice-overs. Lyssa is the executive producer, an occasional narrator, and has directed more than 100 audiobooks. Lyssa has directed and produced 30 audio tours for Rick Steves' *Europe through the Backdoor*. Since their founding in 2007 they have won numerous Audiofile Earphones Awards, won the 2009 Odyssey Award for best young adult Audiobook of the year, and been nominated 5 times for the industry's highest honor: the Audie Award.

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Chuckanut Writers Conference
Whatcom Community College, Bellingham
Friday and Saturday, June 22 & 23
www.chuckanutwritersconference.com

<http://villagebooksblog.typepad.com/village.books.blog>

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Whatcom Writers and Publishers

serves the local writing and literary community in Bellingham, Washington, and the surrounding area. WWP is professional association of writers, freelance professionals, book authors, self-publishers, publishers, editors, proofreaders, book designers, booksellers, web designers, and others, all of whom are dedicated to promoting the written word, whether through fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

Whatcom Writers and Publishers

Fred Su: President

Pam Beason: Membership Chair

Carol Schultz: Treasurer

Kathy Brown: Publicity

Amanda Hagarty: Webmaster

Carolyn Leeper: Newsletter Editor
(submit items to: cdleeper@hotmail.com)

Calendar

June 20 — Lyssa Browne,
Cedar House Audio, on "Audio Books."

September 19 —

October 17 —

November 14 —

December — No Meeting —

2012 Membership Dues! \$25.00

You can pay the dues at the meeting or mail your check to:

Whatcom Writers and Publishers, P.O. Box 2342, Bellingham, WA 98227.

WWP Membership Form:

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website(s): _____

Briefly describe your writing interests and activities: _____

President's Message

WWP has invited many speakers on various aspects of the written book and ebooks. This month, our speaker will speak on one more variation on how publishers can make money: audio books. Lyssa Browne from Cedar House Audio Productions in Seattle will speak on the how and why of audio book production.

Now down to business. A reshuffling of the board will occur after this month's meeting. I will be stepping down as President and Kathy Brown will take over (Kathy has been serving as Publicity Director). Pam Beason will step down as Membership Director but will remain on board as a Member-at-Large to provide feedback and help as needed. Carolyn Leeper, our intrepid Newsletter Editor and go-to person for RSVPs, will take on the additional duties of Membership Director. Carol Schultz, our Treasurer, has agreed to hold that office for another year. Amanda Hagarty is our new Webmaster and has hit the job running, as she has already revamped the WWP website beyond my minimal efforts. We are still seeking someone to fill the Speaker Seeker position. That person will work with the board in lining up speakers for WWP events. If interested, please contact Kathy (kbrown@chantireviews.com).

The health of this organization is maintained by the vibrancy of its board members and the breadth of its general members. It has been an honor to serve as President this past year and I cannot thank my fellow board members enough. Special thanks go to Carolyn Leeper in her capacity as Newsletter Editor and RSVPer. Carol Schultz has one of the more difficult positions as Treasurer, because it entails collecting dues, handling meal payments, and running to the bank and post office. Pam Beason has done a fine job maintaining the membership rolls. Kathy Brown, though she took on the Publicity Director job later in the year, has ensured that the local media is kept informed. It was also Kathy's suggestion to move our venue to Window on the Bay. Also, I'd like to thank Sara Stamey. Though not a board member, she proposed two great speakers this past year, Bill Dietrich and Gary McKinney.

I feel confident that the board will continue to provide WWP members with wonderful speakers on topics of interest in the months and years to come.

Remember, we will take July and August off and will start anew the third Wednesday in September (the 19th).

Come to the June meeting and learn more about audio books and how to transform your written word into the spoken word.

On a sad note, longtime WWP and former board member Ken Morrow recently died. See our eulogies.

Saying Goodbye to Ken Morrow

by Fred Su

"Kenneth A. Morrow, M.D., died on May 25, 2012, at age 83, in Seattle, WA. He had been suffering and was ready to die; he had a good life and a good death."
Written by his widow, Dorothy Morrow.

