



Jeri Westerson: Best Selling Author of Fantasy, Horror and Romance



The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is excited to welcome award-winning author Jeri Westerson as our speaker on June 4 at 1:00 pm via Zoom with a presentation titled “How to Write a Page Turner!”

What makes a book an

enticing page-turner? What tools do writers need to keep readers up at night (in a good way)? Page-turning novels grip readers from the very first word and don’t let go until the very last word. There are a few tips and tricks that writers can do to get there; all you need is someone to offer some advice. Jeri Westerson, award-winning medieval mystery author, will offer suggestions and will answer the burning questions you may have on writing books that are certain to sell and bring readers back again and again.

L.A. native Westerson writes the critically acclaimed *CRISPIN GUEST MEDIEVAL NOIR* series, two urban fantasy

series, a Gas Lamp-steampunk fantasy series, a rom/com LGBTQ mystery series, and numerous short stories in various mystery anthologies. To date, her medieval mysteries have garnered thirteen industry award nominations, from the Agatha to the Shamus. She has served as president of the SoCal Chapter of Mystery Writers of America, president of Sisters in Crime Orange County, and vice president for Sisters in Crime Los Angeles. She’s also a member of the Historical Novel Society. Her latest novel, *OSWALD THE THIEF; A Medieval Caper*, releases this month on May 28th.

Members of CWC-SFV will receive Zoom invitations to this event.

A Sampling of Jan Westerman Novels

More Information available at: jeriwesterson.com



CWC members from other branches may request a Zoom by contacting Monte Swann at cwcsfvhost@gmail.com by noon on June 3. Other guests may purchase admission to this presentation at [San Fernando Valley Writers \(cwc-sfv.org\)](http://SanFernandoValleyWriters.com) by noon on June 3. After purchasing admission, guests will also receive a Zoom invitation. We regret that we cannot accommodate late requests.

IN THIS ISSUE	2/ President’s Message	6/ Memories of Dad	11/ Life in the Key of “	14/ A Feathered Dustup
	3/ Election Results	7/ CWC Writers Conference	12/ Happy Norman	15/ Song of the Sea
	4/ May Speaker Review	8-9/ Writers With June Birthdays	13/ Spring 2022 Afternoon Hymn	16/ Farewell
	5/ Anat’s Script Tips	10/ Cultural Dance		



Hello members, and welcome to June – a time for celebrating graduations, weddings, Father's Day, Pride Month, Alzheimer and Brain Awareness Month, and Juneteenth. In addition, chocoholics like me look forward to National Fudge Day (June 16) and Chocolate Éclair Day (June 22).

For our club, June marks the end of our formal program year. The past year was packed with presentations on prose, poetry, and the perils of pernicious publishing contracts. We began the year with Happiness Coach Silver Rose and will end the year on Saturday, June 4 with award-winning author Jeri Westerson, who will teach us how to write page turners.

Along the way, we learned how to use psychology in character development, how to write biographies, and how to turn our fiction into screenplays. Your membership dues go a long way to provide you with the information you need in the craft and business of writing as you continue your literary journey. Your CWC-SFV board hopes you've enjoyed the program year!

If you missed some of the presentations, read about them in the *Valley Scribe* archive via our [website](#) – all thanks to Editor-in-chief Kathy Highcove, the members who submitted summaries of the lectures, and our webmaster Michael Rains who posts the *Scribe* each month. I know you will enjoy reading back copies of this beautiful publication as much as I do.

As we go into our summer hiatus, I will also enjoy catching up on the articles in *Writer's Digest*. The May/June 2022 issue includes their annual feature titled "101 Best Websites for Writers." A definite keeper.

Finally, one more note about the business of running a writers club: Please pay your renewal dues now, and also encourage your friends to join us as new members. Maybe you and a friend can start a critique group with a few others to discuss the latest speaker, as well as critique each other's work. Remember that membership in one CWC branch buys you access to the other 21 CWC branches. While the cost of driving a car or chugging down a cold glass of milk has soared, the price of CWC membership has remained the same for as long as I can remember. It's the best deal around.

So, I hope you enjoy June celebrations, check out the *Scribe* archive, peruse your pile of *Writer's Digests*, renew your club membership, and refer a new member – just because it's June. *Just because it's June, June, June.**

Karen Gorback Ph.D., CWC-SFV President

*From *Carousel* (1945) "June is Bustin' Out All Over" music and lyrics by Rodgers and Hammerstein

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Kathy Highcove
Editor of
The Valley Scribe

Behold your board officers and directors for the coming year, people who are ready to take the wheel of our San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club. We're guided by a basic CWC precept: the nurturing of writing skills in our local community. A century ago, a small group of elite California writers met and mused on their poetry, prose and promotion of writing skills. Since that gathering, the writer's world has greatly changed. For example, today we writers meet online with both SFV local members and folks who found us through social media. Soon, when COVID is finally on the decline, we board members plan to hold hybrid meetings: face to face interaction, and face time for members who join us via a Zoom connection. We will work hard to meet the needs of all our club members.

