



The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California
Writers Club

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LUZMARIA ESPINOSA—POET ADVOCATE FOR HER COMMUNITY

By Heather Bradshaw

On Saturday, April 1, the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club celebrates National Poetry Month by welcoming internationally-acclaimed, Ventura County Poet Laureate, Luzmaria Espinosa, 'Luzma', to read some of her poetry and share how her own life experiences, culture and community activism have shaped her work.



Luzmaria Espinosa

Luzma was born in Uruapan, Michoacán, Mexico. She and her family migrated in the 1950s to Santa Paula, California where her father, a former railroad worker, went to work in the agricultural fields. The third of eight children, Luzma found solace in books, imagining a world beyond the confines of her small hometown. Inspiration to develop her poetry came from friends, mentors and fellow activists.

Luzma's lifelong commitment to peace and justice spans decades internationally as well as nationally. Her work includes participation and/or support in international struggles, Chicano Theatre, Danza Azteca, and Performance Poetry. She was at the forefront of introducing Danza Azteca throughout the Tri-Counties, and connecting established Chicano Artists with Ventura County Artists.

As well as teaching theatre and poetry to children and youth in schools, Luzma also inspires the community through non-profit community agencies and juvenile detention centers. As a coordinator for youth violence prevention/intervention programs, she was influential in developing strong leadership skills with youth who otherwise might not have gone to school.

Whether in schools, in juvenile centers or in the community; community advocate Luzma motivates

and encourages students to heal by expressing themselves through cultural performances and writing stories or poetry. Proudly she reveals that past students have received their doctorate and are teaching in various colleges and universities throughout the states. Espinosa is a past recipient of CA Arts Council Artist in Residence, SP Latino Town Hall Award.

She won an award in Cultural Arts, and the Jalapeno Award from the Royal Chicano Air Force. She is a member of California Poets in the Schools, a member of the Royal Chicano Air Force, [Inlakech Cultural Arts Center](#), and [LUCHA, Inc.](#)

Of being inaugurated as for 2020-2022 and 2022-24 [Ventura County Poet Laureate](#) she said: "Poetry is the language of life, of hope, of love, of nature, of a higher spirit. And poetry, and arts in general, has always been for me a way to understand myself, humanity, life around me, an instrument through which I can say something about what I see, and what our responsibilities are to one another. That's what I hope to communicate in my new role."

You can see this impactful and inspirational poet perform some of her deeply thoughtful poetry on YouTube. *Note: Luzma's last name is sometimes spelled Espinoza.*

Each CWC-SFV member will receive a free Zoom invitation to this presentation. Guests may purchase admission at [cwc-sfv.org](#) by March 31 at noon. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. Members of other CWC branches who want to register for an invitation should contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, at [SFV.CWC@gmail.com](#) by noon on March 31st. *Regretfully, we cannot accommodate late requests.*



I've always loved composing poetry and generally turn to this genre when a topic is bursting out of my heart and needs a safe place to land.

A Choice

Each night after watching the news,

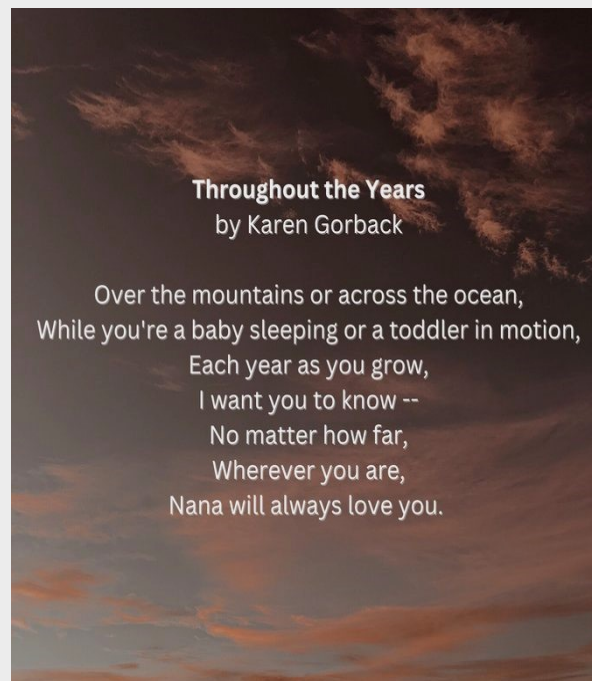
I frequently feel the blues.

Until I remember

kindness is an ember

to fan however I choose.

Then, a few weeks ago, I ran across a contest on Twitter titled "Fifty Precious Words," posted by children's book author Vivian Kirkfield. The objective was to write a 50-word story, but mine morphed into a poem. Special thanks to my daughter-in-law and writer Gennie Gorback who provided the graphic.



One of the Twitter readers who read my entry posted that his children also call his mother "Nana," and he would share my poem with her! Sometimes, ya gotta love social media.