I first met Ken and Dorothy many years ago, when Whatcom Writers and Publishers was known as Washington Press Association. We used to meet at Lucci's (just down the road from Windows on the Bay). Dorothy would later tell me that I was one of the non-stuck-up members who would actually talk to them. I never got the impression that other members were stuck up, but I could see that "acting professional" may have intimidated some of the newcomers. As the organization metamorphosed from a public relations group to a writing one, Ken and Dorothy matured into professional writers. Ken, especially, seemed to have found a new calling after all those years as an ophthalmologist. His breakout memoir, *A Boyhood in Nelson*, sold thousands of copies and continues to sell well in Nelson, BC. Following that memoir, Ken continued to crank out books (see Kate Weisel's eulogy).

When WWP faltered and membership declined, Ken, Dorothy, and I, as board members, took on the reins to try and stop the decline. One time we had only seven people show up at a meeting, and three of us were board members! Gradually, we stopped the bleeding with a list of good speakers and, perhaps, a gradual rise in interest in writing and publishing from the community. It was during this time that we also changed our name from Whatcom Communications Association to Whatcom Writers and Publishers.

From our professional relationship, Ken and Dorothy became friends with my wife and me. We would go out together for morning coffee, lunch, and dinners and talk about writing, but rarely politics, as we were polar opposites in that respect. Ken had a gentle manner, but he was opinionated (rarely showed to outsiders). Still, he respected people and he would gladly offer advice to neophyte writers, advising them that the road to being a published author, for most people, was through self-publication, of which he was a paragon.

Ken was one of those rare individuals who managed to be successful at two careers, as an ophthalmologist and a writer! People write because they wish to leave something of value behind. Words that will transcend time and death is one way to do so. That is why so many people take up writing. Not too many people can say they were successful at writing. Not many people can say they sold as many books as Ken did. He will be remembered fondly within WWP. Certainly, his writing will be remembered within Whatcom County and the Nelson, BC, community.

Ken, your words have immortalized you.

Saying Goodbye to Ken Morrow

Dorothy Morrow tells us, *Kenneth A. Morrow, M.D., died on May 25, 2012, at age 83, in Seattle, WA. He had been suffering and was ready to die; he had a good life and a good death.*"

Kate Weisel offers this brief eulogy:

Kenneth Morrow will be missed very much. His no-nonsense approach to life, his compassion, and his gentlemanly manner endeared him to many fellow WWP members. Ken and Dorothy were long-time WWP members (and board members), before moving to Seattle late last year to be closer to family as his health declined.

Ken was a prolific self-published author who started writing in his 70s. He wrote six books with the research and editorial assistance of Dorothy J. Morrow, his beloved wife, who also designed the covers. She is the author of "The Gift of Roots, Heartwarming Reunion Stories As Told To An Adoptive Mother."

I worked with Ken on all his books, but he was also a wise and supportive mentor. I will miss him, but will always remember him with fondness and the greatest respect.

Ken's books include:

"A Boyhood in Nelson, Growing up During the Depression." Now in its third edition, the book has enjoyed wide success.

"Leaving Nelson, Beyond Toad Mountain." This book continues the memoir.

"Ladies of Easy Virtue in the West Kootenay, Regional History in a Global Context" offers insight into the history of prostitution in the Kootenays.

"The Doukhobor People, A Tribute to Good Citizens." This is a sympathetic tribute to a hard-working people who, despite the hardships and anguish of their past, are respectful of that spark of goodness in each of us.

"Widower's Guide to a New Life," Kenneth Morrow. This practical little guide will help a widower adjust to their new life.

"Comfortable for Life, Planning & Managing Your Retirement" through work and wise planning.

Stone Soup

Miki Gilliland

Thoughts on Legalities

Newspaper reporters are generally aware of legal concerns. Although many people think of the First Amendment as being absolute, reporters and editors know this simply isn't the case. A reporter may not defame a business person. A business may not falsely advertise. No reporter would write about a defendant as though he were already proven guilty. In general, pornography is still not acceptable.

Plagiarism is still the most worrisome entity for all writers. Those who write non-fiction generally are sued more often than fiction writers. A non-fiction writer is expected to write something new and original based on information that has already been recorded. It's unacceptable to copy verbatim something that someone else has already printed. Any writer who rewords a given premise or fact must give credit to a former source while making his own contribution. A writer is supposed to improve or disagree with someone's opinion, sometimes with new interviews. History is really tricky because main sources of information are all dead and facts have become embellished over time. Generally a history writer tries to go to the source by reading old letters and manuscripts. Some authors avoid unintentional plagiarism by saying things such as "Webster's New World Dictionary defines plagiarism as 'taking ideas or writings from another and passing it off as one's own.;"

What some fiction writers don't know, is that their First Amendment rights are not unlimited either. Nevertheless, there are instances that a fiction writer must watch. Where fiction writers can get into trouble is by defaming someone in an identifiable way, generally because the writer feels wronged. Revenge is never a good motive for much of anything, mostly because real life often has a better plan for the wrongdoer. It must be proven that the character is so like the real person that the character is easily recognizable. Dead people cannot be defamed unless the estate of that person owns commercial rights to the deceased and his image or character. If this is so, there are other laws that can prevent a writer from exploiting the departed.

