



The Valley Scribe

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

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ITS BEEN A LONG STRANGE TRIP FOR JONATHAN MABERRY

The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome New York Times best-selling author, JONATHAN MABERRY, as the keynote speaker on Saturday, October 7 at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation titled, "A LONG STRANGE TRIP - A Writer's Journey Through the Landscape of Publishing."



Jonathan Maberry

The author of fifty novels, Jonathan will take us along for the ride as he discusses his shift (at age 48!) from wannabe writer to successful pro. This talk is chock full of insider tips, fresh perspectives on the changes in publishing, strategies for getting in gear and getting in print, and much more.

Five-time Bram Stoker Award-winner, Jonathan is also a three-time Scribe Award winner, Inkpot Award winner, anthology editor, writing teacher and comic book writer. His vampire apocalypse book series, *V-WARS*, was a Netflix original series starring Ian Somerhalder.

Jonathan writes in multiple genres including suspense, thriller, horror, science fiction, epic fantasy, and action; and he writes for adults, teens and middle grade. His works include the *Joe Ledger* thrillers, *Kagen the Damned*, *Ink*, *Glimpse*, the *Rot & Ruin* series, the *Dead of Night* series, *The Wolfman*, *X-Files Origins: Devil's Advocate*, *The Sleepers War* (with Weston Ochse), *NectroTek*, *Mars One*, and many others. Several of his works are in development for film and TV.

As well as being a writer, Jonathan is the editor of high-profile anthologies including *The X-Files*, *Aliens: Bug Hunt*, *Out of Tune*, *Don't Turn out the Lights: A Tribute to Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, *Baker Street Irregulars*, *Nights of the Living Dead*, and others. His comics include *Black Panther: DoomWar*, *The Punisher: Naked Kills* and *Bad*

Blood. He is the author or co-author of several nonfiction books on supernatural folklore: *The Vampire Slayers Field Guide to the Undead* (writing as Shane MacDougall), *Vampire Universe*, *The Cryptopedia* (co-written with David F. Kramer), *They Bite* (co-written with David F. Kramer), *Wanted Undead or Alive* (co-written with Janice Gable Bashman), and *Zombie CSU: The Forensic Science of the Living Dead*. His *Rot & Ruin* young adult novel was adapted into

the #1 horror comic on Webtoon and is being developed for film by Alcon Entertainment. He the president of the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers, and the editor of *Weird Tales Magazine*. He lives in San Diego, California with his wife, Sara, and their fierce little dog, Rosie.

As you can see, Jonathan has a wide range of experience as a writer and as an editor of magazines and anthologies, so be ready with your questions about writing and publishing during the Q & A after his presentation! Find him online at www.jonathanmaberry.com

While this presenter will be on the big screen at the MPTF, we encourage you to attend in-person to meet and talk about your work with other members over snacks and drinks. Looking forward to seeing you there!

All members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on October 6th at SFV.CWC@gmail.com for an invitation to register. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on October 6th. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.

Karen's Corner

BY KAREN GORBACK, Ph. D., CWC-SFV PRESIDENT

HELLO,
OCTOBER!



Along with cooler temps and spooky vibes at the end of the month, October brings us the opportunity to celebrate California Writers Week (October 15 – 22). If you take a few minutes to peruse the list of California writers on the poster (page 3), I know you'll find a few old friends.

My favorites include Carl Reiner, Beverly Cleary, Sue Grafton, Theodore (Dr. Seuss) Geisel, Jack Canfield, Anne Lamott, John Steinbeck, Ambrose Bierce, Julia Child, Mark Twain, Jack London, and so many others, including Sidney Sheldon, whose books I devoured as soon as they were released.

According to the [CWC website](#), "... in early 2003, with the expert help of Anthony Folcarelli [from the Sacramento Branch], the Central Board of the California Writers Club worked to establish California Writers Week." One of several clauses in the resolution is especially meaningful, because it refers to you.

"WHEREAS, The California Writers Club honors all California writers, past and present, and continues to nurture the talents of new writers as well as established authors, and to provide a forum for the sharing of their writing experience, and . . . "

Yes! The CWC honors all writers, past and present – all of us who face a blank computer screen or empty sheet of paper, and with only 26 letters at our disposal, make magic. We honor you during California Writers Week!

But isn't it ironic that during the same month we celebrate writers, we also recognize [Banned Books Week \(Oct. 1 – 7\)](#). This year's Honorary Chair is actor, reading advocate, and writer LaVar Burton, who reminds us, "Books bring us together. They teach us about the world and each other. The ability to read and access books is a fundamental right and a necessity for life-long success. But books are under attack. They're being removed from libraries and schools. Shelves have been emptied because of a small number of people and their misguided efforts toward censorship. Public advocacy campaigns like Banned Books Week are essential to helping people understand the scope of book censorship and what they can do to fight it. I'm honored to lead Banned Books Week 2023."

As we enjoy October, let's honor all California writers, while remaining vigilant to ensure our right to read their books, and all others, remains free.



For more information on Banned Books Week, please go to these websites:

[Banned Books Week \(October 1 - 7, 2023\) | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues \(ala.org\)](#)

<https://bannedbooksweek.org/levar-burton-to-lead-2023-banned-books-week-as-honorary-chair/> - Search (bing.com)

By decree of the Governor and State Legislature,
the third week of October is perennially designated as

California Writers Week

Celebrate the writers of California!