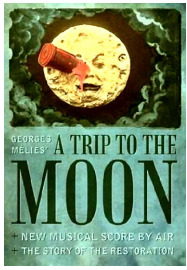
Yes, much change has come to the CWC in a century, but some things remain the same: CWC volunteers, in every CWC branch, freely give their time and energy in support of local writers. We SFV board members try, each year, to meet this goal. And believe me, who's a veteran of numerous CWC boards, it's **joyful** work. As our new year begins, ask yourself:

How can I help our SFV branch in the coming year?

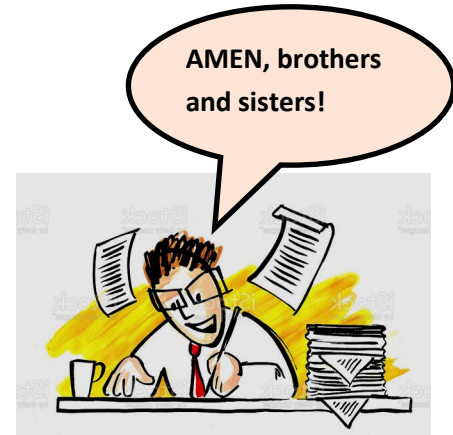
Kathy Highcove

The Scriptwriter's First Commandment: LESS IS MORE!

By Kathy Highcove, *The Valley Scribe* Editor



Countless published authors have dreamed of writing not only a best-selling book, but one that might be adapted into a hit movie. Such a metamorphosis is not an impossible dream. Since the early 1900's, stories and books have been made into a movie. At our May Zoom meeting, CWC-SFV member, Anat Golan-Wenick, a seasoned optional screenwriter and script analyst, delivered an insider's take on the verbal/visual connection. This partnership between book and film, author and producer, text and script has continued – thrived! - since the dawn of cinema.



Anat's talk began with a short history lesson: she shared a film clip from *A Trip to the Moon* (French: *Le Voyage dans la Lune*) a 1902 film directed by Georges Méliès. It was inspired by a wide variety of sources, including Jules Verne's 1865 novel *From the Earth to the Moon* and its 1870 sequel *Around the Moon*. Our Zoom gallery watched a scene with top-hatted astronomers. "Marine" maidens in short-shorts, tussling with a moon goddess and creepy moon aliens. More than a century later, countless authors and their agents are in production with directors and producers. All interested parties change a

book's descriptive, informative text into far fewer pages of terse dialogue and stage directions. Scripts reinvent a published story into a visual experience. Why would an author hope that their book could morph into film? Anat gave us the bottom line: profit. The end product can be extremely lucrative. The Worldwide Box Office's statistics show that film adaptations of books will earn 53% more profit than competing films. Movies also increase the sales of the source material – the original book! A happy ending for all protagonists!

Have you seen my new yacht?

Our speaker then gave us a quick tutorial of the challenges of her profession. A scriptwriter must be a versatile talent, who, after reading the original storyline, can convert several hundred printed pages into a very different format. Brevity is the goal and a page of script should reflect brevity with what is termed in script circles as: "white space."

A book writer must paint a word picture for a scene, invent intriguing dialogue,

George R.R. Martin
Game of Thrones author

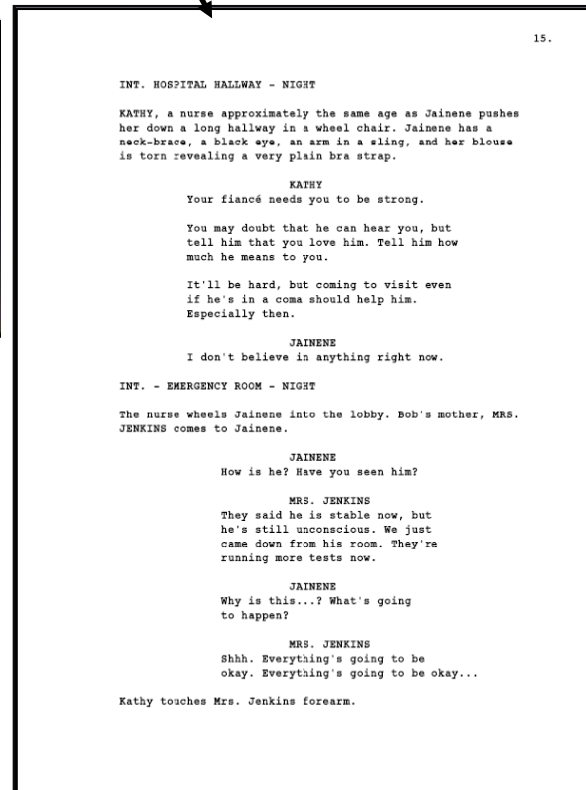
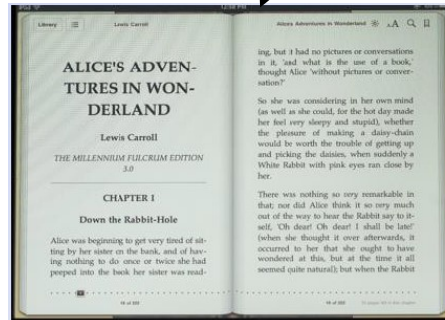
create a problem or challenge for every important protagonists, build tension, provide a crisis and supply a satisfactory ending. In other words, a writer must be a skilled narrator while providing sensory information for a reader.