Disclaimers are just hogwash, caveats that say that there is no resemblance to any person, living or dead. These are not useful in a court of law and are no protection from being sued. Anybody can be sued; doesn't mean the plaintiff will win. In well known author Robin Hemley's book *Turning life Into Fiction*, he tells of an incident where a former beauty pageant winner sued a Penthouse writer when a fictional character appeared in print was characterized as promiscuous. The stereotypical description of the character fit the plaintiff's description. She was awarded \$28 million. A saner judge ruled the escapades were so bizarre that no one could perform them and the award was overturned. The episode didn't stop the author from sweating or spending money defending himself.

*The prudent thing for a writer to do is to bone up
on what's legal to say before he starts writing.
Let the writer take care.*

Book Excerpt

Candace Wellman

Excerpt: *The Peace Weavers: Cross-Cultural Marriages at the Edge of the Salish Sea* By Candace Wellman

Nellie and F.F. Lane (chapter lead anecdote)

Jim Carr was dying. With every labored breath that failed to pump enough oxygen through his fluid-filled lungs, he knew the pneumonia would not be defeated when it reached the crisis point. The fever would not break. The chills would not cease. The coughing would not stop. He was going to die and his too-young Sto:lo wife Nellie and their baby would be alone in the cabin some miles up the Nookack River.

What happened next became family legend.

The dying man told teenaged Nellie to get his horse and hurry to find his long-time friend and gold rush partner, Sheriff Fred Lane.

“Go get my friend. I want to see him before I die. I want to tell him something.”

Lane’s land claim adjoined Carr’s, but the sheriff was often seven miles away in Whatcom, sometimes further. She thought he had taken his canoe to his other cabin in town, so she ran down to where he tethered his horse. Lane was there. Seeing Nellie’s distressed face, Lane asked what was wrong and she gave him Carr’s message.

When Lane arrived at Carr’s cabin, his friend told him: “I’m dying. I want you to take good care of my wife and baby.”

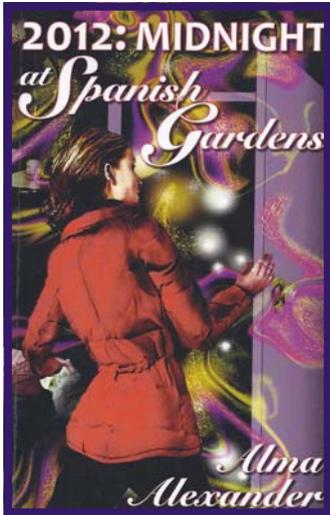
Helene “Nellie” Carr had no family nearby. To return home to her mother at *Math’qui* village near the Fraser River in British Columbia demanded that she find someone to canoe her up the river to *Squahalich* (today’s Lynden), then find a Nooksack guide willing to take her north on the trail into *Sto:lo* country. The trip would take days. It was late winter 1867, and the weather was veering from clear and cold to snow and rain, too early in the year for such an arduous journey with a baby.

The too-young wife and mother soon became a too-young widow. F.F. Lane did not take her home to her family. No one did.

Lane married her instead.

Lucy Lane Handeyside, *Lummi Elders Speak*. p. 71.
John A. Tennant *Farm Journal*, March 1867.

Announcements



Alma Alexander — June Reading

Where: Village Books in Fairhaven

Date: June 12 — **Time:** 7:00 p.m.

Alma Alexander will be presenting her newest novel,
2012: Midnight at Spanish Gardens

The Story opens on the eve of the end of the world, December 20, 2012, when five friends meet in Spanish Gardens, the restaurant where they had celebrated their college graduation 20 years before. Over Irish coffee, they reminisce — and reveal long held and disturbing secrets about their dysfunctional lives.