Jack London Eugene O'Neill Sam Shepard Alan Ginsberg F. Scott Fitzgerald Carolyn See Tom Wolfe Sue Grafton Dr. Leo Buscaglia
Raymond Chandler Dean Koontz Beverly Cleary John Steinbeck Robert Louis Stevenson Armistead Maupin Henry Miller Theodor "Dr.
Seuss" Geisel T. Jefferson Parker Robert Frost Elizabeth George Norman Mailer Julia Child Baba Ram Dass Mark Twain Jack Kerouac
D.J. Waldie Danielle Steele Gertrude Stein Ambrose Bierce Alice Walker Jessamyn West T.C. Boyle Ray Bradbury Joseph Wambaugh
Marianne Williamson Richard Henry Dana Allen Drury Isadora Duncan Lawrence Ferlinghetti Lisa See Gertrude Atherton Joan Didion
Ken Kesey Joe Eszterhas Annie Lamott Robert A. Heinlen Richard Vaughn Gary Zukav Dr. David Viscott Richard Boyle Raymond
Carver Clive Cussler Jack Canfield Richard Ford Wallace Stegner Yusuf Komunyakaa Whitney Otto Alice Sebold Carlos
Castaneda Suzanne Forster Jane Fatcher Ina Coolbrith Catherine Coulter Mary Austin Amy Tan Thomas Harris Tobias
Wolff Phil Arnot George Sterling Yolanda Nava Thomas Pynchon Raymond Barrio Upton Sinclair Alyson Noel
John Gray Jennifer Ann Kogler Herbert Gold Martin Cruz Smith John Blumenthal Michael Chabon Helen Hunt
Jackson Jessica Barksdale Incan Dashiell Hammett Barbara Seranella Susan Vreeland Mike Blake William
Saroyan Molly Dick James Dalessandro Michael DiLeo Robyn Schneider Delilah Beasley Herb Caen
David Meltzer Anna Deavere Smith Jim Drexler Richard Alan Bunch Molly Giles Rhys Bowen
Andrea Siegel Barnaby Conrad Ashley Wolff S.I. Hayakwa Peter S. Beagle Jonathan
Kellerman Alan Rifkin Gayle Brandeis Susan Kelly-DeWitt Oscar Zeta Acosta Adali
Isaacs Menken Joaquin Miller Dan Millman Terry Black Jack Hicks April Halpri
Wayland J.S. Holliday Anh Do John Muir Michael Scott Moore
Carolyn Follett Carl Reiner Victoria Silva Audrey Wood
Don Miguel Ruiz Rebecca Solnit Isabel Allende M.F.K.
Fisher Firoozeh Dumas Lisa Alpine Steve Martin
Khaled Hosseini Edward Humes Faye Kellerman
Susan Ito Pico Iyer Freeman House D.P. Lyle
Eric Shapiro Bonnie Domrose Stone Sharleen
Cooper Cohen Victoria Zackheim
Kathleen Sharp Joe Quirk Ross
Macdonald Lynette Brasfield
Gail Tsukiyama Jo Anne Van Tillburg
Bret Harte K.C. Cole Jane Dutton
Alexandra Haslam Elizabeth McKenzie
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni Deanne Stillman
Jessica Mitford Ray Berry Pat Morrison
Rupert Hughes Hughes Thom Gunn
Susan Straight Rayn Roberts
Randy Shiltz Peter Richardson
Veronique de Turenne Ursula K. LeGuin Tony Lazzarini Peter LeSouart Raymond Strait Percival Everett
Yone Noguchi Wylene Dunbar Vladimir Lange Tony Johnston Malcolm Margolin M.L. Malcolm
Michael McClure Ruthanne Lum McCunn Lucille Lang Day Oakley Hall
Nik C. Colyer Robyn McGee Kelly Lange Tamim Ansary Nancy Huebotter
Mark Coggins Kathi Kamen Goldmark John Gregory Dunne Alan Epstein
Thomas Steinbeck
Theodora Kroeber Alan Clements devorah major Jose Davidow
John Lescoat Linda Palmer Robert Haas Louis B. Jones Sylvia Boorstein
Susan Dunlap Robert de Heer Leora Krygier John Grissim John Gilmore Keith Bailey Robinson Jeffers Molly Fish Kathryn J. Abajian
John Forbes William O'Daly Shirley Ann Parker Maxing Hong Kingston Wardlaw Lee John Collins Penny Warner
Taylor Smith Ruben Martinez Peg Bracken Joe Gores Jean Harfenist Lee Lofland Paul Erdman Ona Russell Sheshia Foster
Molly Katzen Mikel Dunham Laurel House Jean Ardell Judy Reeves Melba Beals Robert A. Davies Rick Wartzman Marybeth Bond
Judith Greber Dora E.H. Crow Ann Bastian Jack Hirschman Edwin Markham Donald DeNevi Ishmael Reed David Masamoto Andrew
Sean Greer Floyd Salas Jimmy Hopper Tillie Olsen Stewart Emery Michael Parenti Jeremiah Abrams Jean Simonda Bolen Fanny
Osbourne Daniel Handler Frank Chin Julie Williams Lacey Fosburgh Kevin Starr Julie Wallace Francisco Garces Evan Connell
Daniel A. Olivas Anthony Marais Marc Allen Louise Steinman Mary Mackey Louise Clappe Anthony Arnold Al Young Ernest
Callenbach Richard Rodrigues Erik Erikson Aimee Liu Reyna Grande Stewart Brand Regina Louise Helen Benedict Dana Gioia
Elliot Feldman Jaime de Angulo Hector Tobar Gina Berrault Ellen Sussman Curt Gentry Eric Stone Elizabeth Stromme Maria Espinosa...
and the list goes on



