

FROM THE
 NEW YORK TIMES
 BESTSELLING
 OF SISTER



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 TIMES BOOK REVIEW

...ely moving."
 BOSTON GLOBE

...c, tense novel."
 USA TODAY

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 ...ll mystery."
 BOOKPAGE

RosamundLupton.com

Whose Success?

To the Editor:

Tom Carson's review of Clive Davis's "Soundtrack of My Life" (March 17) states: "As the head of Columbia Records in the 1960s, he discovered, among others, Janis Joplin." Record executives do not discover artists: they stumble upon them. Not even Christopher Columbus would have had the chutzpah to claim he "made" America.

Undisputedly, Davis contributed to making such talents publicly known. But at whose expense? Joplin probably never received her fair share of royalty payments and may never have owned her masters; nor is it likely that her family inherited the full financial fruits of her work.

These usually go to people who can't sing, can't write, can't play and yet end up millionaires, while true artists, like Rodriguez, end up broke and ripped-off.

That record executives step forward to usurp credit for artists' success is not uncommon. More disconcerting is that their self-serving accounts are considered worthy of review in your pages.

RUBÉN BLADES
 New York

The writer is a Panamanian musician, actor and political activist who has won numerous Grammy Awards.

The Real Deal

To the Editor:

Re "True Lies," by Ben Greenman (March 17): I have long been intrigued by how often readers of fiction want to know which parts really happened to the author, whereas readers of nonfiction want to know which parts were made up. In both cases, as Greenman indicates, there is a vague implication that the authors are cheating.

These seemingly paradoxical obsessions, I think, reflect a universal human desire to distinguish what's real, in order to make sense of potentially overwhelming sensory experience. The ultimate reality is that we can't truly distinguish what's "real" in our perceptions, any more than nonfiction authors can avoid shaping "reality" by the way they recount events or fiction writers can avoid drawing on personal experience when

ostensibly making up stories.

DEBORAH TANNEN
 Washington

The writer is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown.

To the Editor:

Ben Greenman's essay "True Lies" registers his indignation with literary works that claim to be fiction but are actually based on writers' experiences. I agree that such fictionalizing of fact is unfair to the unsuspecting reader, but I have to wonder if Greenman himself is trying to fool the reader by claiming that his disappointment in discovering the basis of so-called fictitious works is factual, when it may be nothing but fiction itself. Could it be that he drummed up his indignation for the very dubious purpose of being entertaining and witty? Can anyone who puts word to paper be trusted?

EDWARD D. LASKY
 Chicago

Involuntary Confinement

To the Editor:

As the former director of the Bureau of Preventable Diseases, New York City Department of Health, I enjoyed Patrick McGrath's recent review of "Fever," by Mary Beth Keane (March 24). The novel is one of the more recent fictionalized accounts of the infamous typhoid carrier, Mary Mallon, a.k.a. Typhoid Mary. As Keane acknowledges, much of her meticulous research was obtained from Judith Walzer Leavitt's definitive biography, "Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public's Health."

However, I would like to point out that McGrath's employment of the term "quarantine" to refer to Mallon's two involuntary confinements is not technically accurate, although the usage is common. "Isolation" is the epidemiological term for people (and animals) confined with signs and symptoms of a communicable disease that are transmissible to others. Quarantine applies to healthy, disease-free individuals or animals that might develop an infection after a variable and asymptomatic "incubation period." If they do, they are removed from quarantine to isolation.

Mary Mallon was a healthy

asymptomatic carrier who was isolated from the public twice, but properly speaking, she was never quarantined.

JOHN S. MARR
 Free Union, Va.

A Passion for Reading

To the Editor:

Dean Bakopoulos's essay ("Straight Through the Heart" March 24), on teaching literature, is relevant to educators in all grades and in every discipline. With the emphasis on standardized testing that has infiltrated academia, we run the risk of losing the passion for learning as an end in itself. My love for reading and writing was not the result of theory, analysis or historical background, but it grew out of a visceral love for a story and a character. When I first encountered "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "Moby-Dick" and "Gulliver's Travels," it was "a moment, a snippet of dialogue" and a "flight of lyricism" that exploded in my heart and in my imagination, forever opening the door to the power and possibility of the written word. "Reading as a process of seduction" is the heart of any pedagogy.

LARRY HOFFNER
 New York

Corrections

Entries on the hardcover, e-book, and combined print and e-book fiction best-seller lists on March 24 for "Damascus Countdown," an action novel by Joel C. Rosenberg, misidentified the country with nuclear warheads that survive an Israeli attack. It is Iran, not Iraq.

A roundup review of audiobook mysteries on Nov. 25 misstated the age-appropriateness of "Gun Games," by Faye Kellerman. Strong language, explicit depictions of sex, and references to drug use and other disturbing themes disqualify the book from being considered in any sense "G-rated," and in an overwhelming majority of cases, it would not be an appropriate selection for a "good-guy dad who just wants to keep the family from having a meltdown on the endless drive to Disney World."