



Scribbles

California Writers Club - Central Coast Writers Branch
www.centralcoastwriters.org
 May 2013

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(See bottom right corner of next page!)



*May 21st - 5:30 dinner, 6:30 meeting
 Point Pinos Grill*

*"Vex, Hex, Smash, Smooch:
 Perk up Your Prose"*

Our May speaker, Constance Hale, shares tips and techniques, insights and inspiration—all from her new book about how to transform sentences. Her talk will romp through the history of English, bust a few favorite myths of grammar teachers, and include examples ranging from Shakespeare to Shake N Bake, Joan Didion to Junot Díaz. She throws in a game and a contest to show you how to exercise a few new muscles.

"Call Me Madame," by Cheri Love



Queries, Queries

HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT LOOKING FOR A MENTOR

"My name is Emily and I am a graduating senior, fledgling writer going to Pacific Grove High School. :) Excuse my informality! I have always wanted to join Central Coast Writers - unfortunately, I always have a conflict on Tuesday nights. But I admire you and wish I could seek advice from real writers.

To get to the heart of the matter, I was wondering if you knew anyone who would be willing to help me. I am working on a novel right now, and it is nearly finished. However, I have no experience in writing query letters, editing, navigating the business, etc. I have read books, but it would be so helpful to have some advice specifically for me. That is what I am asking: if you know of someone who could be a mentor of sorts, willing to answer some of my questions."

[Ask me for Emily's email address.]

SOFTWARE USERS' GROUP(S)?

Audrea Elliott is a fiction writer who lives in Santa Cruz. If you are interested in getting together with her to talk about using Scrivener and/or MindMap software, you can contact her at wordartlady@gmail.com.

If you are interested in starting a Scrivener users' group as a CCW venture – like our fiction, poetry,

These are variety of inquiries that have come our way through different avenues. Check them out – one may be something you're interested in.

and memoir groups – let me know. Scrivener is a great tool!

PRISON RESIDENT LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION

This one came by mail. The Executive Committee didn't know what to do with it, so were passing it on . . .

"I come before you an author. I need your help propelling forward. I need your help to capture the hope and very imagination of tommorow [sic].

I'm also sending you a synopsis of one of my unpublished works. I have 8 unpublished works in all.

I have so much more to offer! Any and all help is trully [sic] appreciated."

[Ask me for Aaron's address.]

Wondering what the list at the top of the first page was all about? These are things that you can get involved in for CCW. Remember . . . for the most fun, take on an Executive Committee position!



Karen Joy Fowler: A Long Career

By Dorothy Friend

We didn't have a mic for speaker Karen Fowler in April, but she gamely stood on the hearth at Pt. Pinos Grill to make sure we could all hear, and delivered a full hour presentation describing the ups and downs of her 30-year career as an author. She also offered her ideas on story endings, and self publishing.

Most famous for her novel, *The Jane Austen Book Club*, published in 2007, she has penned six novels and three short story collections, winning many notable awards.

She received twenty three rejections of her first novel, *Sarah Canary*, but when it finally sold, it won the Commonwealth medal for best first novel by a Californian and recognition as a New York Times Notable Book. In addition, it was short-listed for the *Irish Times* International Fiction Prize and the Bay Area Book Reviewers Prize.

"It's a great puzzle to me that it was so hard to sell but got those awards," she said.

Her subsequent two novels did not meet the early success of her first, but her fourth novel outperformed it, spending thirteen weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. It was also made into a movie that Fowler credited with allowing her to buy her current home in Santa Cruz.

Fowler listed four standard approaches to ending a story: solving a problem, solving a mystery, introducing a revelation, or having a character make a difficult choice. She said she often combines elements of these, for example, setting a piece up as a story of choice, but ending it as a story of revelation.

"Some people tell me it's a violation of the contract with the reader -- I can't recall signing any such contract," she said.

Fowler has a serious science fiction following for her short stories, and has won the Nebula Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America twice. At first her agent considered this an obstacle in terms of promoting her novels, which were written in the genre of literary fiction, but ultimately the literary world also came to accept science fiction as serious literature, she said.

Self publishing? Depending on the situation, it could be a good career move, or not. Her own rejections forced her to look carefully at her work and experiment to find out what wasn't working. "It could be a smart career move, but sometimes it's just impatience" that drives authors to self publish, she said.