Founded 1909

Watch for special events sponsored by:

California Writers Club

The nation's oldest professional writers organization

www.calwriters.org

Photo: Dave Cypert

Source: California Writers Club | calwriters.org

HOW CALIFORNIA WRITERS WEEK WAS BORN

Twenty years ago, our California Writers Club made California history. Here's an account found in our club's website, [California Writers Club | calwriters.org](http://CaliforniaWritersClub.com) :

For several months in early 2003, with the expert help of Anthony Folcarelli of the Sacramento CWC branch, Barbara Truax, Central Board President of the California Writers Club, Tim Leslie, member of the California State Assembly, and Anne Marie Gold, member of the executive board of the California Library Association, worked to establish California Writers Week. The plan was successful and on September 4, 2003 at 10 a.m., California Writers Club members gathered on the Assembly floor in Sacramento to receive a Joint Legislative Resolution from Assemblyman Tim Leslie. The Resolution was endorsed by the California Library Association.



Anne Marie Gold, Tim Leslie and Barbara Truax hold a framed copy of the California Legislative Assembly Resolution declaring the California Writers Week Resolution.

Below is the full text of the California Legislature Assembly Resolution declaring the third week in October to be California Writers Week.

Resolved: California Writers Week

By the Honorable Tim Leslie, 4th Assembly District; the Honorable Joseph Canciamilla, 11th Assembly District; the Honorable Guy S. Houston, 15th Assembly District; the Honorable Bill Maze, 34th Assembly District; the Honorable Gene Mullin, 19th Assembly District; the Honorable Joe Nation, 6th Assembly District; the Honorable Patricia Wiggins, 7th Assembly District; the Honorable John L. Burton, President Pro Tempore of the Senate; the Honorable Nell Soto, 32nd Senatorial District; and the Honorable Jackie Speier, 8th Senatorial District; Relative to the **CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB**

WHEREAS, The California Writers Club was founded in 1909, with Jack London, Ina Coolbrith, George Sterling and others as members; and WHEREAS, California's literary tradition dates back to the works of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Mary Austin, Nobel prize and Pulitzer prize winner John Steinbeck, Delilah L. Beasley, Joaquin Miller, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Barrio, Gertrude Atherton, Raymond Chandler, Pulitzer prize winner William Saroyan and a great many others, and WHEREAS, The California Writers Club honors all California writers, past and present, and continues to nurture the talents of new writers as well as established authors, and to provide a forum for the sharing of their writing experience, and WHEREAS, The California Writers Club's mission is to teach, mentor and encourage all writers for the good of our society; and WHEREAS, California libraries are the forum where the writing of Californians is preserved and provided to the public, and WHEREAS, the California Writers Club encourages all California libraries to showcase the works of California writers through displays, author programs and reading clubs; and WHEREAS, The California Writers Club urges all educational institutions to place more emphasis on developing the writing and reading skills of everyone; and

WHEREAS, The California Writers Club is observing the third week in October as California Writers Week; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED BY ASSEMBLY MEMBERS TIM LESLIE, JOSEPH CANCIAMILLA, GUY S. HOUSTON, BILL MAZE, GENE MULLIN, JOE NATION, AND PATRICIA WIGGINS AND PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE JOHN L. BURTON AND SENATORS NELL SOTO AND JACKIE SPEIER, That they recognize the third week in October as California Writers Week, and encourage the people of the State of California to reflect upon the contributions that California writers have made to humankind.

Members Resolution No. 2170. Dated this 4th day of September, 2003.





A WORK OF VISUAL ART INSPIRES A WORK OF POETIC ART

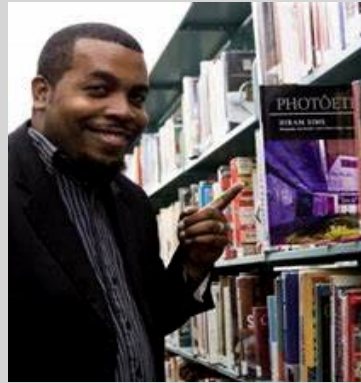
A Review by Elaine L. Mura, Ph.D.

Ode on a Grecian Urn



On 9/9/23, CWC hosted author Hiram Sims, who spoke on “One Picture is Worth 1,000 Words.” Sims has penned several books and speaks on creative writing with a special focus on poetry. In fact, his specific niche is Ekphrasis, which he defined as poetry inspired by other works of art. Of course, Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn” immediately comes to mind. To clarify, he termed Ekphrasis as rhetorical or device-related transfer of one media of art to another media by defining and describing its essence and form. He added that it is a derivative work of art from the original and helps the audience relate more directly to the original work through illuminative liveliness.

He noted that Ekphrasis actually enhances the original art work, so much so that the recreated work takes on a life of its own through its brilliant description of the original. He indicated that the process helps the audience relate to the original and is especially important in this age of social media, when comments tied to other comments lead to a conversation about the art work.



POET HIRAM SIMS

and represented by the photograph. Inference, he posited, were guesses we make based on the facts – an important part of interpretation. Historically, the root of photometry has been writing poetry about paintings.

As an example, he showed a photo of Van Gogh’s *Potato Eaters* painting. Van Gogh reportedly said that he wanted to depict the average person in Europe. For Sims, the painting also represented the first time he saw poverty in a painting where five heavily-clothed people shared two potatoes and a pot of tea while crowded around a small table in their chilly house. Thus the facts shown in the painting led to his inferences.