I hope you enjoy National Poetry Month, take some time to address whatever is bursting out of your heart and treat yourself to the deliciousness of writing poetry.

If you like, follow me on [Twitter @karengorback](#), on Facebook, on [LinkedIn](#), or join my blog at [karen-gorback.com](#) .

Karen Gorback. Ph.D., CWC-SFV President

THE CWC BULLETIN: A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR ALL CWC MEMBERS

The California Writers Club Bulletin is a quarterly newsletter emailed to members of all 22 branches as a PDF attachment. The latest issue was sent on March 22. If you don't recall receiving it, you might want to check your spam folder, or if you're on gmail, the Promotions folder. The current and past issues of the Bulletin may also be found at <https://calwriters.org/bulletin>.

The Bulletin was extensively revamped and revised a year ago, and is now full of helpful articles on the writing craft, and publishing and marketing. Equally important, there are now several opportunities for members to promote their books and literary achievements.

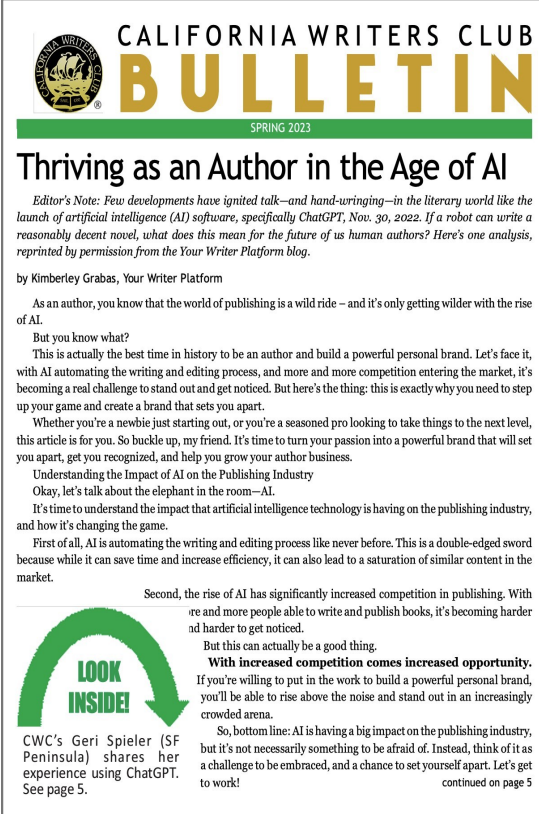
Announce your latest book release in the Member Spotlight. Also welcome is news of literary achievements: short stories, poems or articles published, plus awards and honors. Send your announcements, 50 words or less, to editor@calwriters.org. Attach a copy of your book cover in JPEG format. Be sure to indicate which branch you belong to.

The Bulletin is also looking for articles on writing craft, marketing, publication, and the writing life. Word count can be anywhere from 200 for short tidbits to 1200 or so for long pieces. Send a brief proposal to editor@calwriters.org. Contributors receive a short blurb and a photo, so this is a great way to promote your books or your writing-related services.

The deadline for the next issue of is **June 1, 2023**, with publication slated for **June 15**.

This is a free service to CWC members, so please do take advantage of it!

Joyce Krieg
Editor
CWC Bulletin



**CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
BULLETIN**
SPRING 2023

Thriving as an Author in the Age of AI

Editor's Note: Few developments have ignited talk—and hand-wringing—in the literary world like the launch of artificial intelligence (AI) software, specifically ChatGPT, Nov. 30, 2022. If a robot can write a reasonably decent novel, what does this mean for the future of us human authors? Here's one analysis, reprinted by permission from the Your Writer Platform blog.

by Kimberley Grabas, Your Writer Platform

As an author, you know that the world of publishing is a wild ride – and it's only getting wilder with the rise of AI.

But you know what?
This is actually the best time in history to be an author and build a powerful personal brand. Let's face it, with AI automating the writing and editing process, and more and more competition entering the market, it's becoming a real challenge to stand out and get noticed. But here's the thing: this is exactly why you need to step up your game and create a brand that sets you apart.

Whether you're a newbie just starting out, or you're a seasoned pro looking to take things to the next level, this article is for you. So buckle up, my friend. It's time to turn your passion into a powerful brand that will set you apart, get you recognized, and help you grow your author business.

Understanding the Impact of AI on the Publishing Industry
Okay, let's talk about the elephant in the room—AI.

It's time to understand the impact that artificial intelligence technology is having on the publishing industry, and how it's changing the game.

First of all, AI is automating the writing and editing process like never before. This is a double-edged sword because while it can save time and increase efficiency, it can also lead to a saturation of similar content in the market.

Second, the rise of AI has significantly increased competition in publishing. With more and more people able to write and publish books, it's becoming harder and harder to get noticed.