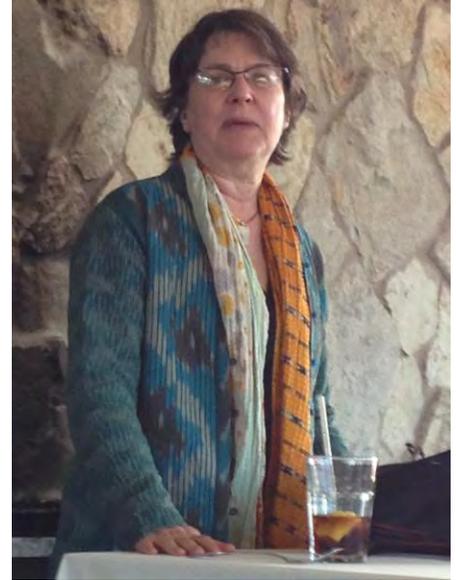
Photos From CCW's April Meeting



Jonathan Shoemaker reads from his poetry



Dorothy Vriend introduces Karen Joy Fowler



Guest speaker Karen Joy Fowler shares her writer experiences

Congratulations to Karen Joy Fowler who will launch her latest book, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, at Bookshop Santa Cruz at 7:30 p.m. on May 29.

A BLURB BY ANY OTHER NAME

By Donna McCrohan Rosenthal

We missed a birthday, a chance to celebrate one of the first words, if not the very first word, coined by the publishing industry to convey a specific book marketing concept. The word is "blurb."

Endorsements on book jackets had existed for a very long time. But not until Gelett Burgess, poet of "The Purple Cow" fame, did we have a unique term for them. Burgess, a prominent figure on the San Francisco Bay Area literary scene, in 1907 depicted a comely fictional lass named Miss Belinda Blurb on the cover of his book "Are You a Bromide?" He showed her spouting high praise for his product. Her name instantly became an adjective.

This means "blurb" has been around for more than 100 years. By the way, what do you call a cake that's been around for 100 years? A fruitcake.

Do you know what to do if you find a 100-year-old fruitcake? Decorate it and enter it in the Lit Cake competition at our annual CWC picnic in Joaquin Miller State Park in Oakland on Saturday, July 20. We have only two rules: 1. Gussy up any dessert, 2. In a literary or book theme.

You wouldn't need much to render a prehistoric fruitcake contest-ready. Just pick the right title, something like "Fifty Shades of Grey" (which would probably describe its appearance fairly well). Or sprinkle it with caraway seeds and top it with a baseball action figure to create J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye." Or sketch Miss Belinda on it declaring it a masterpiece, because that's what blurbs do.

Will we see you at the picnic? We may have missed a birthday, but there'll still be plenty of cake.

Donna McCrohan Rosenthal is Director of Public Relations for California Writers' Club.

MEMBER PROFILE

Finding Inspiration in Nature

Amy Brewster

By Michelle Smith

Amy Brewster is one of CCW's newest members, but she's been writing since she could ... well ... write. "I have always enjoyed writing," Amy says, "probably since I could hold a pencil. I used to compose stories that I also illustrated when I was five or six, and I started a diary in 3rd grade."

Amy's early start in writing led the way for having her own column in *The Californian* for a year. She's had a short story published, and she even won second place in a local writing contest. Amy earned a degree in Ecology/Biology and a master's in U.S. History from UCLA. She's held jobs ranging from firefighter to environmental educator and has lived and worked in Iran. Today, Amy works as a full-time teacher and runs a tutoring business.

Amy loves writing non-fiction essays, poetry and short stories, but her work schedule leaves precious little time to write—perhaps an hour or two whenever she can snag some peace and quiet. But it's during her "birding and hiking" time in which she finds inspiration in nature.

Amy's best advice for other writers is "to write from the heart and be true to what you know."



Michelle Smith's articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is <http://theebonyquill.com>.

POETRY CORNER

By Nancy Jacobs



Jack Kerouac

In his own words...

"I consider myself a jazz poet, I am satisfied with that. What intelligentsia says makes little difference, as I have always spent my time in skid row or in jazz joints or with personal madmen and never cared what "intelligentsia" thinks. My love of poetry is love of joy."

On January 25, 1988, the city of San Francisco named the street behind City Lights Bookstore "Jack Kerouac Street."