In contrast, a scriptwriter must dramatically reduce all description, dialogue and scene details. Less is more. "Kill your darlings," Anat advised us, i.e., ruthlessly redline any word, sentence or paragraph that slows the action on the white page. All stage directions and dialogue must be reduced to a few sentences and key camera shots. Take a close look at the difference between the page of a book and a typical page of a script. Note that the black text is framed on the page with at least an inch of white space. Also note that the text is tight, terse and flows quickly as one reads down the page. There are no long descriptions. Less is more.

Script lore is a huge topic and I predict that Anat, our SFV expert script analyst, will make future appearances to address essential elements of the script genre.

On the next page, Anat shares resources that can help you learn the ins and outs of the everchanging scriptwriter genre. Copy and paste her tips into your Scriptwriter folder!

VERBAL MUST BECOME VISUAL



Anat Golan-Wenick's Basics For Screenwriters

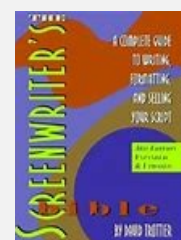
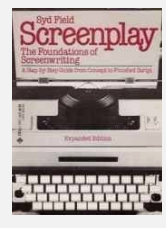
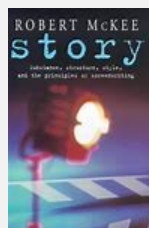
1. One trick to adapt you book scene into a movie/TV screenshot is to visualize in your mind what the audience will see on screen. If you can't imagine how it would look like - you have to figure a different way.
2. Smells and feelings have to either be verbalized or visualized. For example, if your character's bad behavior is triggered by a smell of chocolate, you'll have to show the chocolate in his vicinity (a bar of chocolate on a table, a store front where they make/sell chocolates, etc.), or it will have to come in a dialogue sequence (dialogue includes voice over like in many of the 1940s detective movies or "Forest Gump" or a conversation between 2+ people).
3. Be concise with words to express your character's emotions/state of mind. A character doesn't just walk. It skips, slumps, strolls, sneaks, etc.
4. Avoid phrases like "starts to" and "begins to" as they tend to stall reading. Use the actual action: a character doesn't begin to cry. A character simply cries. Also do not just state that a room is silent without giving an indication what is going on with the characters to provide some action and to better characterize your protagonists/antagonists. For example, a room may be quiet, but your antagonist can slide his hand up and down a knife he/she is holding. A character can wipe their nose every few seconds, wipe sweat from their forehead with a napkin, etc.
5. Be strategic with your scenery. In a novel you can spend pages detailing a room, a house, a neighborhood. In a screenplay suffice to say dilapidated shack, a fancy/upper scale living room, a messy teenager room. Trust the prop master to know what a messy teenager room should include. Only give details on what is absolutely necessary to a character. For example, if your teenager is pretending to be dumb, but is actually smart, you can say a messy room, with an advanced scient book peaking from under the bed/from under dirty socks etc. If your character is a heavy smoker, obviously you can't state that the room smells like cigarettes, but you can state an ashtray filled with cigarette butts, or many empty cigarette boxes, etc.)
6. In a novel you can mix past, present and future tenses. In a screenplay, the action sequences (not dialogue) is always in simple present tense (except rare cases where you can use the present tense like going instead of go/goes).

Finally, for free writing software, here's a good article that notes and rates what's out there. You can just take the names of the software or refer to the article. [16 Best Free Screenwriting Software For Screenwriters 2021 \(techpout.com\)](https://techpout.com/2021/01/16-best-free-screenwriting-software-for-screenwriters-2021/)

Final Draft is the gold standard in the market, but it is pricey. **Movie Magic** and **Fade In** are two others that also cost money but are widely used in the industry.

Books about screenwriting:

- 1) Story: by Robert McKee
- 2) Screenplay by Syd Field
- 3) Making a Good Script Great by Linda Seger
- 4) The Complete Guide to Standard Script Formats by Cole Haag
- 5) The Screenwriter's Bible by David Trottier



PATERNAL REASSURANCE

By Max Schwartz

Editor's note: This memoir piece by Max Schwartz, now deceased, was written in response to my request for a memory of his father. Several years ago, during my first round as editor of *The Valley Scribe*, Max was my cartoonist, advisor and an excellent writer of memoir pieces. He had once worked as a reporter, editor and published several books. I learned so much from Max about editing a newsletter. Here's a sample on his nonfiction writing from June, 2013.