Each friend in turn is given a curious set of instructions by an enigmatic bartender named Ariel:

“Your life is filled with crossroads and you are free to choose one road or another at any time. Stepping through this door takes away all choices except two — the choice to live a different life, or return to this one.”

All of them pass through the portal and into drastically changed lives. They change occupations and families; one changes gender; a woman Falls in love — with another woman. In the end, four choose to Return to their original lives. One doesn't.

Hope to see many of you there!

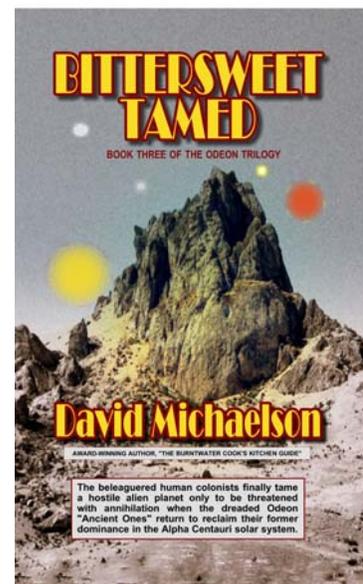
* * * * *

David Michaelson

BITTERSWEET TAMED,

The third book in the SF trilogy is now available through Barnes & Noble, Amazon.com, and Virtualbookworm.com

TRAIL COOK is finished and should be available in June through the same online booksellers.



Announcements

Newly Remodeled Website

The newly remodeled website now has a Members Spotlight Page, a Members Website Directory, and a Members Services listing. The Spotlight Page displays new publications, achievements and awards from the last six months. The Website Directory lists Author Websites or Blogs. The Services Directory displays the business details of literary related services provided by members. We also have events listings. If you would like to take advantage of any of the Members Listings or if you know of any events that may be of interest to WWP members and would like to see them listed on our website,

email AmandaHagarty@gmail.com

* * * * *

Alma Alexander

Alma Alexander has just released a new e-book, *'Out of This World,'* in her **Alexander Triads** series for the Kindle, Nook, and other e-readers.

The Triads are collections of short stories, three to a book.

While Alma mostly writes fantasies, the stories range from love to horror.

This collection, **Alexander Triads 6**, is a collection of science fiction tales, including the end of planet earth as the sun turns into a red dwarf.

The first Triads, *'Once Upon a Fairy Tale'*, is priced at 99 cents. The others are \$2.99 each.

* * * * *

Barbara Wray Wayland

(writing as Barbara Lois Wray) is happy to announce that her novel

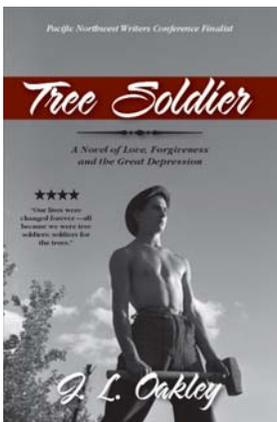
The Dream Maker will soon be available as an audio book and as an ebook.

Read her blog at www.enterprisinghobbit.com

* * * * *

Friends of the Lynden Public Library, 216 Fourth St, Lynden, will soon host our annual Exhibition of Whatcom County Art at the Lynden Library. The Meet the Artist Reception is scheduled for June 13th from 5 to 7 p.m.

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Janet Oakley

will present a talk on Depression era Civilian Conservation Corps on June 16 at noon at Fort Nisqually (Tacoma).

After her talk, she will be signing her award winning novel, **Tree Soldier**.

During the 1930s, the CCCs helped move some historic structures in Dupont to its present site in Discover Park.



Chanticleer Book Reviews

Traditional Book Reviews for Today's Book Publishing

Special Pricing

just for Members of

WhatcomWriters and Publishers

~Published Novels Contest Entries~

~Professional Book Reviews ~

~Manuscript Reviews~

extended!

Take advantage of CBR's Beta Release with special pricing for WWP Members. You must email or call Kathy Brown directly. WWP special is NOT listed on website

WWP CBR Contest Entry Fee: \$ 20 (after May 30, WWP \$35, non-members \$ 40)

WWP Professional Book Review: \$ 95 for 250 - 350 words

WWP Manuscript Editorial Review: \$145 for 350 - 450 words

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## **Chanticleer Book Reviews**

### ***Blue Ribbon Contest 2012***

#### ***Published Novels\*: 2012, 2011, 2010, & 2009***

*\*Novels may be self-published. WWP Special Entry Fee: \$20*

*Official Entry Deadline for Published Novels:*

**June 15, 2012 midnight**

*~ Six Categories ~*

- Mainstream • Romance • Young Adult,*
  - Mystery/Thriller • Contemporary • Historical*
- Professionally judged. Score sheets used.*

FMI: [www.ChantiReviews.com](http://www.ChantiReviews.com)

Winners will be announced at the July's PNWA, RWA, & other conferences, in press releases, publications, and social media sites.