But this can actually be a good thing.
With increased competition comes increased opportunity. If you're willing to put in the work to build a powerful personal brand, you'll be able to rise above the noise and stand out in an increasingly crowded arena.

So, bottom line: AI is having a big impact on the publishing industry, but it's not necessarily something to be afraid of. Instead, think of it as a challenge to be embraced, and a chance to set yourself apart. Let's get to work!
continued on page 5

LOOK INSIDE!

CWC's Geri Spieler (SF Peninsula) shares her experience using ChatGPT. See page 5.



SPRING MEMBERSHIP

DRIVE 2023

Write here, write now!

Help the CWC-SFV membership grow.

How? Here are three suggestions:

1. Renew your membership by June 30.

The names of all CWC-SFV members
who renew their membership
by June 30 will be entered into a raffle.

The raffle winner will receive a full membership fee refund!

**A FREE YEAR OF INFORMATIVE SPEAKERS
AND CRITIQUE GROUP ACCESS!**



2. Refer a new member who joins our club
by June 30 and
receive a \$20 refund on your dues.



3. Tell your friends that those who join our club
in May or June will immediately receive
CWC-SFV club benefits.

That's 14 months for the price of a year's membership!
WRITE ON!



SAN FERNANDO

Valley Writers

A BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB



Whether you're a published author or have always wanted to write, please join our monthly Saturday meetings via Zoom to learn more about the craft and business of writing. Go to <https://cwc-sfv.org/> for membership information and single lecture admission prices. This series is free for CWC-SFV members.

CWC-SFV GUEST SPEAKERS FOR 2022-23



September 10, 2022

Christobel Kent—Best selling author of the “Sandro Cellini” series and several stand alone novels

“Writing Setting from Italy to Britain”
<https://www.bookseriesinorder.com/christobel-kent>



February 4, 2023

Laura Jensen Walker—Author, pantser writer, teacher and podcast host

“Writing by the Seat of my Pants: From Memoir to Mysteries.”
[Home](#) | [The Official Website of Laura Jensen Walker, Author](#)



October 1, 2022

Beverly Olevin—Prize-winning author of non-fiction and fiction stories, playwright, memoirist, and director,

“Power of the Pen: Short Stories and Beyond”
[Beverly Olevin \(Author of The Good Side of Bad\) \(goodreads.com\)](#)



March 4, 2023

Mandy Jackson Beverly—Podcaster, author, teacher. and non-fiction and fiction writer,

“Getting Your Book Published in the Modern World.”
[Mandy Jackson-Beverly | Podcaster, Author, Teacher \(mandyjacksonbeverly.com\)](#)



November 5, 2022

Vincent Virom Coppola—Author, producer, director, writer of screen]plays, plays, philosopher, UCLA professor and lecturer

“The Power of Myth in Story-telling.”
[Vincent Coppola - IMDb](#)



April 1, 2023

Luzmaria Espinosa—The official Ventura County Poet Laureate, serving as ambassador to the Ventura community for poetry.

“POETRY: A Method of Reflection, Reconsideration, and Revision of Your Thoughts, Beliefs, and Actions.”



December 3, 2022

Dacre Stoker—International best-selling author, researcher, presenter, lecturer, and great-grandnephew of Bram Stoker,

“The Mystery Behind the Research and Writing of Dracula.”
[dacre stoker website - Bing - Shopping](#)



May 6, 2023

Adam Plantinga—Author of *400 THINGS COPS KNOW*, a collection of facts, anecdotes, and reflections from police work.

“Writing Realistic Police Procedures.”
[Home | Adam Plantinga](#)



January 7, 2023

Angie Chatman—Freelance writer, published in magazines, zines, anthologies, editor and podcast story teller

“The First Drafts Club.”
[Angie Chatman Faculty Bio - Gotham Writers Workshop \(writingclasses.com\)](#)



June 3, 2023

Ross Berger—Author, producer and screenwriter for live-action television, animation, video games, and digital series.

“Writing for Video Games and New Technologies”
[Amazon.com: Ross Berger: books, biography, latest update](#)

Mandy Jackson-Beverly Revealed Multiple Ways To Market A Story

By Elaine L. Mura

At our March Zoom gathering, the CWC-SFV hosted author Mandy Jackson-Beverly, who spoke on “Getting Your Book Published in the Modern World.” Many began her talk by letting the audience know that she published her first book in 2015 – and was going to share with us what she had learned. As an indie publisher, she sold 10,000 books and did her own marketing. Since then, she has moved on to hybrid publishing.

