



WRITERSTALK

Volume 32
Number 03
March 2024

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

March Speaker:
Martha Engber

Flaming Great Dialogue: Create Unforgettable Characters Through Dynamite Exchanges

Your dialogue is white-hot when your characters stop speaking to you and start speaking to each other. How can you get there?

The process cannot be rushed. Before you kill your darlings, you must cultivate them. You must walk in each one's shoes until you grasp their gait, their musings, and their idiosyncrasies. Only then can you lock them in a room together and watch the sparks fly.

During our March meeting, Martha Engber, will show you how to:

- Sidestep common dialogue pitfalls
- Employ five dynamic dialogue techniques
- Make your characters speak for themselves



Martha Engber is the author of six books, including *Scattered Light* (coming in 2025), the sequel to IPPY Gold Medal Winner *Winter Light*. Her other fiction includes *The Wind Thief* and *The Falcon, The Wolf, and The Hummingbird*. Her nonfiction includes *Bliss Road*, a memoir about her neurodiverse family, and *Growing Great Characters*, a resource for writers.

A workshop facilitator and speaker, Martha Engber has had a full-length play produced in Hollywood and poetry and fiction published in a variety of literary journals.

She encourages readers to connect via her website, MarthaEngber.com.

What: Martha Engber on Flaming Great Dialogue
When: Saturday, March 9, at 10:30AM
Where: Maker Nexus, 1330 Orleans Drive, Sunnyvale
Admission: \$10 for members, \$15 for nonmembers

Map and directions to Maker Nexus, 1330 Orleans Drive, Sunnyvale, on Page 12. See you there. Saturday, March 9, 2024 10:30AM

February Recap: Eleanor Vincent
Crafting a Powerful Memoir
Bill Baldwin

Eleanor Vincent showered us with great suggestions for memoir writing at our February meeting.

When writing a memoir, keep several things in mind.

Distinguish the "situation" from the "story." Vivian Gornick has described the "situation" as the context or circumstance of the story; it can also include the basic plot. The "story," on the other hand, is the *emotional experience* behind the story, and the insights issuing from that.

Be as clear as you can about the theme of your book: what is its overarching content?

As you write, ask yourself what you are doing. "Why should I write a memoir, rather than a novel?" One good answer is to understand what happened to you and regain control and a sense of agency.

Consider your relationship to what you are describing. You need to distance yourself enough from the story so that you can appeal to readers. There is danger in resting too close to your narration.

As you proceed, there are other questions to ask yourself: What motivates you? Why are you writing this story, after all? Is it to understand yourself better? Is it to share insights with the world?

Where are you in the process? How will you know when you have achieved your objectives? Are you clear on your objectives?

Can you distance yourself enough from the story in order to write it? Remember the craft! You want a character arc. You want to show, not tell.

Continued on Page 4

Between the Lines

Edie Matthews
President, South Bay Writers



To Critique or Not to Critique

Shortly after beginning my first novel, I joined a critique group. I was looking for feedback. I wanted to know if my story was clear, engaging, or boring. I also needed motivation. I knew having a deadline would keep me writing. There was no way I would show up and not have something prepared.

It's always encouraging to learn what's working, but I wasn't looking for accolades. Though I loved it when people laughed, more important to me was to find out what was not working or was unclear. I surmised, it was better to find out from your peers than to have my work rejected by an agent because of a mistake. When I submit to an agent, I want it to be the best it can be.

For example, one time I was working on a complicated scene where a young woman was invited to lunch in a swanky restaurant with a wealthy group of men. Her menu was in French and had no listed prices. I was so concerned with describing the scene and her emotions, I completely forgot to include the waiter. Fortunately, someone pointed it out to me.

I have seen some people become defensive and want to justify every point. If the person being critiqued debates every detail with each person, it will drag out the meeting. That's why it's best when the writer waits until everyone has given their opinion. Then the writer can explain the reason for their choices.

On occasion, you'll encounter someone who is highly critical. If the criticism is harsh, and I strongly disagree with it, I don't argue. I conclude my story is just (excuse the cliché) not their cup of tea. Not everyone will like your book. Just like not everyone likes chocolate ice cream. But keep in mind, plenty of people do.

There are times you will have to critique work that you are not thrilled with. In those instances, I try to be objective. No matter what the genre is there are certain requirements. Has the writer fulfilled them? I'll review the characters, motivation, plot, tension, description, continuity, clarity. Is it clear when the scene changes? Sometimes a single word like "later" is all that's needed.

Over the years, I've probably been in six different critique groups. I like the ones where you send out your material in advance, but you also read it aloud at the meeting. This is not only helpful to the critiquers, but also to the writer. Reading your work to an audience is like holding a magnifying glass to it. It will become clear to you what is working and definitely what needs to be rewritten.

Now my friends, some of you may be disciplined. You write every day for two hours, and you have a sixth sense about what works and what doesn't. But if you are like many of us, eager for feedback and enjoy the camaraderie of other writers, I encourage you to join a critique group. —WT

Suggestion from the editor: Attend one of our in-person meetings to find others with similar interests and to find others who wish to form a critique group.

April is National Poetry Month, a good time to send a short poem or limerick to *WritersTalk*.

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SBW Mission

Educating writers of all levels of expertise in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

Join Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Note: California Writers Club uses a fiscal year that runs from July 1 through June 30 each year. Dual membership: \$25. Contact Membership Chair, Inga Silva, or sign up online at southbaywriters.com Or, send a check to CWC-South Bay Writers, P O Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055

WritersTalk

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Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in *WritersTalk*. Please prepare your work as carefully as you would for an agent. All submissions will be copyedited. The Managing Editor decides which submissions to publish. Submission deadline is the 15th of the month. Electronic submissions should be attached MS Word files sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com. Use Times New Roman 12-font, no tabs, no colors, no page breaks. Send graphics separately as jpg files.