Finalists will be awarded prizes and promotional packages.

WWW. **ChantiReviews**.com

For WWP Special: contact: Kathryn Brown at [kbrown@ChantiReviews.com](mailto:kbrown@ChantiReviews.com) or call 97

# Identifying Your Readers

## *How do Readers Discover your Book? Identifying your Readers*

In order for readers to discover your book, they first have to know where to look. It may seem obvious to you, but not to the readers who are overwhelmed with the millions of selections that are available or to the readers of the slush pile. When you can identify your book's potential readers to booksellers, agents, or publishers and, most importantly, to yourself, you will be taking the first step to promote it.

List four or five authors of well-known, preferably best-seller works, that you can visualize your book sharing shelf space with. Your book may share space with authors in several genres. However, you must be able to state why and how your book resonates with the readers of each of these authors in these different genres.

### *Can you “show audience?”*

This is called “showing audience” in the publishing industry. Andrea Hurst, literary agent, gives this great example of showing audience: “This book has the heart of Nicholas Sparks, the romance of Nora Roberts, and the charm of Debbie Macomber.” The elements are there so that you know where the book fits—even though you don't know what the plot line is or what the story is about, she said. However, it is enough information to tell you where the book fits and who are its potential readers (aka the market).

**Excerpt from *Your Author's Platform = Discoverability of Your Book; How to build an effective author's platform step-by-step*, by K. Brown. To read more on this topic, please visit [www.ChantiReviews.com](http://www.ChantiReviews.com).**

# Book Review

***Big River Meadows: Eviction from Eden;  
a 1927 Montana Tragedy***  
by W. David Jones, M.D.

**A Chanticleer Book Review, March 2012**

*Big River Meadows: Eviction from Eden* is a novella based on a true story written by W. David Jones, M.D. He tells the story of his father's boyhood—a rancher's son growing up on a large Montana spread. The story propounds that the vigilante law of the old West prevailed as late as 1927.

This intriguing historical event retold by Dr. Jones is an attempt to resolve persistent mysterious rumors that involve revenge, murder, desire and retribution that took place on the family ranch. Jones' characters pull the reader into their world of endless gritty ranch work, into their uneasy relationships made inevitable by the landscape, and into their hopes and dreams. Narration, the majority written from a lad's point of view, is mixed with action that describes the driving forces necessary for Montana ranch life.

The smoke of the branding fires, the pristine beauty of the countryside, and the imposing presence of the looming Rocky Mountains envelop the reader. The story wraps itself around the cause and effect of choices made and how these choices ripple throughout lives and destinies. The author cleverly uses chronology shifts to reveal a pivotal event at the beginning of the novel. Dr. Jones continues to keep the reader turning pages with increasing tension to discover the incidents that led to the event. Several shifting points of view place the reader within the minds of key characters and reveal their motivations.

Embedded in the writing is a sensory richness that conveys the history of the ranch, the equipment and technology of the time, the means and ways of daily living, and the code by which family and neighbors stood by each other.

In this reviewer's opinion, many will enjoy reading this historical account of Montana ranch life---perhaps more than once.

# Poetry

## Travels And Talks

Suspended in these moments  
solid table and chairs  
seated, sociable, scented,  
soundings in my ears—  
cascades of causal poems roam

From alligator to dragon tale,  
a legacy—dark horse/black sheep,  
forgotten park, no name woods,  
five-foot fava bean and return  
to the crime scene.

Not only do I hold these scenes  
in my hands, our exchange of  
postcard poetry spreads  
creativity across the lineage  
of the world.

Fresh oxygen like the Amazon  
rainforest—expelled from  
the poet's lungs nourishes  
everything which inhales  
life through its pores.