Sims then had the audience do an exercise to illustrate his point. The audience was instructed to select a photo or picture on a cell phone or the wall of their home and write a haiku (5-7-5 syllables) on that image. The exercise proved enlightening to the group.

To inspire our group of writers, Sims closed with several recommendations, including re-reading Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” checking into US Poet Laureate Natasha Trethaway, perusing Sims’ book called *Photoetry*, and reading *The Best of Robert Service*.

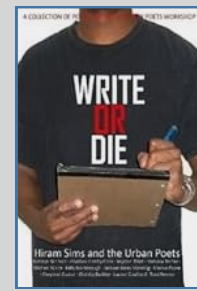
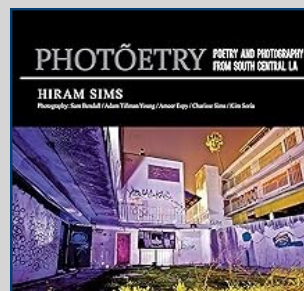
Sims added that all were welcome to visit the Sims Library, a collection of readings which started in his suitcase, moved to a garage, and finally found a facility on Crenshaw and Florence in Los Angeles. He added that “poetry is happening all the time.” He also suggested that authors follow the Community Literature Initiative group of Southern California, an organization which helps authors finish their books and even may help them get published. Further information is available at www.communitylit.org.



Vincent Van Gogh’s *Potato Eaters*

Sims also suggested that writers use photos for inspiration, a process which he termed photoetry. As an example, Sims showed the group a photo sent to him by a former student holding a baby in his arms; the baby wore an LA cap on his head. From this photo, Sims authored a hilarious poem asking people to cease criticizing Los Angeles because they weren’t born there and really didn’t appreciate the many fascinating points contained in the city.

To further clarify photometry, Sims noted the difference between fact and inference, with a fact being an actuality



[Amazon.com : hiram sims books](https://www.amazon.com/hiram-sims-books)



Whether you're a published author or "have always wanted to write," please join the CWC-SFV for monthly meetings at the Motion Picture and Television Fund Wasserman Campus in Woodland Hills. Meetings begin at 1 pm. Presenters will join us either in person or via Zoom on the huge screen in The Saban Center for Health and Wellness. You'll enjoy networking with other writers while learning more about the craft and business of writing. For more information and single lecture prices, visit <https://www.cwc-sfv.org>. Presentations are free for CWC members.

CWC-SFV GUEST SPEAKERS FOR 2023-2024

September 9, 2023

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Join poet, author, and photographer Hiram Sims as we explore the power, history and significance of the Ekphrastic poetry. We will identify homemade images and artwork that will be the basis of writing new poems. (In-



October 7, 2023

A LONG STRANGE TRIP - A WRITER'S JOURNEY

NY Times bestselling author, Jonathan Maberry, will discuss how writing horror got him started in his writing career, share insider tips, fresh perspectives on the changes in the publishing trade, and strategies for getting in gear and getting in print. (Zoom)



November 4, 2023

YOU CAN BE A WINNING WRITER

Award-winning poet and author of seven books, Joan Gelfand, will talk to us about various strategies to getting published. Her book, *You Can Be a Winning Writer: the 4c's of Successful Authors* was an Amazon #1 best seller. (Zoom)



December 2, 2023

BEATING REJECTION

Best-selling author Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, (aka crime writer Sam Blake), will discuss exactly what the industry is looking for and how best to submit your work. She will show you how to improve your pitch and build your author platform. (Zoom)



January 6, 2024

A COMPLICATED LIFE

Author, lecturer and BBC presenter, Paul Lewis, will talk to us about prolific Victorian author Wilkie Collins's incredible work ethic and his colorful private life. (Zoom)



February 3, 2024

BLACK AND IN LOVE

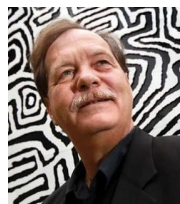
Romance author, Synthia Williams, will talk about why she started writing romance novels and why she likes to focus on black love in her award-nominated stories. (Zoom)



March 2, 2024

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Inspired by mythologist. Joseph Campbell, screenwriter, author and educator Christopher Vogler, will show us how to use the hero's journey to improve our creative writing. (In-person)



April 6, 2024

PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO WRITING

Kirsten Casey is a California Poet in the Schools, creative writing teacher, and the current Nevada County Poet Laureate. She wants you to enjoy writing, even if you feel undisciplined and blocked. (Zoom)



May 4, 2024

WRITING TRANSFORMED MY LIFE

Poet, writer, and activist, Luis Rodriguez, will share his poetry and discuss the transformative experience of writing his memoir: *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* (Zoom)



June 1, 2024

COACH WOODEN AND ME

Author and award-winning columnist, Woody Woodburn, will discuss what we can learn from his memoir, *WOODEN & ME: Life Lessons from My Two-Decade Friendship with the Legendary Coach and Humanitarian.* (In-person)



Meet new CWC-SFV Member Ken Mazur

Professional Guitarist, Producer, Composer and Novelist

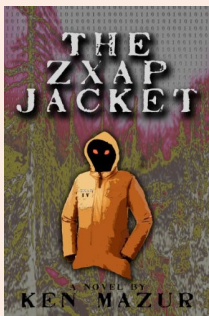
Content provided by kenmazurcomposer.com

A native of the NY metropolitan area, Ken was seduced into the music world by the early Beatles and became a professional musician by the age of fifteen when his home town rock band became the house band at the Village Gate Club in Greenwich Village. He later graduated PHI BETA KAPPA in anthropology from the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he worked in the field as an archaeologist and anthropologist, most notably from the Mesa Verde National Park Research Center.