Dear Kathy, My first reaction to your request to "remember anything about my father since the last time I saw him alive," was when I was six years old: I was crying as he left to return to the hospital, now called the City of Hope. I learned later he died from tuberculosis.

My mother made sure I always remembered and respected his memory. Every year we went to the cemetery, where I listened to her wailing "Why did you leave me, Sam? Why did you leave me?" Then an elderly man in a black hat would come to the grave site and pray in Hebrew to my dad. This was repeated on every anniversary of his death, or Yahrzeit, until I left for the army in 1943.

When our regiment lined up to board an old English merchant ship bound for England, our chaplain's aide passed out Bibles at the gangplank. I got the Jewish version. That's an ominous sign, I thought, as I pocketed the small book. Two days later while on the rough Atlantic swaying in our canvas hammocks in the ships hold and as waves pounded the hull, I saw my father again. He told me not to worry.

Most of my comrades were intensely reading their Bibles, but I was being reassured by my father's spirit as I was certain a German torpedo would tear through the thin steel hull and explode in our midst. He was my Bible for the entire voyage and throughout the War in Europe and Pacific. He safely returned me home to raise a family, become a grandfather, and write this story about our fathers.

"My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, "You're tearing up the grass." "We're not raising grass," my dad would reply, "We're raising boys."

- Harmon Killebrew
2011

My father didn't tell me how to live;
he lived, and let me watch him do it.

- Clarence B. Kelland
2011

The Storm

I watch my father battle the storm,
feel encroaching cold in the drafty cab,
hear gears' grinding urgency,
windshield wipers' struggling rhythm,
see, through briefly cleared arcs,
the plow's smothered hood.

In the wind-tunnel void
a barrage, an infinity of white--
Coming! Coming! Coming!
Buries guard rails,
muffles headlights.

I see him alone.
Overcome.
angled blade
tearing at the shroud.



- Mary Shaffer
2010



2022 SAN FRANCISCO WRITERS CONFERENCE

Hyatt Regency Embarcadero Hotel

Thursday, July 21- July 24th, 2022

Celebration of Craft, Commerce and Community for Writers

<https://www.sfwriters.org/2022-conference/>



The mission of the San Francisco Writers Conference: *Build Bridges To Better Tomorrows.*

Writers attending the conference will receive information and inspiration to help them:

- ◆ write and successfully sell their books
- ◆ reach their literary and financial goals
- ◆ provide a forum for writers, agents, publishers, and writers organi-

2022 Key Speakers



Charlie Jane Anders

Charlie Jane Anders is the author of *Victories Greater Than Death*, the first book in a new young-adult trilogy, which came out in April 2021. Up next: *Never Say You Can't Survive*, a book about how to use creative writing to get through hard times; and a short story collection called *Even Greater Mistakes*. Her other books include *The City in the Middle of the Night* and *All the Birds in the Sky*. Her fiction and journalism have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Slate*, *McSweeney's*, *Mother Jones*, the *Boston Review*, *Tor.com*, *Tin House*, *Teen Vogue*, *Conjunctions*, *Wired Magazine*, and other places. Her TED Talk, "Go Ahead, Dream About the Future" got 700,000 views in its first week. With Annalee Newitz, she co-hosts the podcast *Our Opinions Are Correct*.



Annalee Newitz

Annalee Newitz writes science fiction and nonfiction. They are the author of the book *Four Lost Cities: A Secret History of the Urban Age*, and the novels *The Future of Another Timeline*, and *Autonomous*, which won the Lambda Literary Award. As a science journalist, they are a writer for the *New York Times* and elsewhere, and have a monthly column in *New Scientist*. They have published in the *Washington Post*, *Slate*, *Popular Science*, *Ars Technica*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Atlantic*, among others. They are also the co-host of the Hugo Award-winning podcast *Our Opinions Are Correct*. Previously, they were the founder of *io9*, and served as the editor-in-chief of *Gizmodo*.



Lysley Tenorio

Lysley Tenorio is the author of the novel *THE SON OF GOOD FORTUNE* and the story collection *MONSTRESS*, which was named a book of the year by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a Whiting Award, a Stegner fellowship, the Edmund White Award, and the Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as residencies from the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, and the Bogliasco Foundation. His stories have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Zoetrope: All-Story*, and *Ploughshares*, and have been adapted for the stage by The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco and the Ma-Yi Theater in New York City. Born in the Philippines, he lives in San Francisco, and is a professor at Saint Mary's College of California.