Ó Sandra F. Lucke

# Poetry

## The Cat

The cat was young and wild in his ways  
A carnivorous hunter who filled his days  
Exploring, roaming, the town and the park  
Loving the chase from daybreak to dark

He wandered wide in field and farm  
With skill and stealth, escaping harm  
Moving easily from here to there  
Living each day with grace and flair

He answered to no one, had no name  
No one called him, he never came  
To be loved, cuddled, petted or fed  
He had never slept on anyone's bed

The cat found the boy, sitting alone  
Tossing, catching, a ball, on his own  
The cat crept close, then closer, near  
Could this be his person, to claim without fear?

The cat is not young now, not wild in his ways  
Carnivorous in dreams of olden days  
Wandering, roaming, the yard and the shed  
Napping on the porch, sleeping on the bed

(Carolyn Leeper)

# Chasing Down A Good Foreword

## Chasing Down A Good Foreword by Sandra F. Lucke

Well-worn phrases can become worn-out. “You cannot judge a book by its cover” and “a picture is worth a thousand words” have outlasted their usefulness. When we turn to blogging as a tool to get our messages circulated, try more original phrases. Try newer phrases in your conversations too and let some old phrases slip away. Did you notice that the foreword in some books are more original and thought provoking than others?

Chasing down a good foreword is a worthwhile effort; it’s the beginning of what follows.

When I gave my manuscript to a well-known author to review, I followed up by asking him to write the foreword to my book of poetry *Long Songs*. Michael Frome agreed and the result surprised me in a good way. Here is a sample of what he wrote.

“Art is whatever form expresses the human spirit; it provides a way of seeing the unseen that dwells in wild places. ‘Here are worlds of experience beyond the world of aggressive man, beyond history, beyond science’, wrote Ansel Adams, the celebrated photographer. ‘The moods and qualities of nature and the relations of great art are equally difficult to define; we can grasp them only in the depths of our perceptive spirit’. Poetry in particular opens the hidden web of wilderness to the human soul”...

Michael Frome, author:

*Heal the Earth, Heal the Soul: Collected Essays  
on Wilderness, Politics and the Media, and Chronicling  
the West: Thirty Years of Environmental Writing*

He is known nationally by environmental journalists and organizations. It may not be comfortable to step beyond your zone of comfort and what’s familiar. Ask a writer who is not a friend but who will say yes to support your project with excellent writing that meshes with the tone of your book. What do you have to lose? You have everything to gain. This may give added stature to your publication, your reputation and bring along a new audience of readers when you mention the author who wrote the foreword.

I hope you give this a try and get an excellent foreword to grace the beginning of your book. Wishing you much success.

# Elements of Good Fiction

## Life and Death and Love (Paying Homage to Great Novelists) © 2012 by Frederick Su

All good fiction encompasses three things: life and death and love. Great fiction encompasses them seamlessly and beautifully, and sometimes subtly. The great novelists capture setting, scene, and dialogue with an incomparable skill that we budding novelists can only marvel at and strive for.

For those of you who have kept up with my writings in this newsletter, two of my favorite novelists are John Fowles (politics and British superciliousness aside) and Ernest Hemingway, who respectively wrote my two favorite novels, *Daniel Martin* and *Islands in the Stream* (tied with Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*). Hemingway's descriptions of place are like looking at a realist's painting. Fowles is the master of setting scenes with nuanced dialogue, especially between the sexes, where the characters fence with words rather than swords. Fowles paints fine descriptions too. They both portray characters so alive that I feel I have lost friends when the book ends.

*Islands in the Stream* was published posthumously by Hemingway's wife, Mary. In my opinion, it is Hemingway's best novel. Reading it, you can glimpse the man behind the pen because Thomas Hudson, the protagonist, is a thinly disguised Ernest Hemingway. Loosely autobiographical, sure, but like all fiction, it ventures where nonfiction cannot. (As an aside, for cat lovers, you should not miss Hemingway's endearing portrayal of the bond between Thomas Hudson and his cat, Boise.) The setting is Bimini pre-war, then Cuba, and the surrounding waters during. Amoral in love and marriage, Thomas Hudson was moral in his duty to country during World War II. He volunteered to help the Coast Guard and Navy patrol the waters. At the end of the novel, he and his civilian team hunt for survivors of a German U-boat that had been damaged and sunk. The hunt is one of the more gripping accounts in fiction of the brotherhood of men at arms, beautifully described in terms of setting, dialogue, characters, and the menace of abrupt death waiting in the wings.