Born Jean-Louis Lebris de Kerouac on March 12, 1922 in Lowell, Massachusetts, Jack did not learn English until the age of six because French was spoken at home. The family was from The French province Quebec in Canada.

His life was quite a journey. He attended Columbia University, did his required military service in the Navy and after moved to New York where he became friends with Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Neal Cassady. In New York he had a short marriage to Edie Parker and later an affair with Neal Cassady who became the model for his famous book titled; "On The Road."

He moved to San Francisco. Jack Kerouac's short second marriage to Joan Haverty ended in acrimony. He began a lifestyle that included addiction to drugs and alcohol. But this did not stop his output. It was at this time that he wrote the poem "Mexico City Blues." The choruses of the poetry in "Mexico City Blues" are short and haiku-like. This defined his writing style.

The Beat Generation includes such notables as Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, John Clellon Holmes, Diane DiPrima, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Allen Ginsberg was also a member who transcribed the scene with free deviation of mind. To define the Beat Generation one would have to say that the members were disaffected young people who had matured during or shortly after World War II and who found inspiration in the writings of Jack Kerouac, especially after they read "Mexico City Blues." The "Beatniks," as they came to be called, made the middle class nervous because of their drug use, sexual promiscuity and their avoidance of any sort of employment.

Haiku, a Japanese style of writing poetry which consists of three lines (five, seven and five syllables respectively), seemed to challenge Jack Kerouac. He attempted to change this Japanese style of writing into a shorter American form. While Jack Kerouac was well known for his novels, his life-long pursuit was the writing of poetry. He was able to publish at least three books on poetry including *Mexico City Blues*, *Heaven and Other Poems*, and *Poems of All Sizes*, plus a book of poems after his death.

He was married a final time to Stella Sampas in 1966 and this marriage lasted until his death on October 21, 1969 in Northport, Rhode Island at his mother's home. His death was attributed to drinking cheap wine and drugs.

See excerpts from Kerouac's poetry on next page.

Excerpt from Book Of Haikus
By Jack Kerouac

The barn, swimming
in a sea
off windblown leaves.

Excerpt from "114th Chorus," Mexico City Blues
By Jack Kerouac

Everything is perfect, dear friend.
When you wrote the letter
I was writing you one,
I checked on the dates,
Just about right, and One.

Your Poetry Editor,
Nancy Jacobs

Answers to 14 Questions You're Too Afraid to Ask Literary Agents **Brian Klems of the Irene Goodman Agency**

Question #1:

Dear Agent: A lot of agencies' websites say they read every query. But I could say the same thing about all the junk mail I receive. How much time do you really spend looking at each query—as in, average seconds per query letter? Give it to me straight. I can take it.

This reminds me of the time I got curious and ordered my sister to hit me as hard as she could, to see if I could take it. She looks like Reese Witherspoon and weighs maybe 101 pounds soaking wet with rocks in her pockets, but she went ahead and cranked me a teeth-rattler on the arm that I feel fairly certain created some sort of embolism that is just waiting to travel to my brain like a gift that keeps on giving.

That is a preface to say: Ground yourself; this one might be a molar-shaker.

Sometimes it really is only, say, four seconds; a first line can close it down for me (e.g., the one I got that opened with, "What if it was your job to kill babies?"). Often the deal breaker is elsewhere in the first paragraph, when I see yet another Hezbollah/North Korea/China terrorist thriller plot, or an estranged daughter coming back to the small town to deal with her ailing mother, expose family secrets and rekindle love with her high school flame. Or sometimes it's at a point later in a query when I am insulted, belittled or offended (yup, those happen too).

In general, I just stop the second I realize the story is just not for me. But average time per query aside, I can assure you this: I do look at 'em all.

See the full post at: http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/literary-agents-unleashed-answers-to-questions-youre-too-afraid-to-ask?et_mid=610915&rid=3037194.

IF THE SHOE FITS . . . by Jonathan Shoemaker



Can you Break the Rules and Still be Great?

There are some people who know all the rules of writing and are quite willing to inform us that what we have written can't possibly be acceptable. Of course it would be wise to hear and consider their specific comments, but such talk should not cause us to go home dejected, feeling that maybe we should take up pinochle and forget about writing. Many writers, lauded by critics and the general reading public, have broken the rules of writing and somehow risen to the highest esteem.

A few of them come to mind.