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1000 words)
Memoir (1000 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (1000 words)

Creative Works

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Member Achievement and News:

membernews@southbaywriters.com

An announcement is information of interest and value to writers that does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator and is published free of charge.

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Our Mission

Encouraging writers at all levels of expertise to hone their skills in the craft of writing

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Words from the Editor

by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson
Managing Editor (Interim)



On Memoir and Fibonacci

Memoir and autobiography are similar nonfiction genres, easily confused. They're both the story of someone's life written in first person, but with some key differences. In a memoir, the author shares memories from a specific time period or reflects upon a string of themed occurrences; for example, Stephen King: *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. An autobiography is a factual and historical account of one's life, such as Benjamin Franklin's *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*; actually, Franklin called his unfinished work his *Memoirs*.

Two years ago, Daniele C. Struppa, Professor of Mathematics at Chapman College, sent me a book manuscript for peer review; he knew me from my years on the editorial board of *The Fibonacci Quarterly*. His book was historically correct, well written, and engaging—12th Century Italy came to life. I loved it, but not the title, *Fibonacci: An Autobiography*. At my suggestion, he changed the title and the genre. Today, I went to Amazon Books and found the historical novel, *And I Saw Sequences of Petals and Leaves: My Life as the One They Call Fibonacci* by Daniele C. Struppa, available on April 29, 2024.

On a bit of a tangent, who was 'The one they call Fibonacci' and why was he important? Leonardo of Pisa was the foremost mathematician in Italy in 1202 when his book *Liber Abaci* (The Book of Calculation) became available. He introduced the Arabic numerals in use today along with how to do calculations, such as long division, fractions and decimals. That sounds so sixth grade but it was a scientific breakthrough in a world that used the abacus to calculate and wrote results in Roman numerals.

I hear you asking, why was Leonardo called Fibonacci? That was his nickname, short for son of Bonaccio, "jovial," his father's nickname. You may have heard of the Fibonacci sequence: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, ..., in which each number is the sum of the two numbers before it. Did you know that we in the US have an official Fibonacci Day, November 23? I'll let you figure out why. Answer next month.

Backtracking to memoir, I invite you to submit a memoir snippet to *WritersTalk* at newsletter@southbaywriters.com. Send your work as an attached Word doc: 1000 words or fewer, Times New Roman 12-point, no tabs, no page breaks, no color, no imbedded graphics. Also, poetry of any genre is always welcome.

April is National Poetry Month. Let's do **LIMERICKS** for this April. They are basically 5 lines with rhyming AABBA. This website provides an easy how-to: <https://unclegoose.com/blogs/blog/how-to-write-a-limerick-in-4-steps>

LIMERICKS CONTEST: Top three limericks, \$25 each and publication in *WritersTalk*. Submit directly to marjohnson@mac.com by March 15. — WT

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Crafting Powerful Memoir

What is your current relationship with the material you are mining? How close are you to it? Ask yourself how much you can write while still in the throes of the experience.

In this regard, Gornick refers to the concept of stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, detachment. Build the phases of grief into your writing. Eventually you want to reach the stage of detachment, and write from there; but in the meantime, you still want to move forward.

Vincent suggested five strategies for memoir-writing success:

- Dig deep. Open yourself to the emotions of your experience.
- Make time your friend (research, write, revise).
- Maintain courage and self-compassion. Let yourself feel the emotions, but be kind to yourself.
- Be committed to the craft.
- Set up support systems.

What to avoid?

- Beginning too soon, going too fast. Move at a pace that encourages

awareness. Keep in mind how your readers will experience your writing, your pacing.

- Purple prose. How will your writing come across to your readers?
- Getting too involved. You need to balance your Deep Dive with distance and perspective.

Finally, consider these four questions (which we discussed in breakout groups): What will support me and my work? What will block me? How can I overcome those blocks? What support system can I use?

Do develop a support network to encourage your efforts!

In any case, *never give up!* A well-done memoir can facilitate healing both for *yourself* and for your *readers!* It is well worth the effort! *Persist!* — WT

Member News

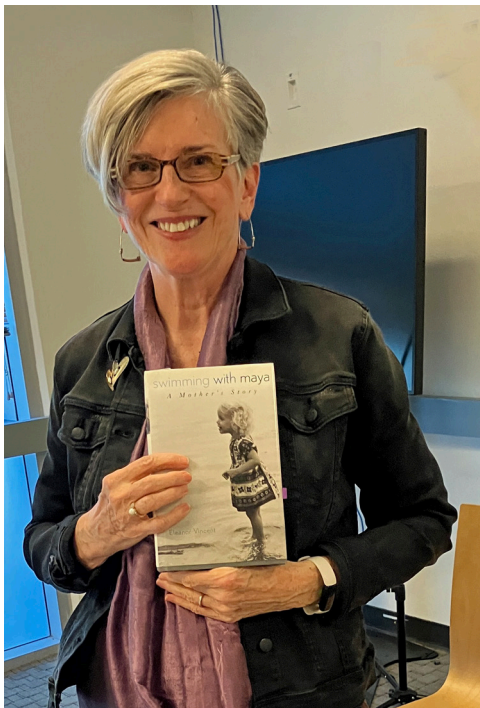
Marjorie Johnson

Kelly Miller wrote, “My book, *The Darcy Secret*, has been awarded a B.R.A.G (Book Readers Appreciation Group) Medallion. In addition, my book, *A Beautiful Son*, has been awarded First Place: Romance by Royal Dragonfly Book Awards and Top Pick by Reader Ready Awards. It has also been named as a semi-finalist, Chatelaine Book Awards for Romantic Fiction, Chanticleer International Book Awards. (Both books available on Amazon.)