Here is an example of Hemingway's description of setting, which begins *Islands in the Stream*:

The house was built on the highest part of the narrow tongue of land between the harbor and the open sea. It had lasted through three hurricanes and it was built solid as a ship. It was shaded by tall coconut palms that were bent by the trade wind and on the ocean side you could walk out the door and down the bluff across the white sand and into the Gulf Stream. The water of the Stream was usually a dark blue when you looked out at it when there was no wind. But when you walked out into it there was the green light of the water over that floury white sand and you could see the shadow of any big fish a long time before he could ever come in close to the beach.

It was a safe and fine place to bathe in the day but it was no place to swim at night. At night the sharks came in close to the beach, hunting in the edge of the Stream and from the upper porch of the house on quiet nights you could hear the splashing of the fish they hunted and if you went down to the beach you could see the phosphorescent wakes they made in the water. At night the sharks had no fear and everything else feared them. But in the day they stayed out away from the clear white sand and if they did come in you could see their shadows a long way away.

A man named Thomas Hudson, who was a good painter, lived there in that house and worked there and on the island the greater part of the year.

Wow! Can you visualize that place? I can!

(Continued)

# Elements of Good Fiction

## (Continued)

*Daniel Martin* is a literary novel in the finest sense of the term. This is not a mystery, not a thriller, not a shoot 'em up story line. But, it is a novel about the breakdown of marriages and relationships, the loss of old love, and the finding of new love. And John Fowles captures the essence of life and death and love through an exquisite molding of words to form a literary sculpture. If words could be transposed into Carrera marble, *Daniel Martin* would rival Michelangelo's sculpted works. It is that good.

The eponymous Daniel Martin is an English playwright who has succumbed to writing American movie scripts. The storyline is about his relationships with four women: a young English actress, Jenny, starring in her first American film, which he wrote; his daughter Carolyn (or Caro); his ex-wife Nell; and Nell's sister, Jane. Nell, Jane, Daniel, and Anthony were a close foursome in their college days at Oxford. They were all the best of friends. Nell was Daniel's girlfriend and Jane and Anthony were a pair. But, the underlying tension was that Jane and Daniel were drawn to each other, and consummated that love, though Jane went on to marry Anthony and Daniel married Nell. Anthony was Catholic and became an Oxford Don in religious philosophy. Jane was not religious, but became Catholic to please Anthony, a subjugation of her true nature. Nell and Daniel's marriage broke up over her jealousy of his success and partly because of his philandering. Relationships soured all around. Daniel wrote a play, thinly disguising the four characters, based on the relationships of the four. Anthony and Jane were not amused. Anthony wrote a letter to Daniel saying, "We are only too clearly dead for you; and from now on you must be dead for us." And so it stood for many years until Daniel, in California, receives a long distance phone call from Nell and Jane in England saying that Anthony, on his deathbed, wants to see him in person. So, a door into his past opens.

That door reintroduces him to Jane. She has changed after all these years, but he still has feelings for her, though he initially tried to stifle it. Here is the scene Fowles sets, in Oxford, after Daniel has conversed with the dying Anthony. He has taken Jane to a local restaurant.

"I don't know what Anthony has said to you, but I can guess they concern things I regard as very private. That have far more to do with the present than the past. That's simply all, you must believe me." She hesitated, and then there was suddenly an undertone of something much more natural. "I can't at the moment take the past, Dan. In any shape or form."

She had used my name, at last, for the first time, and for the first time I clearly saw a strain. She was mortal after all. I left a pause.

"Anthony kept going on about the two of you having ruined my marriage. By implication, my life. I pointed out that you have no right to give yourselves that kind of guilt. I haven't not enjoyed my life, Jane, for all its faults and failings—and I was always fully capable of ruining my own marriage. And I did. That's one thing. The other is that he hoped you and I would become friends again now. My own instant conclusion is that there's an appalling lack of corrupt and conscienceless men in your life. I think you need at least one. I've also got Anthony to report to tomorrow. And Caro. I'd like it to be that some hope, however small, was established."

(Continued)

# Elements of Good Fiction

## (Continued)

She had stared down through that and for a long moment she continued to do so, but there was a trace of a rueful smile, some sort of admission of defeat.

“Nell did warn me.”

“Of what?”

“What she called your vicious habit of calling everyone’s bluff but your own.”

“You used to have quite a low handicap at that game yourself.”

“I seem to have grown out of practice.”

“I can’t understand why you should wish to continue what was always an inhumanity.”

“It’s nothing to do with you personally. But with a use to which I feel you’re being put.