The **California Writers Club's** mission statement mirrors that of the SFWC: Helping writers build the networks they need by creating a community, online and off. In short: 'Writers Helping Writers.' We, the CWC, once more sponsor a booth to provide convention attendees with information about our Club, and as an outreach to local writers who seek help, support, and encouragement in their writing career. This is the ninth year that we have represented the state-wide CWC at our Conference booth. And this is the most important aspect of our booth: our volunteers.

As an added benefit of this CWC conference, the SFWC 2022 has volunteered to host a five-member panel. These five people were chosen in recognition of the hard work they've given throughout their many years with the CWC. They are all CWC NorCal board members and will speak on "Success Stories: Finding Author Support within the California Writers Club." The CWC panel will be held on Sunday, July 24th at 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in Seacliff Room A.

The San Francisco Writers Conference 2022 has once again embraced our CWC participation, and we want to thank those of you who have stepped forward to help make this another year of celebrating our fellow writers!

Cordially, Carole Bumpus – Norcalchair@calwriters.org

SFV Editor's note: Our Thanks to CWC for providing scholarships to our own Anat Wenick and Pat Avery who will attend day-long intensives at the conference on Screenwriting and Poetry.

June Gloom. What to read under an overcast sky? As one who does enjoy reading in the back garden at this time of year, before lingering outside becomes unpleasurable in the intense heat of summer, I've made myself a little reading area to do so.

Under the shade of a guava tree, I have placed a rickety wooden lounge that has a bolt missing and has to be balanced just-so to be stable, but it suffices. Across the lounge, there is a long cushion with stuffing exposed in places where it has been raided over the years for nesting material, and draped over the cushion is a colorful throw, which too is riddled with threadbare holes. Somewhere close by is nest woven with red, blue, and yellow cotton, and lined with man-made white fluff.

Looking forward to an hour of reading, I set my tea and biscuit on the side table and open the book. It feels idyllic, low seventies with a soft, cool breeze; our Golden Retriever curled next to me, and the young crows calling from their nest built in a tall tree in the neighbor's yard.

Before long, however, a chattering alerts me to a male squirrel in the guava branches looking down at me. More peanuts? Okay, I fetch some. What page was I on? Next up, the Juncos land on a path nearby, chirping, apparently deciding that it is the female's turn to peck the ground for seed while the male keeps watch on the arm of a chair, his small dark head flicking around, keeping an eye on the sky and the four corners of our yard. Very cute to see, but back to my book.

Half a paragraph in and I am disturbed by the rattling of the ceramic water dish on a nearby patio table. It is the resident Scrub Jay. I take a look in the dish. The water has been sullied by soggy peanut shells. Thanks crows! I refill the dish with fresh water and return to my reading spot where, it turns out, the Yorkipoo has decided to join us. It's getting pretty crowded on that lounge. Somehow, we all fit.

A Mourning Dove, with its usual twittering fanfare, lands on the chair arm vacated by the Junco, and gives me the eye. Obediently, I put out more seed. A Hummingbird buzzes above my head and hovers. Hm, what's that about? I check the feeder; it's covered in ants! I clean it, refill it and move the Shepherd's hook that it swings from to a different part of the yard, again. The book beckons but, Oh, look a beautiful orange butterfly, a white one, a yellow one, a red one! I haven't seen that before. And don't get me started on the charms of the talented vocalist - the Mockingbird.

So yes, I love to read in the garden but hardly any reading gets done. Here follows a list of what not to read in your garden this month:

Poets — Gillian Clarke, *Zoology*, UK poet laureate, John Masefield, *Sea Fever*, Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Nobel Prize Winner, William Butler Yeats, *The Second Coming*, Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Muldoon, *Moy Sand and Gravel*, and Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*.



Glacier By Gillian Clarke

The miles-deep Greenland glacier's lost its grip, sliding nine miles a year towards the sea on its own melt-water. As, forty years ago, the slag-heap, loosened by a slip of rain-swollen mountain stream, suddenly gave with a roar, taking a primary school, crushing the children. The century of waste has burned a hole in the sky over the Pole. Oh, science, with your tricks and alchemies, chain the glacier with sun and wind and tide, rebuild the gates of ice, halt melt and slide, freeze the seas, stay the flow and the flux for footfall of polar bear and Arctic fox.

Crime writers celebrating birthdays this month, include: Patricia Cornell, *Postmortem*, first in the Kay Scarpetta series, Val McDermid, *The Wire in the Blood*, Dorothy L Sayer, *Strong Poison*, though Sayer considers her best work to be a translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*,

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*.



“To be sane in a world of madmen, is in itself madness.”

(Continued on page 9)

Best wishes also go to; Peter Mayle, *A Year in Provence*, Ian McKewan, *Atonement*, (I think we procrastinators can agree with McKewan, "I'm quite good at not writing"), Adam Roberts, *Jack Glass*, short story writer, Edith Pearlman, *Binocular Vision*, Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie*, Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winner, Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth*, and Chris Van Allsburg, who wrote, *Jumanji* and *The Polar Express*.

