



# Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch  
[centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)  
October 2023

October 17, 2023

Booktoberfest!



Come enjoy CCW’s annual Booktoberfest. Several of our members will be readers. Each will have about 8 minutes to showcase a book published within the last year. Priority goes to readers who have not participated for the past two years. Come hear what your fellow members have been publishing!

Members are invited to bring their own books to sell. If you wish to sell books, you will have a chair and a small space at a table, so plan accordingly.

November 21, 2023

Write What Scares You!

Maria Francesca



Every story has an element of horror woven into it, whether it's the boogeyman hiding in the closet or the debilitating fears of grief, loss, hopelessness, and danger. Many writers don't realize their writing contains horror elements because, as horror/suspense writer Douglas E. Winter says, "Horror is not a genre; it is an emotion." Come explore the dark

side, and you might be surprised at what you uncover.

**Francesca Maria** writes dark fiction surrounded by cats near the Pacific Ocean. She is the award-winning author of [They Hide: Short Stories to Tell in the Dark](#) from Brigid Gate Press, which debuted as an Amazon #1 Best Seller. She is also the creator of the [Black Cat Chronicles](#), a true horror comic book series narrated by a mystical black cat.

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## CCW President's Letter

By Sarah Pruitt

Indigenous Peoples Day and Columbus Day are honored on October 9. Columbus, as we know, was the first non-Indigenous person to publicize his discovery in 1492. Don't get me started on the Vikings, St. Brendan, or Zheng He.

When the first humans reached what is now the continental United States is a fluid date changed with each new archaeological discovery. Currently, it is 23,000 years ago—google footprints in White Sands National Park in New Mexico. (Obviously a little earlier than 1492). The footprints show children and teenagers interacting, possibly in a game around 21,000 BCE, or BC if you remember the fifties. These hunters and gatherers reached what is now the American Midwest to find, among other creatures, dire wolves weighing 150 pounds (If you write fantasy or prehistoric romances, you might want to google these guys), giant sloths, mammoths, and saber-toothed tigers. It took planning, but armed with spears, arrows, and stone points, hunters successfully provided meat for their clans. The gatherers of the tribe picked up the slack (some scientists think more than 50%) by bringing home edible plants and, thus, staving off scurvy.

October 16 is Oscar Wilde's birthday. My favorite of his works is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The 2011 film version, starring Judi Dench and Colin Firth, captures much of the effervescence of a live production. Wilde and his wife had two sons. Both had fond memories of their father. One young man died in World War I. The survivor's grandson is Lucian Holland, who arranged to occupy Wilde's room while a student at Oxford's Magdalene College.

October 25 is Zadie Smith's birthday. She writes novels, essays, and short stories. Her first book, *White Teeth*, won numerous awards and became a bestseller. A British citizen, her fiction deals with England's relationship with immigrants from the Commonwealth.

Ken Holden and Maria Skyttä will lead our Literary Salon from 1 to 3 p.m. on Sunday, October 22, at Juice n' Java at 599 Lighthouse in downtown Pacific Grove. The previously-announced Writers Round-up with Joyce and Nancy has been postponed until January.

This month's meeting is our annual celebration of our writers and their books. I am speaking of Booktoberfest. This is a chance to hear and applaud the works of your fellow club members. If you have a book published in the last two years, you are eligible. If you wish to read at Booktoberfest, let me know as soon as possible. There might still be room for you on my list.

Booktoberfest 2023 takes place at the Center for Spiritual Awakening, 522 Central Avenue in Pacific Grove. It is across the street from the Pacific Grove Public Library. If you want to help set up, doors open at 5 p.m. Or, any time between 5:30 and 6:15 is an excellent time to arrive. As always, admission is free for members and guests. Don't forget—FREE pizza!

Excitedly submitted,  
Sarah E. Pruitt  
CCW President



## Three Drafts to a Finished Novel



“There’s a fairly finite period in which to finish a book while you’re still excited about it and learning from it,” according to writer Stuart Horwitz. He proposed it’s possible to complete a novel in three general drafts. A draft includes major conceptual shifts, he said, and the most important thing is to remember which draft you’re currently writing. If you have to add a new scene to the third draft of a manuscript, for example, that scene should be treated as a first draft rather than holding it to third-draft standards. Horwitz then discussed a mantra and goals for each draft:

First Draft Mantra: *Keep it Moving*. The first, or “messy,” draft should be written without worrying too much about formulas or outlines. Make time to write, surrender your inner critic, and listen to your intuition. This draft is all about finding clues and discovering what you care about, Horwitz said. To ensure you keep things moving, he suggested counting your words: “You won’t know the quality of the work at this point, so go for quantity.” It’s also important to have fun writing this draft.

If you hate working on the project, he said, maybe it’s not the right one for you.

Second Draft Mantra: *Kill All Your Darlings*. The second, or “method,” draft is all about taking the best parts of your first draft up a level and getting rid of what doesn’t work. “A lot of revision is about cutting,” Horwitz said. As you begin the second draft, he suggested brainstorming all your scenes from memory to discern which ones are good, bad, missing (need to be added), or “forgotten” (scenes you forget to include during this exercise might be ones you don’t need). He also suggested physically cutting scenes apart to try them in a different order, or using online programs like Scrivener to accomplish this. The second draft is also where you can pinpoint your theme, which may have changed from the initial theme that excited you and pulled you into the project. Horwitz suggested visualizing your theme in the center of a bullseye and considering if each element of the story connects to it in some way.