Mandy recommended that indie authors work with professionals to give their manuscripts the best chance of finding an audience. She noted that typical costs for book cover design run from \$100 to \$1000+; Formatting \$100 to \$800; Title set-up with Ingram pack \$49; Title set-up for

a Facebook platform – free; Library of Congress Control number PCN, free; marketing from \$2500 to \$3000; ISBN number \$125 (to \$295 with barcodes). She strongly suggested that the author NOT put the cost of the book in the barcode. Therefore, as an indie publisher, you may have a final bill of over \$10,000. For more information, author can reach out to the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) in the U.S. or the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) in the UK. They offer genre groupings.

Our speaker indicated that there are currently three ways to go for authors looking to publish: traditional, hybrid, and indie (self). Mandy also mentioned Vanity publishers. They publish, but do no marketing.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

In summary, traditional publishing offers:

- Less financial risk
- Possible advance based on size, popularity, platform, fan base
- Distribution Media coverage, reviews, marketing, social media
- Prestige and validation
- Contract with rights and licensing – although Mandy

strongly recommended getting your own intellectual property attorney to read the contract BEFORE you sign: “You don’t want to give away anything you don’t have to.” Her caution includes audio, swag, foreign rights, TV, film, games, and lots more.

HYBRID PUBLISHING

All hybrid publishers charge a fee which usually covers editing, book cover, formatting, and some marketing sometimes: Beware disreputable companies which charge a high fee for next to nothing. Mandy suggested “She Writes Press” publishing package as a good one (cost, \$9500). Fees range from \$2000 to \$80,000.

In summary, hybrid publishing offers

- The end result is a beautiful book
- Traditional distribution to the trade – can be wide or limited
- They get all numbers, licenses, etc.

INDEPENDENT (SELF PUBLISHING)

This method has improved since it was first introduced and is now easier. Good idea to get a DBA, make a budget and marketing plan, and overall get organized. REMEMBER: Author pays all costs. For estimates, see first paragraph above. The total cost may exceed \$10,000. In summary, Indie publishing offer:

- Author retains all creative and business control
- Opportunity to distribute by print-on-demand
- E book distribution--an aggregator sends books to every

group (Apple, Barnes and Noble (Nook), Kobo, Amazon (Kindle), Google Play, and can put book in libraries.

- Indie book stores may be open to carrying indie books (but you need to develop a relationship with them)
- Speed to market – not years and might be weeks to months
- Author is in charge of marketing; he/she must hire teams of professionals, editors, cover designers, formatting help, etc.
- Author owns all right to all work



Mandy Jackson-Beverly

EDITING

There are several types of editors: Line editing, proofreading editors, content editors. Some editors specialize in helping the author conceptualize his ideas in an organized way. Other editors simply check spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. As the editing becomes more complex, the price goes up. In order to locate an editor, you can look at book you like. You can also ask other authors. Some groups have lists of approved editors. Penn (see below) has a list of editors, and Mandy suggested that CWC develop to list of editors for their members.

AGENTS

Things to look for in an agent: Does the agent deal with your genre? Do you feel comfortable with the agent? Is the agent supportive, available when you need him/her? After the meeting, Mandy emailed additional information regarding agents for CWC members. She suggested the following links:

- Joanna Penn (extremely knowledgeable regarding self-publishing)
- www.thecreativepenn.com
- Jane Friedman (extremely knowledgeable regarding all forms of publishing)
- www.janefriedman.com
- Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)
- www.Ibpa-online.org/page/standardschecklist
- Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi)
- www.allianceindependentauthors.org
- Publishers Group West - by Ingram Content Group (distributor)
- [Book Distribution & Publishing | PGW](#)

And the following editors:

- Anne Victory at Victory Editing (has different types of editors, including developmental, line, proof editing (let her know Mandy recommended her)
- www.victoryediting.com

- Reedsy is a website that helps an author find an editor, designer, marketer and other professionals. Mandy has not used Reedsy, but it comes recommended by others.
- www.reedsy.com
- PEN (Professional Editors Network). Mandy has not used them.
- www.pensite.org
- Lisa Rojany (Editorial Services of LA). Mandy has not used her but knows her through the NY Journal of Books.
- www.editorialservicesofla.com/home/
- Finally, Mandy's website: www.mandyjacksonbeverly.com
- And Mandy's email: mandyjacksonbeverly@gmail.com
- Mandy's podcast: [The Bookshop Podcast](#)

Mandy's presentation at our March Zoom meeting was comprehensive and very well received by her audience.

Not only was she well informed, but she was also enthusiastic about sharing her information with others. CWC-SFV members were fortunate to have attended her presentation.