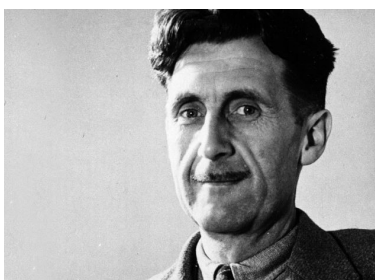
Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life*.



"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."

George Orwell.

1984 and *Animal Farm* have together have sold more books than any other twentieth century author. Phrases he gave us: 'Cold War,' 'Big Brother,' 'thought crime,' 'thought police' and 'double think.'



And, of course, Orwellian has become a popular English term.

Other novelists with birthdays this month are; Richard Powers, *The Overstory*, Larry McMurry, *Lonesome Dove*, Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Collen McCullough, *The Thorn Birds*, Carol Shields, *Stone Diaries* (Pulitzer prize winner), Ken Follett, *World Without End*, V. C. Andrews, *Flowers in the Attic* (what a strange book to read when I was fourteen!), Louise Erdrich, *The Plague of Doves*, Robert Fulghum, *All I Really Needed to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*, and Salmon Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*.



Josephine Winslow Johnson

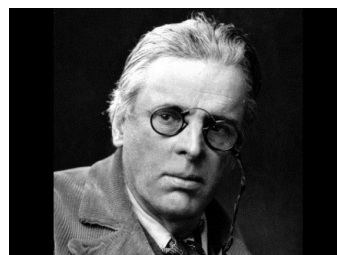
Her first novel, *Now in November*, won the Pulitzer Prize. She was 24.

Dorothy West, *The Living is Easy*

"When I was seven, I said to my mother, may I close my door? And she said, yes, but why do you want to close your door? And I said because I want to think. And when I was eleven, I said to my mother, may I lock my door? And she said yes, but why do you want to lock your door? And I said because I want to write."



William Butler Yeats



The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
More anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are these words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

Sources: <https://www.writerswrite.co.za/literary-birthday-calendar/#>, www.theguardian.com, www.abebooks.com, en.Wikipedia.org, pr.princeton.edu



Cultural Dance

The music was turned on
A command was given:

*“Join the circle
Mingle with the rest
Sway to the music.”*

The beat was captivating
The heart was pounding
But the feet
Would not comply.

The mind was entangled
The soul was floundering
Between the new tune
And an old familiar rhythm

The crowd swept in ecstasy
Danced in harmony.

But my frostbitten feet
Set me apart from the rest.

Pirhiya Goldstein

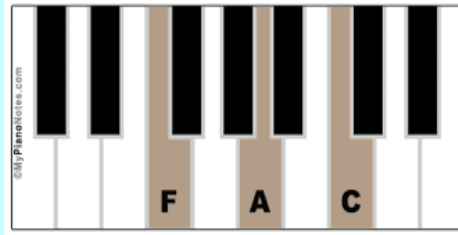


I've reached the age when more often than not I find myself reflecting on whether I am satisfied and content with the course my life has taken. I ask myself questions like: What could I have done that I didn't do? What have I done that I could have done better? What, if anything, is *left* for me to do? Is there still time? These are heavy matters to ponder, but when they become a bit overwhelming I know it's time to take a break. That's when I head for my piano keyboards.

At the risk of appearing self-serving, I believe I have been endowed with some inherent skills and a certain degree of talent. One of the latter attributes has to do with music. If it can be said that one has an "ear" for music, I've been told that I fall into that category. For example, while I am not remotely close to having perfect pitch, I can usually tell very quickly when another person is just a tad off key. My talented ear is also responsible for my ability to play music and songs on my electronic keyboards without knowing how to read music. If I know a song by heart, I can play it, the operative phrase being "I play by ear." However, I intensely dislike that expression because of the picture it summons. When I first heard it as a child, I visualized a severed ear tripping the light fantastic over the keys, leaving a bloody trail in its wake. It wasn't a pretty picture and I still can't shake it. So, I prefer to say that I use the Van Gogh Method, which sounds far more professional.

So, go ahead, ask me. If I know it, I will play it for you. But there's just one little catch: I can only play it in the key of "C". The song might not have been *written* in that key, but I have to *play* it in the key of "C". Allow me to explain:

This is my personal favorite because it is a fairly simple one, with not many chord changes. Chords are usually played with the left hand, the melody with the right hand. For me, the less I must worry about my left hand, the better; I am not ambidextrous. Then I discovered folios with songs written exclusively in the key of "C" and can be played using only three chords. I thought I had died and gone to heaven, where undoubtedly everyone plays keyboards instead of harps. And another plus for my lovely key of choice is that it's usually devoid of those annoying little sharps and flats. They are so distracting, and who needs them, anyway? So there you have it, my rationale for playing everything in the key of "C": I know the song by heart and I can play it by Van Gogh.