Dr. Geraldine Forté: In celebration of African American authors, The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Library at San Jose State University is hosting a Black History Month exhibition of books written by Bay Area African American authors, February 1 – March 15, 2024. Dr. Michael Cheers, Professor at SJSU, is the exhibition curator. Geraldine Forté will have three of her books in the exhibit on the 5th floor: *Of Prayers and Beatings*; *The Sinceria Pound Cake Extraordinaire: A Recipe for Life*; and *A Brand-New Song to Sing*. She also has a book in progress: *A Pandemonium of Parrots*.

Kudos to you both. — WT

To share your writing news here, email to membernews@southbaywriters.com.



Eleanor Vincent holds a copy of her poignant memoir, *Swimming with Maya: A Mother's Story*, which deals with the death of her daughter and coping ever after. Time alone doesn't heal. Recovery takes courage and self compassion.

A Film Review: *American Fiction*

Shari Clare

What compels us to write? Are we mainly driven by a passion for our subject matter, or is it more important to write what publishers believe the audience wants?

This question is at the heart of the comedy/satire/family drama *American Fiction*.

The main character, Thelonious “Monk” Ellison, is a Black college professor who struggles to earn an audience for his literary fiction because it isn’t “black enough.” Meanwhile, a first-time author generates plenty of buzz for a book that Monk can’t bring himself to read, partly because the title is *We’s Lives In Da Ghetto*.

Out of frustration about his circumstances, which includes an abundance of family drama, Monk uses a pseudonym to write a truly awful novel that incorporates all the worst stereotypes of the urban experience. Just for laughs, he asks his literary agent to submit it to some publishers.

When it ends up on the bestseller list and is subsequently nominated for a literary award, Monk is forced to reconcile his conflicting feelings about the money it brings in with the standards he holds for good literature. — WT



This is a Celtic knot; Limerick is a county in Ireland. Limericks arose as humorous drinking songs. Combine St. Patrick’s Day and Poetry Month with WT contest on pages 3 and 10.

San Francisco Book Festival

The 2024 San Francisco Book Festival has issued a call for entries to its annual program celebrating the best books of the spring season. Here’s the link: <https://mailchi.mp/jmnorthernmedia/2022-san-francisco-book-festival-call-for-entries-13922993>

Deadline: May 25

Go to website for information. If you have a published book, this is well worth your while.

View from the Board

Chris Weilert

The South Bay Writers Board met as it always does, zooming at 7 p.m. on February 5. SBW Board members are listed on page 2 of *WritersTalk* with their emails.

Edie Matthews: Marge Johnson will continue to handle the *WritersTalk* newsletter until the new editor, Tina Glasner, begins with the April issue. Welcome, Tina.

We have another new board member: Shari Claire is taking over as Membership Chair. We applaud Inga Silva for her years of service in that position. South Bay Writers has reached 100 members, and more are joining.

Jamal Khan: Our March 2024 speaker will be Martha Engber.

Marjorie Johnson: Marge is always looking for member news.

Alice Wu: Alice reported a 0.5% increase in our treasury funds.

Bill Baldwin: Open Mics continue on first and third Fridays on Zoom. Please contact Bill to set up your opportunity to read your work. Bill reported no updates from the Central Board, but plenty of news from NorCal. **San Francisco Writers Conference,** February 15-18: The CWC booth will be staffed by members of the Berkeley Branch. This year, volunteers won't be allowed to attend the conference. Stay tuned for next year.

There is some confusion regarding this year's *Literary Review* and the *Ekphrastic Coffee Table Book*. As far as the Coffee Table Book, fifteen images have been selected as the art work, and all CWC members (that includes SBW) were invited to submit writing inspired by one of those images. All members should have received emails about this. There will be a separate *Literary Review* with submission deadline February 28. Mike Apodaca from High Desert Branch is coordinating this effort, which is being done differently than in previous years.

The CWC storage unit in Fremont was vandalized and some items stolen: our banner and a scrapbook with club history.

The Bay Area Book Festival is coming up June 1-2. Tune in at BayAreaBookFest.org

Membership: As of January, we have 96 active members, 2 lifetime members and 2 students. That makes 100!

The next board meeting will be March 4, 2024, on Zoom. SBW members are always welcome at Board meetings. To attend, email Edie Matthews at pres@southbaywriters.com. — WT

Bay Area Book Festival

Vanessa MacLaren-Wray

Cometary Tales: Writing on the Solar Wind

The Bay Area Book Festival is coming up in June in downtown Berkeley. My publisher is offering a shared space for local indie and self-pub authors to sell their books.

"Small Publishing In a Big Universe," a project of local publisher Paper Angel Press, plans to host a table for small-press and indie authors to sell their books together at the Bay Area Book Festival's outdoor fair on June 2nd. The shared-space fee covers room for your books, onsite sales support, and online marketing. The application form contains the details:

<https://spbu-marketplace.com/vendors/application/>

If you have remaining questions you can reach out to Steven Radecki at spbumarketplace@gmail.com. — WT

Essay

When Your Favorite Sports Team Loses

Chris Weilert

When you see the opposing team storm the field after winning the big game, it feels like someone threw rubbing alcohol on an open wound with your flesh screaming. The anger and disappointment will finally subside and manifest into a dumb stupor. The next day, I attempt to block the pain from my brain and focus on positive things like puppies and strawberry shortcakes. In reality, I try to ask myself why I spent so much damn time getting wrapped up in the lives of millionaires while I watch their games in my bathrobe, eating a bowl of cereal. After much introspection, as a loyal fan, this silliness is etched into my soul.