A VERY TAXING TIME

By Phyllis Butcher



April is the cruellest month . . . no, that's not a typo. The author, T. S. Eliot, used the British English spelling of the fourth word of his epic modernist poem, *The Waste Land*. Little would he know that the phrase itself would ultimately become a satirical byword for a recurring event in the United States: the requirement for filing and paying income tax. April 15th became the official deadline and would forever be anticipated with panic by a great deal of the population, including the accountants and tax preparers who are responsible for keeping us honest. The three months of January, February and March preceding the due date became known as the dreaded "tax season", when clients

were supposed to be accumulating and disseminating the information required to prepare their income tax returns. In a perfect world the results of their due diligence would be handed over to the experts in a timely fashion, and the returns would be completed and filed in ample time before the deadline. However, when on April 13th someone walked into our Certified Public Accounting office with a shoebox brimming with receipts, cancelled checks and laundry tickets, then would ask if he could pick up his returns the next day...well, no one has said it better than the wonderful Yogi Berra: "It's deja vous all over again!"

For those in the accounting profession, challenges such as these only add to the amount of time and energy required to survive the journey to April 15th in some state of mental and physical wellbeing. Families will basically be abandoned, as the chosen one usually arises each morning before dawn and returns home in the dark of night. I know all of this, because before I retired in 2004 I had worked for the same Certified Public Accounting firm for 42 years—a plethora of tax seasons, indeed. I wasn't an accountant but was initially hired as a secretary, the appellation of choice back in the day. My title and position eventually evolved to Office Manager, and that later morphed into Administrative Assistant. In reality, a more accurate description would have been the resident Mother Hen to a clutch of partners and staff members. And this I say with a great deal of devotion, affection, and pride for having been part of this very special community.

Needless to say, over the years I had been witness to weddings, divorces, affairs, births of children and grandchildren, and deaths. These were mainly all tied in because many of those who came to work for the firm stayed for a very long time--or haven't left yet. Here are a couple of examples that make my tenure of 42 years a great deal less impressive. The current Managing Partner came to the firm right out of college in 1968 (I handed him the employment application to fill out). In 2018 he celebrated his 50th anniversary with the firm. The partner second-in-command celebrated his 50th this past January. If I add together the current third and fourth partners' years of employment, it's a staggering total of almost 60 years. Another staff employee is going on 35 years. But the highest honor has to go to one other incredible woman, who is without a doubt the firm's MVP. In 1950 she graduated from UCLA, and in the same year married and was hired as a bookkeeper by this firm. She retired (reluctantly) at the age of 89 in 2017.

So, it seems that as rugged those tax seasons can be, many of us obviously survived and others continue to do so. We are all still "family" and continue to get together to commiserate or laugh or cry, time permitting (no such nonsense between January and April 15th, of course). And gosh, those perks just keep coming. They still do my tax returns--for free!

FROSTY WINTER

By Pirhiya Goldstein

From a distance
Yet, closely watching the whirlwind
Listening to the turbulent sounds
Engulfing, spattering movements,
Hearing, deciphering the unspoken,
Half spoken words muffled.

Is it a call for help?
Hesitating to reveal?
Trying to save loved ones?
Attempting to preserve self-dignity?

The regal Sequoia tree
Losing its strength
Branches swaying
Bend beneath powerful winds
And blistering frosty winter.

The passionate fire
Among the trees
Have devoured your core
Leaving behind bare
Naked land yearning for life.

The stormy years are
Exposing your roots
The fierce current uprooting you
From your abode ground.

While in despair you are
Grasping for pure air
Attempting to survive
Holding tightly to life.

OPAL PICKLES WRITES A CHILDREN'S BOOK

By Cartoonist Brian Crane



Brian Crane, American cartoonist and creator of the Pickles comic strip, generously gave his permission for this multi-panel display of his Pickles story in *The Valley Scribe*. If you'd like more laughs, Crane is the author of several published books available at:

[Brian Crane Books | List of books by author Brian Crane](#)



Picasso at the Lapin Agile- A Rollicking Debate

A Review by Elaine L. Mura

Penning by Steve Martin – actor, comedian, writer, producer, musician, modest recipient of multiple awards – PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE opens at the Ruskin Theatre. Following readings at his home and a workshop in Australia, Martin's first full-length play premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago in 1993, followed shortly thereafter by performances at the Geffen Theatre in Los Angeles and, eventually, Broadway. Now the play has returned to Los Angeles to tease and delight audiences anew.

The time is 1904, and the place is Paris. The scene is the Lapin Agile, a local pub and meeting place for the yet unknown and sometimes even the nearly famous in the heart of Montmartre, an artists' colony where struggling creators in all fields meet, compare notes, and definitely drink up a storm. This day is no exception, and colorful artists of all talents wend their way into the district's multiple bars. But this day might also be exceptional – because on this day two creative, free-thinking men, both on the precipice of greatness, meet and share their deepest thoughts about life and the creative process.