Mark Twain, ridiculed in his day, once wrote, "First get your facts, then you can distort them at your leisure." I agree, in a way. Write well, and readers will love your work no matter how many rules you break.

In *The Girl who Kicked the Hornets Nest*, Stieg Larsson meticulously records facts in Swedish history and politics, with asterisks sending the readers to the back of the book for detailed explanations. Accurate, but distracting. Dan Brown includes historical facts in conversations between protagonists in the *Da Vinci Code*, but we wonder if the character has his facts straight.

Jed Rubinfeld bounces back and forth from one point of view to another in *The Death Instinct*, like a simulcast, revealing various aspects of a multifaceted plot, thus breaking another rule. Fortunately, his story follows a fairly straightforward plot and deals mainly with few enough characters that the reader readily recognizes them and remembers what part they play as the plot progresses.

Larsson, on the other hand, throws in so many characters that are complexly related that I finally had to haul out my old whiteboard in order to figure out *who* and *what* these people are and how they affect the drift of the story.

In contrast, Barbara Kingsolver, in *The Lacuna*, sails us through a relatively uninterrupted current of events as seen by one fictional individual, but through narration by an all-knowing narrator. The book kept me reading till long after midnight right from the start. I was familiar with most of the facts, and she presented her fictional character in such a way that, toward the end of the book, I started to wonder if such a character really existed. By the way, her language is so beautifully crafted that we would enjoy reading her work even if it included no plot or message whatsoever.

The same is true of *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown developed a plot and character so convincingly that I totally bought into it and exclaimed, "Sandra! This person in the lineage has the same name and corresponding date as one of our ancestors!"

She calmly replied, "Jon, it's a novel!"

Be well,

and do good work,

Jonathan

The CCW monthly meetings are always held on the third Tuesday of the month.

Plan ahead and mark all of the meetings for the rest of the year on your calendar right now, and then again on New Year's Day!

Looking for a Critique Group?

CCW encourages participation in these groups.

Poetry: The Saturday before the CCW monthly meeting, 9:30 to 11'ish

Prose: The Saturday after the CCW monthly meeting, 9:30 to 11'ish

Poetry and Prose each meet at Juice & Java, 599 Lighthouse Avenue, Pacific Grove. For more information, contact Harold Grice at Oookaayy@sbcglobal.net.

Memoir: 1st Sunday of the month, 1:00 to 3:00 at Crema Espresso Bar, 481 Lighthouse, Pacific Grove. For more information contact Kris Kissman at kkissman42@yahoo.com.

May Writers' Open Mike

May 16, 5:30-7:30, East Village Coffee Lounge, 498 Washington Street, Monterey. For more information contact phanson@csumb.edu, 831-601-9195.

Other News

FOR TAKE: **Photosmart Premium C-309 a-f printer:** very nice and prints both sides. Wireless does not work. Needed wireless for several computers. If more than one wants it we can have drawing. Harold - Oookaayy@sbcglobal.net

Self-Publishing Summit 2013

June 1 & 2

Hotel Shattuck Plaza, Berkeley

\$595

For more information, visit

<http://selfpublishingsummit2013.com/>

Writers' Digest Competitions coming in June:

Popular Fiction Competition. Details at:

http://www.writersdigest.com/popularfictionawards?et_mid=613489&rid=3037194

Short Short Story Competition. Details at:

http://www.writersdigest.com/competitions/short-short-story-competition?et_mid=613489&rid=3037194

Stars & Flags Military Book Award Contest 2013

For books with content related to the military, written within the last five years. Entry June 1-August 31. \$50 fee. Details at: starsandflags.com

Litquake's digi.lit

June 29, 8:30-5:00, SPUR Urban Center, San Francisco, \$255. All-day digital literary conference with speakers who are redefining the future of reading and publishing. Details at: <http://www.litquake.org/?s=digilit>

Happenstance *By Harold Grice*

An interesting aside from the San Francisco Writers Conference was the following occurrence.

The second morning I decided to have breakfast at the Top of the Mark. I rode up in the elevator with a nice looking, proper lady. At the Mark we exited and there were many open tables. I suggested we might share a table if she would like, which we did.

She related her moving from England to Maryland, to Los Angeles and now to the Bay Area. I thought that rather exotic as I expressed my movements have all been on the west coast except for a little time in the Orient.

She said "Well, yes and no. Moving is very tiresome and requires a lot of reestablishment of habit."