As much as I don't want to be emotionally drawn into my favorite team's daily ups and downs, I eventually come around and become concerned if things are not going so well. Hey! They lost five games in a row; I better listen to sports talk radio and find out what's going on. The worst roller coaster rides are the NBA and MLB seasons because they drone on forever, but not before the drama of the regular season plays out. First, your team starts, guns a blazing, winning and getting everybody excited, then about halfway through, they hit a roadblock and skid off the tracks. Players become injured, and now, management panics, feeling the urgent need to trade a bundle of young prospects to receive a player who might come in and save the day.

Sound familiar? That's the MLB every year, and the NBA is almost the same, except they hold most of their torture for the end at the playoffs. The NBA and the NHL piled on four rounds of playoffs that they make you endure for three months.

As a brainwashed fan, if you have lasted through the marathon season and managed to give a damn to the final game, you now bite your nails down to the nubs through the playoffs. If your team manages to move forward into another tier of the playoffs, you will change your life and normal behavior into the scheduled time of the games. You make arrangements for food choices and who you will see the game with. If you fly solo and want to be left alone in your living room while you sweat things out, you sit with the luxury of talking to yourself. I have done this plenty of times and find it liberating to cuss, burp, and yell in privacy. I like to be around a gathering of people during a big sporting event because you will be distracted from having to absorb every single minute of every single play.

If your team is fortunate to win the big one, you can walk on cloud nine for a brief moment in time. You are allowed to boast and talk trash against all the naysayers and buy clothing that said your guys won the championship. If your team loses the big game, you have mixed emotions. Those mixed emotions are cross between anger, sadness, despair, and denial.

I deny that the loss ever happened and try to act as if the drubbing was no big deal. But in reality, it hurts, and you first want to blame those athletes and coaches who blew the game and choked, and sometimes it's the referees and umpire's fault. This is all part of the package when you become a loyal fan, and if you are a Chicago Cubs follower, you have endured more abuse than usual. Maybe it's their year but if it doesn't happen, take time to decompress and take in another sport because spring training is only three months away. — WT

**SBW February 10:
Eleanor Vincent on Memoir**

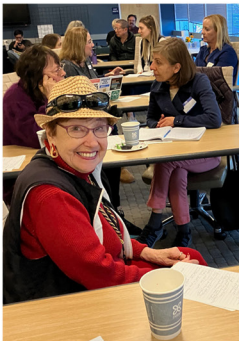
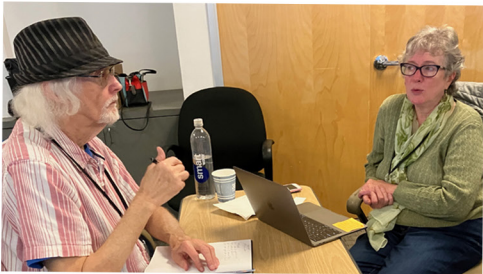
Photos by Carolyn Donnell



*Writing down
memoir ideas*



*Writers discussing
their memoir ideas.*



My First Time on a Horse

Marjorie Johnson

My favorite neighbor is a big black horse with a white blaze on his forehead. I call him Star and he lives in a field behind our back fence. I give him treats every day after school--apples, carrots, sometimes a bunch of clover--and I stroke his soft nose and pat his neck and talk to him about everything.

Today I am wearing my green shorts because it's hot, and I climbed through the back barbed wire to feed Star because he wouldn't come to the fence. I'm sitting on top of a large chunk of granite enjoying the shade of a cedar tree when I see Charlie and Robin go through the fence on the other side. They don't belong here -- trespassing. I'm not trespassing, just visiting my friend the horse.

Charlie and Robin are the rowdiest boys in my class. They always torment me and call me The Brain. Just because they are dunces. It's hard enough being a girl, worse a smart girl.

Charlie says, "Hey, look, it's The Brain, sitting on that there rock." His brown hair needs combing and his shirt's half pulled out of his dirty jeans. He's repeating fourth grade.

Robin says, "That's all she can do, sit on rocks and read books. She don't know how to do nothin'. Bet she couldn't get on that horse, couldn't never ride one, lessen it says how in one of them there books."

Robin looks as bad as Charlie and needs a bath. Besides that, his English is incorrect.

Charlie says, "Betcha can't get on that horse. Brain can't do nothin'."

I say, "Star, come here, Star." I'm glad I still have half an apple.

Star comes close to the rock and I slip onto his back. He is big -- my legs have to stretch way out. He is tall -- I couldn't climb up without the granite outcropping. I grab his mane with one hand. I have never tried this before.

"See, I can too get on a horse. Bet you can't do it," I say.

Charlie says, "Let's see you ride. Giddy up!" and slaps Star on his butt.

Star takes off down the hill. I bend down, hold onto his mane for dear life.

My heart is pounding, I can't see, he's running so fast. He's going for the blackberries at the bottom of the hill.

I'm scared. I can't let on to Charlie and Robin.

Star stops in the middle of the bramble, just stands there, snorts. I just sit there. It's a long way down, and I'm wearing shorts, for pete's sake.