Isaac J. Cruz, Fred Deni, Amy Motta, and Ashley Barrett – Photo by Khue Cai

Albert Einstein (Ryan Stiffelman) has come to the Lapin Agile hoping to bump into someone he has heard about in his wanderings, a painter named Pablo Picasso (Isaac J. Cruz). Both men are in their 20s – and only a few years from making a noticeable dent in the world of science and art. In 1905, Einstein will introduce his theory of relativity, while in 1907, Picasso will create *Les Femmes d'Alger*, his foray into the new art form of cubism. Both will soon wow the world – and the play is just cosmic moments away from their life-altering contributions. The two young men begin their debate over the value of genius vs. talent and soon get into what it takes to excel and open new doors in their specialties, art (Picasso) and science (Einstein) – so different, and yet maybe not so different. Soon the pub is filled with opinions – and people to voice them loudly – including Gaston (Fred Deni), Freddy (J Teddy Garces), Charles Dabernow Schmendiman (Hudson Long), Sagot (Jack Merrill), Germaine (Amy Motta), and Suzanne/the Countess/female admirer (Ashley Barrett). When “the Visitor” (Jackson Glenn) arrives in his blue suede shoes, things heat up even more.



J. Teddy Garces, Amy Motta, and Jackson

PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE is a delightful tale of “what-ifs” which will charm, entertain, create some belly laughs, and also raise some serious philosophical questions. Helmed by skilled director Amelia Mulkey, the play speeds through the story with nary a moment to waste. While at its heart the content might seem rather intellectual, Mulkey and the excellent cast manage to keep things moving – and the audience laughing and following along with them. The ensemble cast and the director clearly “get it” and make sure that the audience members do too. Kudos are also in order to a superb production crew. Ryan Wilson's set is lush, detailed, and a real treat for the eyes. You almost feel that you're part of the turn-of-the-century bar crowd. Michael Mullen's gorgeous costumes are another visual treat and add to the feel of the early twentieth century. Edward Salas' lighting and sound make this intimate production glow. But at the heart of any production is the script – and Steve Martin exhibited his obvious talent to a tee with the able assistance of director Mulkey and the talented ensemble cast.

This production which will fully activate the synapses connecting your eyes, ears, and thinking mind. This production runs through April 30, 2023, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The Ruskin Group Theatre is located at 3000 Airport Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (with ample free parking). Tickets range from \$20 to \$35 (seniors/students/Guild members \$5 off; groups of 8+ \$28). For information and reservations, call 310-397-3244 or go [online](#).

A Workshop With Everything A Writer Needs to Know About the Horror Genre



Jonathan Maberry

Hello members; I recently learned of a workshop titled: **THRILLS AND CHILLS**, led by NY Times bestseller **JONATHAN MABERRY**. Mayberry was our keynote speaker on March 5, 2022, with a presentation titled "The Genre of You."

WHO: Jonathan Maberry is a New York Times bestselling author, a five -time Bram Stoker Award-winner, 3-time Scribe Award winner, Inkpot Award winner, and comic book writer. His vampire apocalypse book series, **V-WARS**, was a Netflix original series. He writes in multiple genres including suspense, thriller, horror, science fiction, fantasy, and action –for adults, teens and middle grades. I plan to attend this Zoom gathering and thought other SFV members might be also be interested in Maberry's presentation.

WHEN: April 23, 10am - 10pm PST (1 - 4pm EST) via ZOOM

DESCRIPTION: The Art of Writing and Selling Horror Fiction: Scary is back and even the big publishing houses are gobbling up novels for the mainstream audience. This workshop covers a lot of ground, from research, to writing, to finding markets to sell your spooky tales. Included in the program: Cultivating Suspense; Pacing and Tone for Horror; Building the Perfect Beast; Research for Horror Fiction –from Folklore to Science; the Psychology of Fear; Terror vs Horror; Character Creation for Horror; Setting and Place; Crafting and Sustaining Fear; Subgenres of Horror; Finding Markets for your Horror Fiction; How to Talk about Horror with the Public; and more.

A set of notes will be made available to all participants.

The cost is \$50. (To enroll make a PayPal payment to jonathan_maberry@yahoo.com

** Proceeds benefit women's shelters & the ASPCA

Please include your full name and the best email address to use in order to send the Zoom link and class information.

HOW: To learn more about this workshop go to: [Horror Writers Ink](#) | [Join me for a BRAND-NEW workshop: THRILLS AND CHILLS with NY Times bestseller JONATHAN MABERRY](#) | [Facebook](#)

Here's A Word From the SFV Critique Group Coordinator

During the past month, I have been in touch with each of the SFV critique groups. Most do not have any openings for new members, but if you are interested in being put on the waiting list please let me know. There has been some interest in forming a new group for short fiction. That might be suitable for essayists and memoirists also. Please contact me at marlenebumgarner@gmail.com if you are interested in joining such a group.

—Marlene Bumgarner



Last Thoughts

By Yolanda Fintor

Did I get it right?

Did I give enough love to those who needed it?

Did I put their desires ahead of mine?

Was I strong when I had to be

But compliant when it was better to bend?

Was I forgiving to those who wronged me?