Ken returned to NYC in 1976 to pursue a career as a session studio guitarist. He became a platinum selling musician whose recording career as a guitarist spans over four decades and includes studio work with musical greats such as Robert Palmer, Tina Turner, Marvin Gaye, The O'Jays, Herbie Mann, Eddie Kendrix, The Paul Winter Consort and INXS. Moving beyond work as a player to become an arranger and composer, he broke in as a NYC jingle writer in 1986. His clients included Chevrolet, Nintendo, Purina, Honda, NY Seltzer, Russell Athletic and McDonalds. In 1990 he moved to LA, fulfilling a desire to score long form projects. From 1990 to 1992, he was the CEO and head producer for the INDI label Proxima Records, but left the record business to focus on composing.

Ken's TV credits as composer include seven seasons scoring Joseph Rosendo's *Travelscope for PBS*, many episodes for the series "Behind the Music, VH1," also the entire following series: "Biker Build Off, Discovery", "Lost and Found, FX", "Manhattan, AZ", USA, and "Comics on Delivery" for Comedy Central. Ken has also scored or contributed music to films including *Nim's Island*, *The Uninvited*, *Pros and Cons*, *Lucky*, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, and *Voices from the Attic*. In 2005, Ken's children's show, *Precious Piglet*, won the ADA Award in the Valley for Best Children's Musical: Music, Lyrics and Book. His Broadway musical *Borscht Belt Bistro* was staged professionally in LA, NYC and Miami.



His first novel, *The Zxap Jacket*, was released via Amazon in 2012. It is the first book of a near future, dystopian sci fi detective trilogy. The second book, *Harvesting the Immortal* is to be released in early 2024. At that time, there will be a new release of book one, recently updated and renamed, *After the Burning Snow*. Ken intends to publish a collection of his poems eventually.

Today, he composes from his private studio in Topanga where he also produces independent musical artists and pursues his life long hobbies of writing novels, gardening, photography, poetry and jazz guitar. He is married to veterinary nurse miracle worker Susan Clark, has three grown children and contributes to her 501c3 volunteer animal rescue organization, www.TopangaAnimalRescue.org as CFO, field volunteer and shlepper.

Want to know more about Ken Mazur? Here are his websites:

www.kenmazurcomposer.com, [youtube/kenmazurmusic](https://youtube.com/kenmazurmusic), tiktok: [@kenmazurmusic](https://tiktok.com/@kenmazurmusic)

Kings River

I forgot again my camera
as the rays of dawn
turned red the gleaming
dusted peaks
and wisps of silver cloud
in bands of fog ascended
joyous, melting in the
sun's embrace.

I felt the river
singing through my bones
and freezing air upon my
cheeks.

too cold my hands
to tie a knot,
I fished the wind instead
which carried high
the leaves of gold
and songs of the
hawk



cedarbrook school

still
small red boots
chip through
autumn
crunching colors
on the walk
within the forks
of naked trees and
angles of
asphalt
still



HAMILTON HEIGHTS AND SUGAR HILL

Alexander Hamilton's Old Harlem Neighborhood Through The Centuries



Former member Davida Siwisa James has rejoined the San Fernando Valley Branch after a two-year hiatus. She returned to L.A. in 2020 after a decade in the High Desert where she was previously a member and former board member of the CWC High Desert Branch. Her nonprofit, Wordsmith Productions, produced the High Desert Book Festival.

Davida has been researching and writing a historical nonfiction book, *Hamilton Heights and Sugar Hill*, about Alexander Hamilton's old Harlem neighborhood.

"I got the inspiration to write the book after I saw Lin Manuel Miranda's play "Hamilton" at the Pantages in L.A. When I mentioned to people that I used to live in the Hamilton Heights section of Harlem as a young woman, they thought I was making it up. I tried many times through the decades, since I left New York, to tell people about this beautiful well-preserved section of Harlem, also called Sugar Hill. It has gorgeous townhouses, mansions and the gothic City College buildings. But it didn't pair well with people's mistaken knee jerk reaction to Harlem. With the last three decades of gentrification, those early twentieth century brownstones are worth \$2 million now. I couldn't find a book about my old neighborhood, so I took Toni Morrison's advice when she is quoted as saying that "if there's a book you want to read that hasn't been written, then write it."

Davida first applied for an NEH grant to write the book. "I've written three NEH grants now, and they are complex, time consuming and highly competitive. You must commit to trying to get a publisher while they review the application."

While she didn't get the grant, two university presses expressed an interest. Fordham University Press, one of the oldest in the country, quickly responded to her query. The book comes out April 2, 2024 in its Spring catalogue, under the Empire State Editions imprint that focuses on subjects unique to New York.

"I am beyond elated. Here I am, in my very senior years, after decades of writing and self-publishing, and I can finally say I have a publisher. What a joy."