"Come on, Star, let's go," I say. I try pulling his mane to the right, towards the pasture. He walks to the grass, puts his head down to eat.

"Good horse," I say. I slip down, jump or fall -- get off some way. He just eats grass.

I walk back up the hill. Charlie and Robin are gone, but I see

my father using the hoe in his garden. I climb back through the fence and stay ducked down until I get to the house.

I hear someone talking, so I look out from the porch. It's the neighbor, the one who owns Star. I don't know what he calls the horse.

"Hey, neighbor, did you see a girl wearin' green shorts, cuttin' through here?" he says.

"Why, yes, that's my daughter. Isn't she a cute one?" my dad says. It's embarrassing. I wish he wouldn't say things like that.

"Well, I'm a-lookin' for her father. That girl needs a whuppin'. I saw her ridin' my horse just now, ridin' bareback. I don't want her in my pasture again, ever again. That horse's dangerous, doesn't let anybody ride, dumps 'em in the brambles. She needs a good whuppin', if'n she takes that horse again."

He calls Star *That Horse*. Star didn't dump *me* in the brambles. *That Girl* won't ride *That Horse* again. Daddy never whips me.

I hear my father say, "Couldn't have been my daughter. She wouldn't do anything like that, and she just got home from school. But I'll tell her not to go through the fence."

"Much obliged," the neighbor says.

Next day, I see Robin and Charlie, sitting in the back in our classroom at school. Robin's carving the desk with his knife but I don't tell. They act like they don't see me, which is fine by me.

They don't call me Brain either. I call it even. -- WT

Note on mounting a horse:

Why do we mount a horse from the left? Horses are one-sided: it's how their eyes work. When they learn something on one side, it is not immediately translated to doing it on the other side. Because horses are usually trained on the left side, mounting on the right can spook the horse.

Spook the horse -- I didn't know about that back then. From the orientation of the horse and the rock, I did mount from the left. I had luck and faith in my friend, the horse.



The Wrong Side of the Road

Carolyn Donnell

My only trip to England turned into quite an adventure. I had recently reconnected with my birth mother and to celebrate our new relationship had brought her to England. One of Mother's dreams was to see Buckingham Castle and Churchill's home, and I also wanted to see southern England where genealogical research indicated some of our ancestors might have lived.

Through a timeshare exchange, I was able to book a week at Walton Hall, a 16th-century country mansion turned Bed and Breakfast near Wellesbourne, Warwickshire. (If you have ever watched *Keeping Up Appearances* on PBS, Walton Hall was featured in the episode "The Rolls-Royce," where Hyacinth and Richard drive a showroom car.) The B&B operated a small van that transported up to twelve people to sites like Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon, and Warwick Castle and included personalized tours led by someone affiliated with the day's destination.

We went sightseeing in the London area on our own on the surrounding weekends. It was all wonderful, but we also wanted to see sites farther away. I rented a car for one day to visit Bath and Stonehenge and then circle back to home base.

"You really should hire a tour car," the owner of the tour van advised. "Or take the train and join a tour there. I don't advise driving all that way if you have never driven on the left side of a road."

Hmmph. I've been driving since I was 14. I can handle it. He was probably drumming up business for a cousin.

I disregarded his words and rented a Honda with my American Express card, complete with full insurance, and set out on the road to Bath. Wasn't long before I realized that the van owner might have had a point.

Not only are you on the wrong side of the road, you are also on the wrong side of the car. Throws your perspective off in many ways, especially trying to navigate roundabouts. (You go around to the left, not the right.) I got honked at and even cursed at more than once.

Needless to say, I got lost. Every sign I followed that said Bath led me in circles. Perhaps it really was a mysterious place, disappearing into the mists of Avalon.

I finally saw a sign that said Stonehenge. What the heck. Stonehenge was next on the list anyway. That destination appeared without much effort. We stopped and checked the gift shop. The site itself was fenced off and could only be viewed from a distance. Someone in the shop said that Avebury, a smaller stone circle, was nearby where one could gain close access to the stones themselves.

Following the map, we cruised around a curve on a narrow blacktop village road. Mom was telling a joke. All of a sudden, the rear ends of two horses loomed in front of us.

"You're gonna hit the horse!" Mother screamed.

I jerked the steering wheel to the right. Two rear hooves raised up into the air. They landed with a boom on the side of

the left front fender, causing the car to veer all the way over to the grass on the right. The car came to a stop. We were shaken but Mother and I were still in one piece. I had heard that hitting an animal on an English road might be a big deal. I wondered if I should just get out of the car with my hands outstretched, waiting for the cuffs.

A man with blond curls and a red face came around from behind the horses. "Don't you know how to drive?" he yelled.

Tears ran down my face. "No. I have never driven in England before."

He came over to look at the horse. I could see that the hoof was bleeding. My heart sank.

He demanded that I follow him to his home nearby where he had his vet come and examine the horse—a registered Arabian mare in foal. A surge of fear swept through me. I wondered briefly if it was some kind of scam, but knowing something about animal rights in England, I didn't have much hope.

He handed me a pen to sign over a traveler's check to pay for the vet's visit. The amount was a lot less than I had feared.

After I signed, I looked at the writing on the pen. *Dodson Feed and Seed*. DODSON! Our family name. What a coincidence! Had we come to rest in our ancestor's hometown without even trying?

"Mother!" I tried to get mother's attention, but she was relaxing with a cuppa' the owner's wife had offered her. I wish I had asked more questions, but we were eager to get back on the road. I didn't keep the pen. What a souvenir that would have made.