Did I befriend those who were left behind?

Did I rejoice with those who excelled?

Did I give comfort to those who grieved?

Did I get it right?

If not

Will I get another chance?

March, 2023



On the Side of the Road Waiting for a Ride

By Ed McBride

You stood with me on the entrance ramp, long hair and ragged jeans
While I got ready to put out my thumb.
You had the best hair, long and straight and pretty.
Everyone agreed about that.

I'd arrived in Santa Fe broke, dazed, shaking from a break-up,
Needing a place to land.
You were sweet, loving, warm, as solid as the old Brooklyn buildings
That surrounded our childhood like the walls of a fort.
You never asked me to leave. It was understood:
That was always up to me.



How long did we stand there on that September afternoon
Black clouds overhead and the wind kicking up?
We talked of old times, other places, people who had come and gone,
Passed through our young lives like so many gusts of wind.
You said there were wind people and tree people.
You were one; I was the other.

When the rain started to fall, you hugged me.
Your smile was real, your eyes moist and soft, your hug tender.
You gave me a hat to protect me from the rain.
It made me feel adventurous, like Indiana Jones, as I got my first ride.
I waved and thanked you and slipped into a strange car
To start a new adventure.

You don't have the same hair now, but I still have the hat.
It's a beautiful hat.



TRAIN WHISTLES

By Lillian Rodich 2023

**Melancholy voice
Cutting through the fabric
Of my velvet sleep**

**Hot Summer's night
Hugging my pillow
With naked abandon**

**Memories flood my dreams
Desire pulling me toward
Distant echoing whistles**

**Wearing designer jeans
And a pink angora sweater
Feeling youth, feeling passion**

**Yearning shaded
By a bright straw hat
And decorated with
a necklace of Spring scents**

**Metallic clicking
Heart beating
Low-throated whistles
Train windows framing seascapes**

**Going south
South toward open arms**

**Melancholy voice
Hidden in my dreams
I am alone on a summer's night
Memories echoing
Distant whistles**



My Secret Garden

By Marlene A Bumgarner



**My morning glories opened today
They drank the dew
Then stretched their tendrils to the light
My sun salutation was a form of gratitude
For lifting me from winter sleep**

**Pointy heads of crocus break the earth
Beetles stand erect as if to wave
Persimmon and kiwi wear capes of green
And the earth is come alive again**

**What magic comes from these small joys
I walk the path
I sing and dance
Spring has come and I am glad**

**I did begin to doubt it would
Through long dark days so cold and damp
So little faith had I
Most nights
I slept from dusk to dawn
and woke with little hope of light**

**But one fresh bud
One vine unfurled
One bug
One bee
One sunny day
Delight returned
My grief assuaged
This secret garden heals my heart**

My Dad Says I Should Make More Friends

By Scott Struman

This afternoon finds me
at a Northridge Starbucks
where the barista stuns me
with her dark black hair
and pale white skin which
makes her a beauty queen

so I tell the attractive girl
last night,
I watched the movie FREAKS
about a 1932 travelling circus
starring the female pinheads
and the male Siamese twins,

the worm-man, the bear-lady
and a dwarf who inherits
a fortune of money
only to be robbed
by the troupe's manager,
a local woman (full-sized)

who pretends to love him
so all the strange characters
by a curse upon the false suitor
transform her into a giant chicken
in possession of a still human face.
This story fails to engage



ERASE WRINKLES
WITH BOTOX



the pretty Starbucks employee
so two weeks from today, I say
I'm receiving a Botox injection
to fill in all the worry lines
now crisscrossing my forehead
which widens the girl's eyes.

What are you talking about?
she asks me as space erupts
and time sends me back,
suddenly to 7th or 8th grade
when my friends began to
ask me why I am so wierd.

A period of time many years
before the Florida dancehall killing,
the Jewish temple attack in Pittsburgh,
the Walmart shooting in El Paso,
even the shootout in Columbine
among others

but on this second journey
into my childhood
I am more mature
so I'm able to realize
the sad truth that I am 100%,
totally insane and everyone else
is completely normal.

Why Now?

By Anne W. Lee

You insist I plunder my contentment
Leave my well-traversed, trenched ground
Become an educated beginner again
Embracing the ill-ease of heights

I clap the resin powder across my palms
Climb up the rungs to the platform
Trapeze bar now heavy in my hands
Balance has left me
I leap—or was I pushed?

Pumping my legs across the chasm
Sensing no safety net below
I watch the second trapeze bar
You swing toward me
I hear You call
“Release—trust the timing!”

I look forward, not back
Caught in that liminal space of free-fall
An eternal split-second
Hanging between terror and trust

That is exactly where You teach me
To reach beyond myself
Discovering
Why now?



A GOLDEN GIFT OF A LIFETIME

By Sheila Moss 2023

The words still resonate most of them clear but not all.