Davida Siwisa James

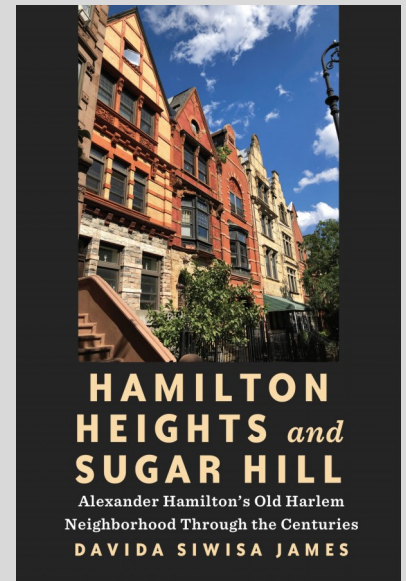
The full title is *Hamilton Heights and Sugar Hill: Alexander Hamilton's Old Harlem Neighborhood Through The Centuries*. It explores four centuries of colonization since the Dutch arrived in the 1600s, land divisions, and urban development around this historic landmark neighborhood in West Harlem, next to Washington Heights. It's where Alexander Hamilton built his home in 1800, as did John James Audubon in the mid-1800s, George Gershwin wrote his first hit "Swanee," a young Norman Rockwell realized he liked to draw, and Ralph Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*. Both Eleanor Roosevelt and Queen

Elizabeth II visited.

"There is stunning architecture, multi-million dollar mansions, and a Romanesque castle that James Bailey of Barnum Bailey built in 1888. There were Harlem Renaissance gatherings, and famous residents like Thurgood Marshall, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and W.E.B. Du Bois."

Davida is most pleased with uncovering the long-lost history of the transitions to Hamilton's home, the Grange, in the aftermath of his death in 1804. She also traces the history of the Morris-Jumel Mansion, Manhattan's oldest surviving residence. It is renowned as George Washington's headquarters at the start of the American Revolution right after he won his first victory in the Battle of Harlem Heights in 1776.

The book is expected to be 432 pages with 128 black and white photos. Hardcover presale is available on the Barnes Noble and Amazon websites for \$34.95. Davida will be exhibiting at the 2024 L.A. Times Festival of Books and organizing her own mini-book tour



A RETIREE FOUND NEW WAYS TO HELP HIS COMMUNITY

By Norman Molesko

After my retirement from the aerospace industry in 1992, I asked myself, "What should I do next with my life?" I found my answer: I started writing as a hobby in 1999 and then became an open-mike stand-up performer in 2007.

It has now been a quarter of a century, since my trademark has become positive and uplifting poetry. My efforts to be an advocate and a writer for Senior Citizens have been recognized and praised by both our city leaders and my writer friends in the CWC-SFV.

In the June 2022 issue of The Valley Scribe, Editor Kathy Highcove recognized me as an "Official Ambassador For Joy And Goodwill." I appreciate that.

Recently, I received the following endorsements:

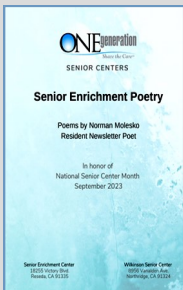
"I always enjoy perusing your perennially positive poetry," wrote Karen Gorback, Ph.D., CWC-SFV President.

"Your beautiful positive message is wonderful wherever it shines," opined Lillian Rodich, CWC Poet Facilitator.

I attribute the above comments to my being a happy and lucky guy who radiates goodwill. I still ask myself, "What should I do next in my life?" At the age of ninety-three, I am keeping my options open. I am still a writer and have found new ways to publish my works. Writing and publishing my verse may be giving me the zest needed for a more suitable Senior lifestyle.

For example, The ONE generation "Senior Enrichment Poetry eBook" is available to all CWC members. You can access the eBook at:

<https://www.lapoetsociety.org/senior-wisdom>



My new ONE generation "Senior Enrichment Poetry eBook." is now ALSO on the Los Angeles Poet Society (LAPS) website:

<https://www.onegeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Norman-Molesko-Senior-Enrichment-Poetry-Book-Sept-2023-FINAL2.pdf>

The updates can be found on the following sites:

<https://www.lapoetsociety.org/>

<https://www.lapoetsociety.org/sradvocacy>

<https://www.lapoetsociety.org/senior-wisdom>



Norman Molesko shares his poetry with a local audience.

I'M JUST A GUY

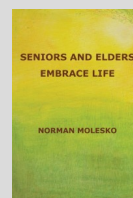
I'm just a guy
who sees the world
as a wonderful place.

I'm just a guy
aware of the goodness
of people around.

I'm just a guy
who experiences life
as worthwhile.

I'm just a guy
who is lucky to be here.

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[Seniors And Elders Embrace Life: Molesko, Norman: 9781979966238:](#)

THE RAVEN REVISITED

By Kathy Highcove



Anyone who's taken English Lit 101 has usually read all eighteen verses of Edward Allan Poe's verse: "The Raven." I have a hunch that most folks have rarely read it again. I recently reread the poem and found myself muttering, "... nevermore" as the verse progressed. Afterward, I wondered what inspired Poe to write this paranoid paean.

Was the distinguished poet depressed, sleep-starved, tired of gloomy weather, or perhaps irritated by noisy ravens hanging around his study windows. I noted the mention of Lenore, his deceased spouse, Virginia, who died of tuberculosis.

To research, I went online, looked up the verse and reaped a few insights—which I will briefly share. First, please peruse the first eight verses of "The Raven" in the next column.

Poe is thought to have written the poem in 1844 when he was struggling to make ends meet. In his essay, "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe stated that he wanted the poem to focus on the death of a beautiful woman because it is "unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world." He hoped this poem would make him famous, and appeal to both "the popular and the critical taste."