I only got lost twice that evening finding our way back in the dark—English village roads don't have lighting—but we finally made it back to Walton Hall in one piece. Fortunately, the American Express insurance covered the cost of damages to the car except for a small deductible.

I have always wondered if the owner went to the pub that night and said, "Hey Dodds, one of your relatives tried to kill my horse today." —WT

Facebook Pages/Groups for SBW

Carolyn Donnell, SBW Facebook Administrator

South Bay Writers has a Facebook page and a Facebook group. The page is a public outward facing page, named **California Writers Club-South Bay Branch**. The group is **South Bay Writers Club**. This is a private group, members only. If you are on Facebook, check them out.

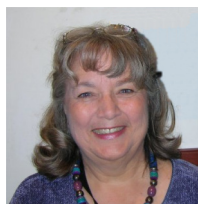
Many other writing-related pages or groups are on Facebook:

- Writing Competitions and Contests: Weekly Updates
- Playwriting Submissions & Competitions
- Poetry Center San Jose: PCSJ
- National Poetry Month-write-a-poem-a-day-challenge
- California Poets
- The Poetry Salon Online
- No Fee Calls for Poems

On January 13, Facebook was one place that Andrew Benzie suggested for promoting your books. —WT

Contests, Markets, and Resources

by Carolyn Donnell



Carolyn Donnell
Contributing Editor

Let us know if you have any success with any of the contests listed in *WritersTalk*. Or any other contest, for that matter. Send your writing victories to member-news@southbaywriters.com. You can also check other branches for their current contests and submissions. See a list of other CWC branches at www.calwriters.org/cwcbranches/

Members of our Facebook group – **South Bay Writers Club** – see contest postings there.

Listings are for information only. NO VETTING has been done by South Bay Writers Club. Read all guidelines carefully before submitting. And please share any experience you have, good or bad.

WRITERS BEWARE site: Check out this website for warnings about contests or submissions: <https://www.sfw.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/>
LOCAL (PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS) AND OTHER CWC BRANCH RESOURCES: See branches at <https://calwriters.org/cwcbranches/>

NEW

California Writers Club announces a new CWC member-only book project for 2024. *Vision and Verse, a fusion of Art and Photography*. An ekphrastic book pairing artwork with poetry and short prose. Now in phase two: winning art will be used as the inspiration for poetry and short prose submissions. Details and submission form at <https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse-ekphrasticbook-submissions/>

NAME	DEAD LINE	URL	COMMENTS
Vision and Verse	March 7	https://calwriters.org/vision-and-verse/	Poetry submissions
SF/Peninsula Branch.		https://www.cwc-sfpeninsula.org/writers-resources/writing-contests	Lists other resources
Fremont Area Writers		https://cwc-fremontareawriters.org/resources-writers/	See Writers Resources tab
North State Writers		https://www.northstatewriters.com/nsw-anthologies.html	Planning a new anthology soon
The Literary Nest		https://www.theliterarynest.org	Send visual art to theliterarynest@gmail.com
Catamaran Literary Reader		https://www.catamaranliteraryreader.com/	West Coast quarterly literary/visual arts journal

Raw Earth Ink	Mar 31	https://raw-earth-ink.com/2023/11/15/what-is-a-woman-anthology-submissions-open/	Women's stories previously published OK
Almond Press		https://dystopianstories.com/writing-competitions-contests/	Lists many contests
The Masters Review	March 31	https://mastersreview.com/2024-featured-flash-contest-now-open	See website for contests. \$1500 prize.
Chicken Soup For The Soul		https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/submit-your-story/	Ongoing topics
Writer's Digest	May 6	https://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/annual-writing-competition	Contests year round. Also classes/webinars
Romance Writers of America		https://www.rwa.org/chaptrevents	Lists by month
Red Penguin Books		https://redpenguinbooks.com/open-submissions/	Various ongoing submissions
Falling Star Magazine		https://falling-star-magazine.com/	Short stories. Some poetry
Water Dragon Publishing		https://waterdragonpublishing.com/2023/07/call-for-submissions-dragon-gems-winter-2024/	Check website for opening date
The Write Life		https://thewritelife.com/writing-contests/	Lists contests
Winning Writers		https://winningwriters.com/	Their contests and others listed

Contests and Markets:

Continued from page 9

Authors Publish		www.authorspublish.com	Lists many contests, submissions, etc.
Funds for Writers		https://fundsforwriters.com/contests/	Subscribe to <i>hope@chope-clark.com</i>
Trish Hopkinson		https://trishhopkinson.com/	Blog
Newpages		https://www.newpages.com/guide-submission-opportunities/big-list-of-writing-contests/	List of writing contests
The Writers College		https://www.thewriterscollege.com/short-story-writing-competitions/	
Freedom With Writing		https://www.freedomwithwriting.com	Lists many resources

POETRY CONTESTS, RESOURCES

NAME	DEAD LINE	URL	COMMENTS
Academy of American Poets	n/a	https://poets.org/academy-american-poets/american-poets-prizes	Lists contests/submissions
Writing Matters		http://www.randalssanctuary.wordpress.com/2020/08/11/publishers-of-poetry-books-chapbooks/	30 Publishers of Poetry Books & Chapbooks
Up the Staircase Quarterly		https://www.upthestaircase.org/	
The Rialto Nature and Place Poetry Competition 2024	Apr 1	https://www.therialto.co.uk/pages/nature-poetry-competition/	British contest
Poets & Writers		https://www.pw.org/content/upcoming_contest_deadlines_87	Lists upcoming deadlines
Poetry Society of America		https://poetrysociety.org/awards	Awards/prizes
The Thimble Magazine		http://www.thimblelitmag.com/submissions/	Quarterly online
Poetry Foundation		www.poetryfoundation.org	
Poetry Pacific		www.poetrypacific.blogspot.com/	Published and unpublished.
Everywriter		www.everywritersresource.com/best-poetry-prizes/	
Reedsy		https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/chapbook/how-to-make/	Chapbook contests

Breaking News: Current Contests

Winning Writers: Latest contests include Tom Howard/John H. Reid Fiction & Essay Contest, <https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-john-h-reid-fiction-essay-contest> Deadline May 1.

Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest: <https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/wergle-flomp-humor-poetry-contest-free> Deadline April 1.

The Missouri Review 2024 Perkoff Prize: \$1000 and publication. Best story, poem, essay that “engages in evocative ways with health and medicine.” <https://missourireview.com/contests/perkoff-prize/> Deadline March 15.

Palette Poetry: 2024 Love & Eros Prize: April 7 <https://www.palett poetry.com/current-contest/>

If you hear about an interesting new contest, please email me, facebook@southbaywriters.com

LIMERICKS CONTEST: Top three limericks, \$25 each and publication in *WritersTalk*. Deadline March 15. Submit directly to Marjorie Johnson, marjohnson@mac.com

My Grandmother in one sentence ...

When she died I was well into engineering college battling my own confusions, resisting demands on my loyalty from family, country, love and looking ahead with such desperation that I refused to bother with any kind of history, even that which surrounded me protruding from the earth in every stone at the shallowest dig, brimming over walls of old buildings awaiting renovation, bubbling up in street corners among hawkers of food, color and cloth in one of the most history laden cities of the world so much so that part of the city had been named “New” Delhi – even this naming was by now history – in an eagerness to cast off the old and tell the world we were new and arrived and secular and departed from our native soil and brothers and concerns and even this departure came back to haunt us years later but we didn’t know it then in the same way that I didn’t know she would come back to me later in life so when at the sight of her body a shaking sob broke through my worldly concerns and forward-focused attentions, I involuntarily reached out to touch her face, causing all the micromanaging elders around me to yell, “Don’t touch the body” for now she was just “the body” and not the matriarch she had once been, which they didn’t like to admit she hadn’t been in over a decade since she was forced to live not on her own terms but those of her children within their rules and fences and with Alzheimer’s merciless dissolution of her identity, the same one whose sense and strength had built and rebuilt all our lives when the fates had come knocking to extract usurious debts which she could be held responsible for only as much as any woman in a society that made it a habit of heaping responsibility and duty and tradition and religious stricture without agency at her door can be, but which were now all paid or abandoned in this final departure so all her beneficiaries could pretend to pay one last homage to her glorious past and her sacrifice, iron will and fearlessness, except at that age I wanted no part of this remembering because I had heard this ancient history umpteen times and knew it would devolve into a multilevel contest of tears and grief that uselessly distracted me from my singular focus of looking ahead to places my life was going to go where no one would want to know my tired history or even more tiresome stories of why my grandmother was forced to flee Peshawar, her home, her *mohalla*, her town of generational soils and how a woman who was barely fifth grade educated in a language and script whose use was confined to a daily reading of her holy book so much so that none of her children bothered to learn it and I most certainly did not except for the recitation of prayers that she taught my sister and me as children called *paath* which literally means “lesson” beginning with *Ik Onkar* (there is only one god) which I strategically utilized before school exams even as I was slowly turning atheist, something I never told her, I don’t think, but now in my middle age as I look for my voice and myself in the universe and wonder what I will leave behind, she often comes back to me and when I confess my atheism to her and that I have no use for religion and don’t find bliss in the *paath* she taught me, although I do remember it all, she simply ignores my protestations proceeding on to tell me *qissas* (stories) from her time and her journeys and when I marvel at her refusal to be cynical until the end, her kindness even to those who came to steal from her, and her steadfast attention to *dharma* (duty or the right thing to do) in the face of insurmountable odds, she simply smiles saying these are the only *paaths* (lessons) I need remember ... – Reena Kapoor

On Interiority

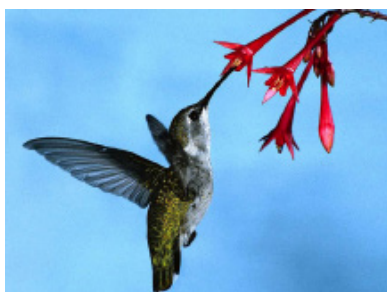
Edie Matthews

In fiction writing, interiority is what’s going on inside a point-of-view character’s head.

It’s their thoughts and feelings, and it’s the stuff that an observer wouldn’t be able to see.