While I'm certainly not proficient in reading music, I have taught myself enough to get out of a jamb if necessary. If I want to play something that I don't know entirely by heart, I will revert to the sheet music. If it's in the key of "C" I've got it made. If not, there's an option. I have this special little

tool that resembles a slide rule, and while it can be a tedious process, I can transpose the music from the key in which it's written to the key of "C", and none will be the wiser. I feel a certain amount of guilt because I'm tampering with someone else's original piece of music. But it will just have to be one of my dirty little secrets.

I have nothing but the highest praise for my awesome Yamaha keyboards. Without them I am nothing. It's true when they say keyboards will play themselves. Just a tap of a finger of a finger on any of the mindboggling buttons brings forth every possible rhythm and voice imaginable to enhance my presentation: trumpets and tangos, piccolos and polkas, flugelhorns and foxtrots, marimba and mambos, banjos and boogie-woogies. Not to mention several pre-recorded demonstration songs and music. With just the flip of a switch the room fills with a sampling of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue or a lively Maple Street Rag. My neighbors undoubtedly throw open their windows to treat themselves to the performance by the sensational prodigy who lives next door. In the meantime, depending upon the length of the piece, I can finish washing the dishes and take the trash out. Another guilt trip, another one of my dirty little secrets.

It should be obvious that this musical diversion of mine provides hours of pleasure and gratification. But whenever I pull out the bench, sit down and crack the knuckles, ready to launch my beloved key of "C", those pesky questions surface once again. Why didn't I pursue a vocation where this special gift could have been put to better use? Why didn't I learn to read music and pair that skill with my clever little ear? Truth be told, I don't have the answers to those questions, but neither do I have the time or energy to try to figure them out. I'm much too busy working on the most important one: What can I still do with the time I have left? Well, that's easy. I can do anything I set my mind to, whether it's running a marathon, writing a novel, or learning how to answer my smart phone when it rings. So don't even *think* about raining on my parade. Anything you can do I can do better. And I'll do it my way. As long as it's in the key of "C".

REFLECTING MY SOUL

Smiles, smiles, smiles.

I have so many smiles.

This reflects how my soul feels.

It is with a sense of glee.

This fellow of eighty, humbly has to say,
the warmth and love I received from friends and family,
and the Saturday Critique Group, fill me with such joy.

A few brief weeks ago, from unexpected heart attacks,

I could have floated away.

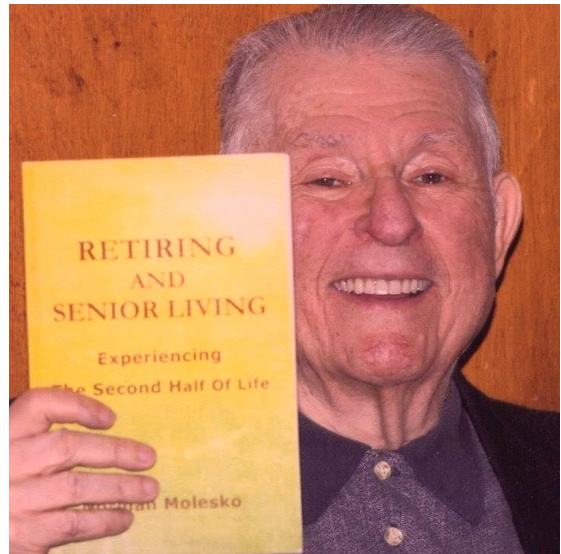
Fine medical care allows me to stay.

Now I stand before you alive and tall.

I appreciate that you and I are here today.

Norm Molesko

CWC-WV InFocus, June 2010



CO-LIVING WITH COVID

I am blessed that the Covid virus

has not reached me, has not invaded me.

L.A. County Public Health keeps updating me.

I am sorry for the million who died from Covid.

I am lucky that I am free from symptoms,
from suffering, from fear, from anxiety.

In this country and in the world,

Covid is hanging on and will not go away.

I will not allow Covid to dictate my lifestyle.

What matters is what I have become,

what I can give to and share with others,

goodness, trust, compassion and some fun.

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Ambassador For Seniors

Norman explains his Ambassador title:

I have an official City of Los Angeles Scroll hanging on one wall in my house that was dated July 7, 2016. On the Scroll under the City of Los Angeles Emblem, the words appear, Norman Molesko, then Ambassador For Seniors. The Scroll was signed by both present Mayor Eric Garcetti and Councilmember 12th District, Mitchell Englander. I generally use the title, Ambassador For Seniors, under most of my poems nowadays.