Quite unjustifiably.”

“Isn’t one definition of fascism the belief that you have a right to judge for other people?”

I detected what I had sensed with her husband, an insecurity, almost a gauche anxiety when faced with someone from another world . . . all very well to despise and dismiss it, as I felt sure she did—very probably on artistic as well as political grounds—and all very well to despise her own enclosed academic world, her city: but it was where she lived, and she was not used to people, to situations, to men who had dropped, or could drop, the local sign-system, the conventions she knew best.

Her eyes down, she murmurs, “I’m no longer the person you knew, Dan. I’m sorry for not hiding it better. It’s not your fault at all.”

Dan hesitates, then reaches across the white cloth and touches her hand lightly. She says nothing. He beckons for the waiter.

Were you drawn into the scene and the nuances of the conversation, as I was? Did the two characters come alive for you, and did you grasp the intertwining of the two personalities—a hint of their past, present, and future? Granted, I had the whole book beforehand to guide me. Still, I believe the above scene illustrates the work of a master (did you catch the seamless change of tense in the narrative, often frowned on? Was it deliberate or an overlooked error? Did you also catch the change from first-person to third-person viewpoint?—something Fowles incorporated throughout the novel).

Both novels are still in print. Search for them in bookstores, libraries, and online. They are literary treasures to me, more valuable than gold.

And great fiction that they are, these two novels illustrate the niceties of life in a way nonfiction cannot. Near the end of *Daniel Martin*, the protagonist laments “. . . a girl and a past walking into winter trees.” That simple phrase beautifully and succinctly captures one aspect of the human condition, about life, love, and loss. To peer into these imagined characters’ souls is to peer into ours—and be better for it.

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Stamey has published three novels with Berkley/Putnam of New York, as well as short stories, poetry, and nonfiction articles. Her most recent novel, *Islands*, published locally by Tarragon Books, was a *ForeWord Magazine* "Book of the Year" award finalist. She has taught creative writing courses for WWU since 1989, and also offers professional editing services as a "book doctor."

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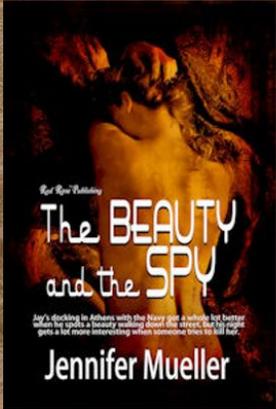
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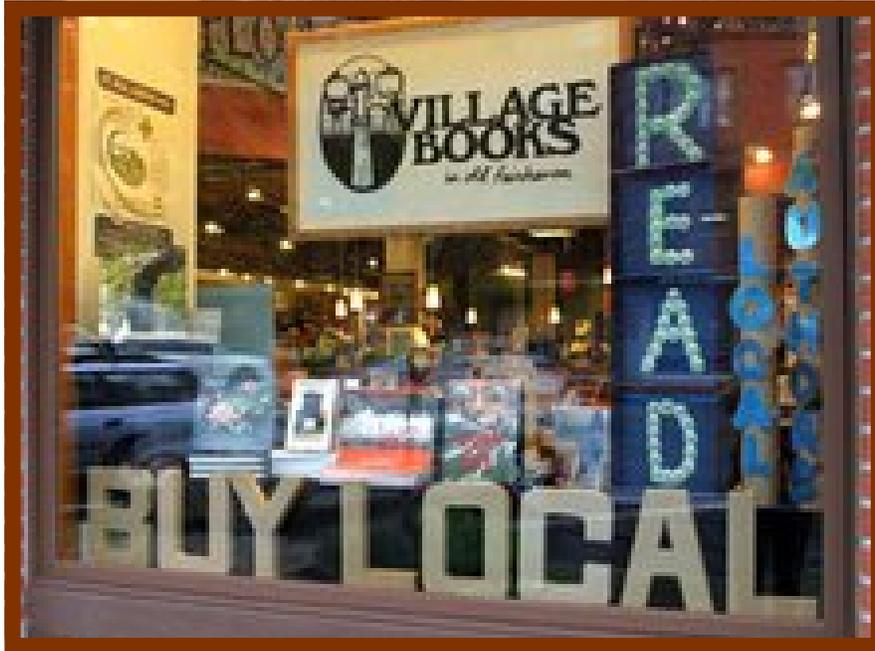
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