The raven mysteriously visits at midnight and soon torments the widower who is already depressed and grieving for his lost Lenore. The troublesome bird, like a messenger from the Underworld, perches on a bust of Pallas (a famous slain Greek warrior) and keeps repeating, "Nevermore," which mystifies and oppresses the depressed widower. The verses of "The Raven" have a haunting musical rhythm that might remind one of a chant heard in a mystical setting or perhaps a witches' coven.

The unhappy host wonders if the bird is a messenger of evil supernatural forces and begins to rant and beseech the bird to leave him alone and stop saying ... "Nevermore."

Did this poem bring Poe the favorable and lucrative reviews and the attention that he craved? I found my answer in an essay posted in a 2019 essay posted by scholar and writer, Cristine Sarikas:

"The Raven" was published in the newspaper The New York Evening Mirror on January 29, 1845 (depending on the source, Poe was paid either \$9 or \$15 for it). "The Raven" brought Poe instant fame, although not the financial security he was looking for. Critical reception was mixed, with some famous writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Butler Yeats expressing their dislike for the poem. Despite those initial mixed reviews, "The Raven" poem has continued its popularity and is now one of the most well-known poems in the world. Countless parodies have been written, and the poem has been referenced in everything from The Simpsons to the NFL team the Baltimore Ravens (their mascot is even named "Poe").

Now, after sampling the first eight verses, you may want to read the entire work at [The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe | Poetry Foundation](#) and then toast poet Edgar Allan Poe by devouring a couple of chocolate Halloween treats which might counterbalance the poem's negative vibes.

Sources: [The Raven - Wikipedia](#) and <https://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/the-raven/>

Excerpt From *THE RAVEN*

By Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
" 'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven—
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

RETIREMENT RUMINATIONS

A Freeverse Poem By Bob Okowitz, Ph. D.

Why does ice cream taste so good?
It's not mentioned in the Food Pyramid.
It has lots of sugar or fake sugar.
That stuff's not good for you.

The fat will send your cholesterol
To the roof, and beyond.
You won't notice, of course,
If you don't get it checked,

It tastes so good. So good.
Like you've just moved into
A condo overlooking Central Park
And there are no money worries at all.

You'll be spending a month in Hawaii.
Just for a change of pace.
You get all of this, just from
A bowl of Breyers Best.

It could be Chocolate, Vanilla, or Butter Pecan.
It doesn't matter, it's all heavenly.
My favorite is Coffee.
I could eat it all day long.

Not that I do, because that would be a sin.
A sin against God, the Food Pyramid,
And against my waistline.
I would be as big as a house.

I would not be able to get through
The front door of my beautiful condo,
I would have to buy two seats on Delta,
To get to Hawaii. What a bummer.

I would have to special order my ice cream,
Since sometimes the store is out.
Especially if I was there two days before.
Life is so not fair.

Maybe I should run a marathon instead?
Oh, no. My knees will yell at me. And my hips,
And my left foot. Yikes, what to do??
A walk to Safeway will be much easier.

Later gang, I'm on my way.



Every Brilliant Thing Review – Perfect Post-Pandemic Fare

Republished with the permission of Splash Magazine

By Elaine L. Mura, Ph.D.



Daniel K. Isaac – Photo by Isaak Berliner

Written by Duncan Macmillan and Jonny Donahoe, EVERY BRILLIANT THING stars Daniel K. Isaac in the solo journey through the milestones in his life that reminds us to pay attention to life's smallest joys – and to the people who are truly important in our lives. Originally a 2006 short story by English playwright Duncan Macmillan, EVERY BRILLIANT THING subsequently proved to be a dynamic theater produc-

tion co-authored with Jonny Donahoe and first presented in London in 2012. The interactive monolog found its way to New York City in 2014/2015, where it starred co-playwright Donahoe and was a Critics' Pick. The powerful solo play has toured the world and was adapted for HBO in 2021. In 2023, EVERY BRILLIANT THING finds its way to the Geffen Playhouse directed by Colm Summers and starring Daniel K. Isaac.

When authors Macmillan and Donahoe were interviewed for an HBO documentary in 2021, Macmillan described the play as "a conversation with the light on...let's not separate us from the audience; let's do everything together." Donahoe added that "because the theater is 'in the round,' you have this moving set around you of people reacting, engaging, laughing, and crying...it's where the form meets the content of the piece."

When asked about the recurring theme of depression and suicide, Macmillan opined that "it's a scary, dark subject that we didn't want to sentimentalize, but we also wanted to be really honest and helpful...it had to be funny, and it also needed to be open and generous and inclusive of an audience and not scare people off. Donahoe noted that "depression is something that affects all of us, whether directly or indirectly, and the only way to deal with it is to be open about it."

So what is all the fuss about? EVERY BRILLIANT THING starts off as a coming-of-age story told by a seven-year-

old boy raised by his stable but stoic father and a mother on a perennial rollercoaster of emotions – and how this youngster coped with the electric and unpredictable atmosphere around him, the specter of suicide often in the air. This is a story about the human need for communication – and the huge bonuses offered to each of us if we will only focus on the beauty and meaningful moments we are surrounded with, rather than on the low points – and even occasional tragedies – that are part of everyone's journey through life. It is also a story of hope and the human need to look for the silver lining in the black clouds hanging overhead. Using music as a stepping stone to feelings, the narrator even learns how to express his feelings without words

Director Summers helms the production with compassion – but also keeps things moving and often very amusing indeed. Isaac does a brilliant job of bringing this monolog to life with the aid of audience members – some of whom step right up and others who look very much like deer caught in the headlights – again adding to the gentle humor in the piece. Happily, Isaac has some latitude with specific lines, given the spontaneity and unexpected responses he must often deal with. At the same time, he must remain faithful to the script. Special kudos to scenic designer Sibyl Wickersheimer, whose beautifully woven and intricately patterned textiles keep Benedict Conran's lighting subtle but still direct. EVERY BRILLIANT THING is a theatrical event which should not be missed.