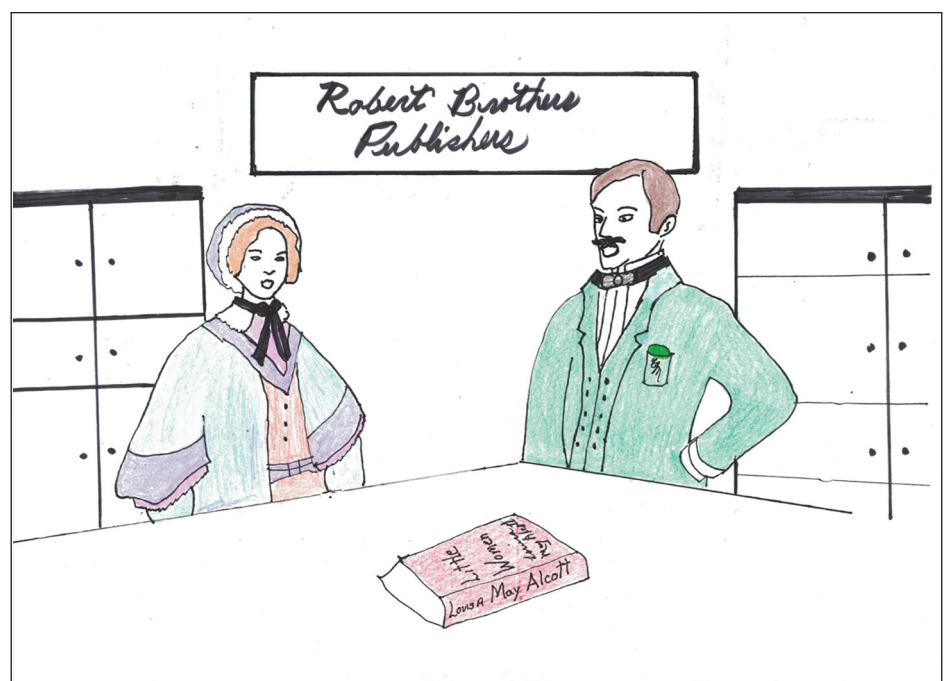
A writer can convey his/her character’s interiority by describing their innermost thoughts.

Writing a memoir is a training ground for learning to express interiority.



Off the Shelf

— Edie Matthews



"Louisa, since *Little Women* and *Little Men* have been so successful, we think you should follow it up with *Little Dogs*."

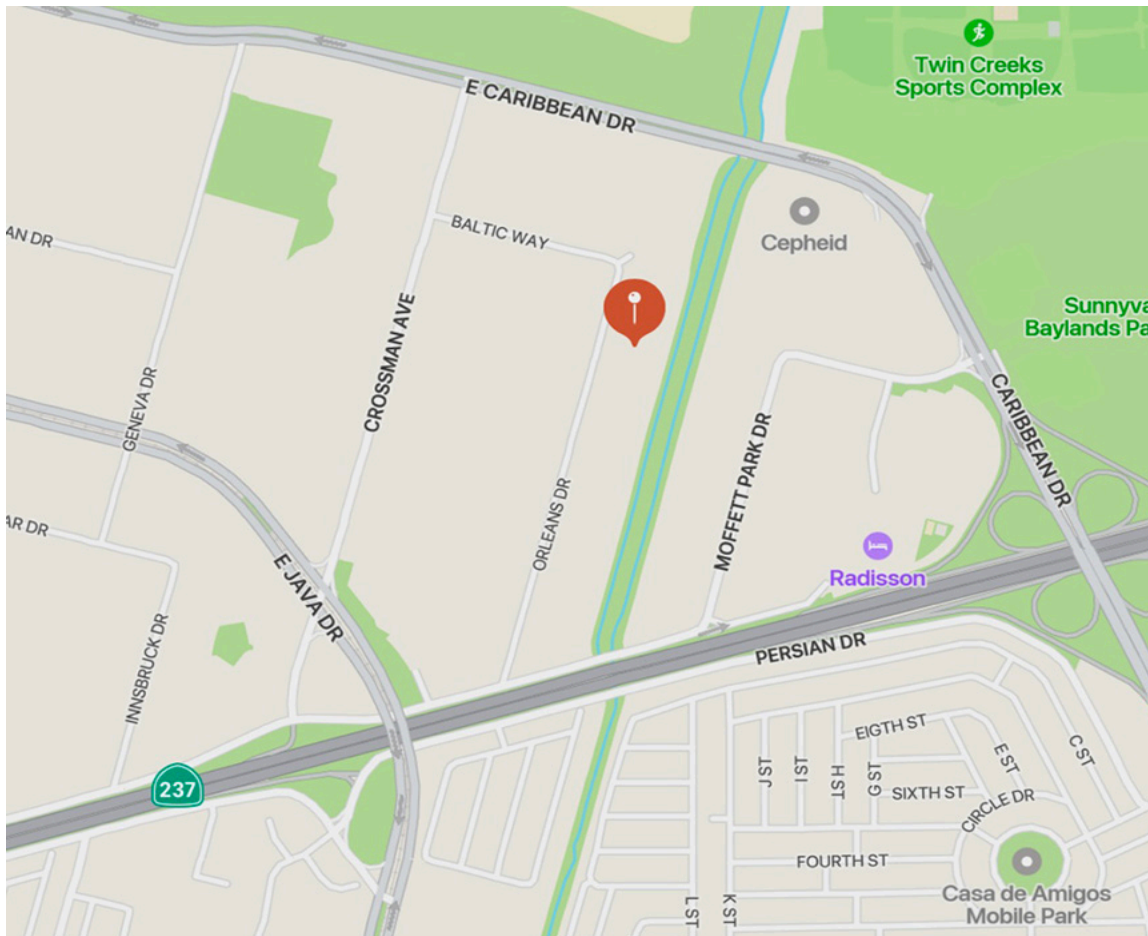


California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055

www.southbaywriters.com

Address Correction Requested



Directions from Santa Clara:

Maker Nexus

1330 Orleans Drive
Sunnyvale

North on Lawrence
Expressway,
Cross Hwy 101,
Name changes to Caribbean
Drive,
Cross Hwy 237.
Left at Crossman Ave,
Left at Baltic Way,
Right at Orleans Dr. to 1330.

**Saturday, March 9,
10:30 at Maker Nexus**

**Come EARLY to
allow for security check
in at door**

**Martha Engber
Flaming Great Dialogue**