We then discussed the history of San Francisco and I pointed out the ability to judge the age of a structure by the ornate treatment of the front, explaining that as the buildings become more modern, there is less detail and more plainness.

Also that prior to 1906 there was a gang called the Sidney Ducks who would start fires in San Francisco. While everyone was fighting the fire, they would loot the businesses. Finally, San Francisco went over and shot a few of them, and it stopped.

She went on to tell me of her attendance at many of these events which made me curious. I asked which she enjoyed the most and she said this was a fine one but I believe she liked one better in the Orient somewhere she had forgotten.

We were at coffee when I said, "I have enjoyed this very much. I would like to know whom I have enjoyed breakfast with. I am Harold Grice."

She said, "Ann Perry."

"My goodness," I said.

We went on to discuss her books, of which I have read several, but it is not really my genre.

We parted soon after. It was interesting that she was a regular person with a life like anyone even though a top author. We met as equals and talked as equals even though I am not the writer she is. On the hand she is probably a lousy engineer.

Editor's note: As the keynote speaker at the Friday luncheon of the 2013 San Francisco Writers Conference, Anne Perry, author of 79 books, addressed over 300 people.



The Last Word

Leslie Patiño, *Scribbles* Editor

LEGOS and the Future of Publishing

On a recent afternoon, half a dozen employees clicked away at laptops around a large rectangle of tables in the spacious main area of Shelton Interactive. Located in an office park nestled among rolling hills and oak trees, this Austin, Texas business is shaping both the present and future of book publishing. After hearing president and CEO Rusty Shelton speak at the 2013 San Francisco Writers Conference, I wanted to see for myself this “full-service digital agency for books and brands.” At the entrance, a wall displays books by authors Shelton Interactive and partner CHC Communications work with. More books line shelves in the nearby conference room.

In his private office, Shelton, who comes across as both laid-back and dynamic, shared computer images of conversations between LEGO characters, part of a campaign developed for David Robertson and his upcoming book, *Brick by Brick: How LEGO Rewrote the rules of Innovation and conquered the Global Toy Industry*. Robertson, a Professor of Practice at the Wharton School, sent personalized figurines to journalists who would later receive copies of the book. Then he tweeted photos of these talking characters to say that this was a package they really should open. According to Shelton, “It has attracted a lot of attention and we believe will help the visibility for his new book.” *Brick by Brick: How LEGO Rewrote the rules of Innovation and conquered the Global Toy Industry* will be released June 25th.

To learn more about Shelton Interactive, visit <http://www.sheltoninteractive.com>.

To learn more about David Robertson, visit <http://www.robertsoninnovation.com> or see his tweets at @Davidcrob.

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Scribbles electronic addresses

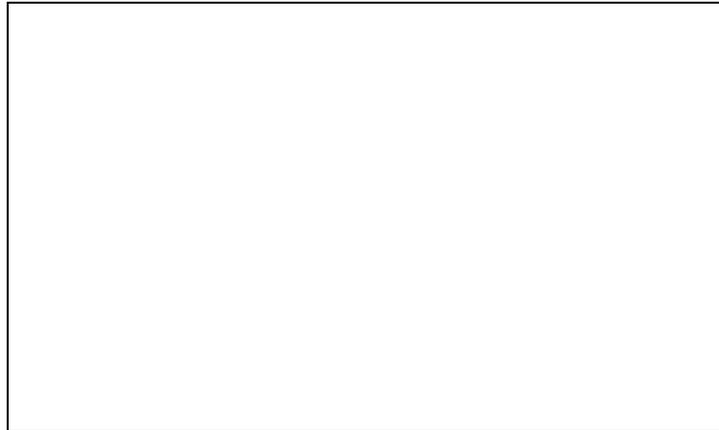
Editorial Department: lnpatino@comcast.net
Website: www.centralcoastwriters.org

Editorial Staff

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California Writers Club
Central Coast Writers Branch
Post Office Box 997
Pacific Grove, CA 93950



Raffle Prizes for May 21st at Point Pinos Grill

I lost the list of raffle prizes that Harry Freiermuth very generously called and read to me, but they include:

- *What I Didn't See, and Other Stories*, by our April speaker, Karen Joy Fowler
- *The Best American Travel Writing of 2006*
- Several recorded presentations of Shakespeare plays and more!

Hiding my head in shame, Cheri Love