EVERY BRILLIANT THING runs through October 15, 2023, with performances at 8 p.m. on Wednesdays through Fridays, at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Sundays. The Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater is located at the Geffen Playhouse, 10886 Le Conte Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Tickets range from \$30 to \$129. For information and reservations, call 310-208-2028 or go [online](#).



Daniel K. Isaac – Photo by Isaak Berliner




Daniel K. Isaac – Photo by Isaak Berliner

THE BODY

BY ART YUWILER *

THE VALLEY SCRIBE OCTOBER 2009



Some things never change. He glowered at the dead body on the kitchen table. A body is a body is a body, he said to himself and he'd seen them all: fat ones, skinny ones and naked ones like the one before him. You can't be in the business as long as he had without seeing them all, without getting used to it. Yet it was gruesome enough, when you thought of it, cut off at the neck like that. Heaven knows where the head went.

Chewing his frayed toothpick, he turned around the room on fat, flat feet. Someone brought it, he thought. It sure as hell didn't just fly in the window. Someone placed it on that table. But who and why? No blood on the polished wooden floor. Likely long dead before being brought here. And no footprints either, though the rains last night soaked the grounds. Whoever had put it there was neat. He opened a kitchen drawer. Plenty of knives he noted. And sharp.

A star shaped chandelier hung from the ceiling in the next room, each of its eight arms ending in a cluster of elongated light bulbs, the kind that flickered like candlelight when turned on. Beneath it a long cherrywood table glowed blood red in the light from the living room windows. But it was the portrait on the wall that struck him. She emerged from a yellow background, long auburn hair framing an oval face, laughing gray eyes; cheeks touched with rose; full, red lips parted in a shy smile. An adorable face—young,

happy. He looked at it for a moment. She doesn't look like that now, he thought, his face grim.

The dining room opened onto a living area. Tall French windows opened onto the garden. On one side, a graceful staircase curved up to split into balconies rimming the upper floor. On the other, a massive stone fireplace cut into the wall. An arc of white couches surrounded it.

He heard rustling above him and darted back into the darkened dining room. She descended the staircase slowly in her black dress, an ageing ingenue. Plump now, arms heavy, grey spotting her auburn hair, she considered her red nails.

He stepped from the shadows and she turned, eyes still fixed on her nails.

"There is a body in the kitchen," he said. "Would you happen to know who put it there and why?"

"The butler did it," she answered, she added, "We are having six for dinner, Gaston. I would like you to barbecue that turkey."

"Again, madam?" he asked.

She turned sharp grey eyes on him. Her full, red lips flattened into a sharp line. "yes, again. Barbecued!" she said firmly.

He turned toward the kitchen muttering to himself. A Cordon-bleu chef and she wants barbecue again, and again and again. Some things never change.

** The late Art Yuwiler was a CWC Board member, a longtime critique group participant, a published writer and a friend to all.*

Turkey Vultures

By Michael Edelstein

**Turkey vultures glide
Above me on summer air
Soft zephyr currents
Carry their outspread black wings
In athlete's graced aerobics
Red heads extended forward
Razor beaks slicing the sky
My joy in their balletics
Is muted by their mission
Searching for the dead road kill
Carrion awaiting them
To fill their empty stomachs
And quell their constant hunger**





Halloween

By Patricia Avery

Spooky goblins fill the night
Swirling, it's a terrible sight
Child imaginings rule the air
A monster beckons from his lair

Pumpkins flicker ghastly grins
Leaves twisting in the winds
Moonlight dances with the fog
The mournful howling of a dog

Costumes pour from every house
A witch, a ghost, even a mouse
Eagerly run to ring each door
As innocent anticipations soar

Bags of loot drag them down
Trudging home through the town
Candy eaten, tummies now full
Sleep under covers of wool

Broken pumpkins on the street
Leaves crackling beneath his feet
Shrieking laughter, a horrible fiend
The moon shines silently on the scene

The Pumpkin Patch

By Lillian Rodich

Chill shakes us and mixes with laughter,
Courtne, Alexis, and I crunch through dried grass
and open our mouths to the wind.

Pumpkins roll in the sawdust,
their orange faces grooved and scarred
and topped by jaunty green caps.

“I want that little baby one,
just as big as my hand,” Courtne chants.
Then, “I want THAT one!”

Bells ring...tinkling silver bells
and we look over toward mushroom of dust
where Indians pound out their rhythm
on beaded drums
as they begin to dance.

Their chant beckons us to join them and we do.
Alexis, Courtne, and I skip into the circle.
Courtne’s face is painted
and a bright feather quivers in her hair
while we stamp, walk, hop, and turn in line.

We turn toward the hot apple cider.
Toward stacks of corn stalks
and toward a sea of pumpkins
alive and glowing in the dusk.



CWC-SFV CLUB INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES



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 meetings at the Saban Health and Wellness Center at the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) in Woodland Hills 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 CWC-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 \(cwc-sfv.org\)](#)

For further information about the CWC-SFV critique groups, contact Marlene Bumgarner at: marlenebumgarner@gmail.com

If you are interested in additional information about our San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club, please check out our website at: CWC-SFV.org

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No, no, no!
Always shriek
BOOOOKS!
at CWC writers!