Norman's three books are available at:

[Amazon.com : norman molesko](https://www.amazon.com/norman-molesko)



Spring 2022

**The pavement is cracked
Grass grows in every niche
Tougher than am I**

**I have pulled the weeds
Sprouting from my neighbor's drive
She will not complain**

**Not Green anymore
The grass is sere and umbered
No water to waste**

Michael Edelstein

Afternoon Hymn

Give thanks for the unrelieved beauty
Of boring days,
When flies buzz in the distance
And ladybirds creep through tall grass.
Relish every day without a ripple,
When fog hangs low
Or sun shines harsh.
You cross your eyes for exercise
And yawn for entertainment.
No attorney, doctor, or accountant
Lingers near to champion your cause.
Boredom presses down
And peace reigns supreme.



**Bess Davidson
2010**

A Feathered Dust-Up

By Kathy Highcove

2012



I spotted a dark form lurking on a high branch of our Brazilian pepper tree, and then I heard the resident mockingbird squall a warning. She teetered on the edge of her nest and dared the crow to come one inch closer. And he did. He hopped down to a lower branch, and leered at her three pale green eggs. I sipped my coffee and waited; I knew the intruder would soon be getting the bum's rush.

The female bird spread out her tail feathers, puffed out her chest and squalled for her mate – who was looking for bugs in the nearby avocado tree. The crow fluttered back up to a higher branch. Her mate came back on the double, and screeched raspy warnings, “K-r-r-a-ck! K-r-r-a-ck!” as he aggressively landed on a twig a few feet above the crow. Both of the mockingbirds now scolded their enemy. They teetered, puffed up, spread their wings and rasped war cries at the enemy. The beleaguered crow listed to the avian abuse for a few seconds, then retreated off his branch. As he flapped ponderously toward his own mate in the tall pine tree down the street, the mockingbirds followed and dive bombed his black feathered back. The crow frantically swooped up and down, banked left, swung right, but his attackers never slackened the attack

“K-r-r-a-ck! Take that! And that! Don’t come near our nest again!”

The songbirds gray forms pursued him, cutting like two sharp Ninja knives through the morning haze. They adeptly crisscrossed their flight paths and attacked from both sides; first one peck from HER and then another sharp peck from HIM on the crow's head and wings. Each jab was accompanied by their low rasping cry, “K-R-R-R-A-C-K,” followed by an aggrieved “CAW!” from the victim.

Crow eventually made it back to his mate, who awaited him at the top of a nearby pine tree. He landed close to her perch. His tormentors pulled back from their merciless pursuit, gave a final battle-cry and winged away, triumphant once more. The crows watched them go.

The bird world's version of the Dynamic Duo landed on the lawn near my chair to troll companionably for a few bugs, then they returned to their nest in the pepper tree. The female fed their chicks as her mate kept watch.

The crows now settled disconsolately on a telephone wire. They bent their heads and stroked their beaks on the black insulation in a pantomime of frustration and menace. They ruffled their wings and seemed to discuss the situation in crow speak. “Caw! Caw!” Then the female crow lifted off the wire and began her own stealthy flight plan toward the nest in the pepper tree. The mockingbirds watched her devious approach.

Time for a new strategy, I thought, but I'm betting on the Home Team.





SONG OF THE SEA

the sea sings to me in morning's tranquility
seagulls' cries far off and muted
where I walk silently and alone
water lapping at my ankles
depression eased into fog

the sea chants to me in noon's warmth
lilting with childhood's laughter
racing along the shore
taunting wave giants
dancing in the ripples
building sand castles
watching sea life bubble into foam

the sea serenades me in twilight
a red sun painting beach sands
my love and I sitting close
wrapped in a blanket of silence
savoring the drama of sky and surf
wave echoes whispering words unspoken

the sea's melodies fill my dreams
sing of the mystery and constancy of life
sing with words that ebb and flow
with the tides

Lillian Rodich

In the coming weeks, please stay in touch with our summer activities and Zoom meetings at <http://cwc-sfv.org>. And tell your writer friends about the CWC-SFV!



Have a wonderful summer.

We will keep in touch during the coming warm months of 2022.

Please find time to relax, read a great book, or write a new story or poem to share with us in this publication next year. But let's not end this issue without honoring a special holiday that comes in June:

Father's Day!

Here's a poem about Dads that might make you smile.



HAPPY FATHERS DAY TO ALL CWC DADS

MY DAD

4 years: My Daddy can do anything!

7 years: Dad knows a lot ... a whole lot. whole lot.

8 years: Dad doesn't know quite everything.

12 years: Obviously, Dad doesn't know that either.

14 years: Dad? He doesn't understand anything.

21 years: Oh, Dad is SO out of date!

25 years: Dad knows a little bit about it, but not much.

30 years: Gotta find out what Dad thinks about it.

35 years: Before we decide, we'll get Dad's ideas first.

50 years: What would Dad have thought about that?

60 years: My Dad knew everything about it!

65 years: Wish I knew what Dad would have thought about all that.

Anonymous