I am in Sister Mary Francis's class and she's reciting

William Wordsworth famous poem -

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

By requiring us to memorize Wordsworth

She gave us a gift to last a lifetime.

Fast forward to 2023 and my caregiver Betty

Saying, "I have a surprise for you. It's in the side garden."

There in the garden amidst a sprinkle of snow were

Four clusters of sprightly yellow daffodils.

It didn't take long for my mind to click into place

And start reciting those famous words

I wandered lonely as a cloud

And although I never conquered the last stanza

It stands beautifully on its own

*For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.*



ARE YOU REALLY READY TO BE PUBLISHED?

The Women's National Book Association-San Francisco (WNBA-SF) Chapter's Twentieth Anniversary Pitch-O-Rama! It will take place via Zoom on Saturday April 29, 8 am – 1 pm.

At Pitch-o-Rama, up to 100 writers get to pitch to agents, book professionals and publishers. Ever since 2020, Pitch-o-Rama has been held online allowing each writer to pitch to and receive feedback from up to 7 agents or publishers.

Before the event, WNBA provides support for preparing your pitch, advice on how to get the most from the event, and discussions with book professionals. At the event, authors can go into breakout rooms to speak to a book coach or a marketing expert. Agents and publishers circulate among the breakout rooms to hear writers' pitches.

Pitch-o-Rama is open to all writers seeking representation—nonfiction, fiction, YA or children's literature—but it's intended for those with finished manuscripts or book proposals.

You can find more information about the Pitch-O-Rama

Source: [Community News: Pitch-O-Rama! - Literary Mama](#)



Celebrating 20 Years
PITCH O RAMA

Writers, pitch your completed work to up to 7 agents or publishers in one day!

You will also get a chance to practice your pitch with coaches and fellow writers.

Saturday, April 29, 2023
8:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. PT

For writers ready to be published.
<http://tinyurl.com/2kb2rrp6>

The graphic features three circular images: a woman holding a book titled 'CHARRA TONICS', a Zoom meeting grid, and a woman at a laptop.

VIRTUAL EVENT
\$65 WNBA-SF members
\$95 Non-members

Scan to Register:



Presented by the Womens National Book Association – San Francisco Chapter
<https://wnba-sfchapter.org>

THREE WAYS TO PITCH YOUR BOOK TO AN AGENT

So you have your book idea, you've written your book proposal, and it's time to actually get it in front of agents. The most traditional and straightforward way to get a book deal is to send your manuscript or pitch directly to the editors at the major New York publishing houses. Before you consider self-publishing, you might try pitching to a few agents who can help you go the traditional route of getting a book published.

1. Find the Right Kind of Agent for Your Work.

Agents are readers, too. They each have their own interests and tastes. Before you go spamming every agent you can find, do your research. Most agency websites include lists of authors they represent, as well as what bestsellers or critical hits they've helped shepherd through the publishing process. Look for books you've loved and names you recognize. This will help you hone in on a reasonable number of agents to pitch.

2. Figure out the Best Way to Get Your Pitch in Front of Them.

Some agents accept unsolicited pitches, others don't. It's a bad idea to turn off a potential agent by sending them work they're not going to read. There are dozens of writer's conferences where agents from many publishers gather specifically to hear pitches from first-time writers. Others host virtual pitch slams. While these experiences can be a whirlwind, they're also a great opportunity to practice your elevator pitch and get a sense of the general interest in your work.

3. Talk About Your Work and Your Ambitions.

This applies more to query letters and conversations that have moved beyond the initial overview of your project. Agents aren't just looking to publish your book, they're looking to represent you as a writer. They'll want to know if you've published before, and where, and whether you've gotten any awards or recognitions. They'll also want to know that you've got more than one book in you. What other ideas do you have? What might your second book be about? The goal here is to show that you're not just serious about this one project, but that you could have a long and fruitful career ahead of you.

Source: [How to Pitch Your Book to an Agent: Step-by-Step Guide - 2023 - MasterClass](#)

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WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The California Writers Club has been in existence for over 100 years, and the SFV Branch for over 20 years. Our mission is to encourage excellence in writing, fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as to reach out into our community and mentor writers at all stages of their writing journey. We hold Zoom meetings on the first Saturday of each month from 1 PM to 3 PM. Meetings are free for all members.

Our meetings feature presentations from published writers, editors and other writing industry experts speaking on topics ranging from how to improve our writing, overcome writer's block, get published, and promote our work.

In addition, we host six critique groups which meet monthly or bi-monthly to give CWD-SFV members feedback from their CWC-SFV peers. They meet in person, on Zoom, or in hybrid groups.

For information and reviews on prior monthly speakers please go to [monthly editions of the Scribe at PUBLICATIONS | San Fernando Valley Writers \(cwc-sfv.org\)](#)