Third Draft Mantra: *Revision is About Limitation*. The “final” draft is where you incorporate feedback from beta readers (Horwitz recommended enlisting three to seven). “Everybody can tell you something about your work,” he said, “if you can keep your perspective and remember to trust your own intuition in the end.” To ensure you receive the feedback you need, he suggested providing beta readers with a questionnaire. A lot of your writing won’t appear in the final draft, Horwitz said. “Like an iceberg, much of it will remain below the surface as only the best stuff is pushed up.” Be careful of too much wordsmithing, however. The goal is to have a final draft with “that fresh feeling of not having been overworked.”

When we see any artistic product in its final form we tend to think that’s how it started out, Horwitz said, but it’s always the product of revision. “Try to work away from the idea that famous writers are geniuses and the rest of us aren’t.”



# Announcements

## New CCW members

Please welcome new members Kevin McNeil, Don Redmon, and returning member Frank Sanchez.



## **Sunday Salon**

October 23, 1-3pm  
Juice n Java

## **Scribbles Editor Needed**

Do you want to get to know CCW better? Have a hand in making the club work for its members? We have just the opportunity for you!

The *Scribbles* editor compiles material that other members write each month, lays out the document, and emails it to members. None of this is terribly time-consuming; most of the work takes place during the latter part of each month, and editing the newsletter is a terrific way to get to know the club very well. For more information, contact Christine Sleeter ([csleeter@gmail.com](mailto:csleeter@gmail.com)).

## **Scholastic Art and Writing Contest Coming Soon**

Autumn is upon us and that means it is time to recruit judges for our annual participation in the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest. CCW will earn \$2500 for our expert adjudication, and it is fun to be a part of this national event.

What is this contest? The Scholastic Art and Writing Contest is open to all high school juniors and seniors. There are two basic divisions, one for visual arts and one for writing. We judge only the writing entries. The writing contest includes categories like short story, personal memoir, sci-fi, humor, novel excerpt, poetry, journalism and essay. Our judges can choose their favorite category to judge.

Last year there were 260,000 entries nationally. We (CCW) were given about 1200 entries to judge. The list of judges must be sent in by December 1, so we will be calling on you very soon. Of course, if you already know the joy of reading these young writers, and you want to volunteer, you can contact Dennis Hamilton (below). We receive the panels of entries on December 15 and have until January 9 to complete the judging. Reading these fresh takes from young writers is inspiring, and even intimidating at times. (Wish I could write that ~~good~~ well.)

You can reach Dennis Hamilton, contest administrator, for more information at 831-643-5093 (phone or text) or by email at [writingcontests.ccw@gmail.com](mailto:writingcontests.ccw@gmail.com) or [Hamilton-dennis@att.net](mailto:Hamilton-dennis@att.net).

## **Announcing CCW's New Webmaster!**

The CCW Executive Committee is pleased to announce the appointment of CCW member Jennifer Schmidt to be our new webmaster, following the retirement of our long-time webmaster Ken Jones. Jennifer brings a wealth of website knowledge and experience to the CCW webmaster position, and will be a key player as we redesign and implement the new CCW website. We look forward to her contributions to making the website a refreshed source of relevant information about CCW to the public and our membership.

# Announcements (Cont).

## Jordan Rosenfeld Workshop

Who: Jordan Rosenfeld

When: Saturday, October 7th, 10 am to 1 pm

Location: Redwood City Yacht Club (441 Seaport Ct, Redwood City, CA)

Cost: \$80

Workshop Topic: Nail Your Story's Voice & Tone

Every genre has its own unique signatures readers come to expect, known as voice and tone. These elements make it possible to identify the genre within a few pages and often reflect the personality, mood, and spirit of your characters and your themes. Nailing your novel, memoir, or short story's voice and tone will ensure you meet readers' expectations while increasing your chance of publication. This workshop will explore such things as: how voice emerges from character and personality; sentence structure and other voice mechanisms; how emotion creates voice; specific word choices, and much more.

**Jordan Rosenfeld** is author of the forthcoming novel *Fallout* (Running Wild Press, 2024), as well as the novels *Women in Red* and *Forged in Grace* and six books on writing craft, most recently *How to Write a Page-Turner*. Her freelance articles and essays have appeared in hundreds of national publications such as *The New York Times*, *Scientific American*, and *Writer's Digest*. She is a freelance manuscript editor and writing teacher. Find her at [Jordanrosenfeld.net](http://Jordanrosenfeld.net).

Registration:

<https://www.cwc-sfpeninsula.org/https://wwwcwc-sfpeninsulaorg/store/p/p/jordan-rosenfeld-workshop>

## Member Congratulations

Have you published a book within the last month? Won a writing award? Please send information to [csleeter@gmail.com](mailto:csleeter@gmail.com).



## **“It Started with the Back of Cereal Boxes”**

**Nora Peyton**

Crafting a compelling story underscores Nora Peyton’s passion for writing. “Words have always been a source of joy, learning, and escape,” she says. “It started with the back of cereal boxes or maybe the funny pages.” In high school, Nora wrote for the school paper and literary magazine, and she went on to major in American Literature at New York City’s Marymount Manhattan College. After receiving several rejections of her writing submissions and employment applications from *The New Yorker* and other fine publications, she found herself in need of a “real job.”

The first position Nora landed was editor/statistician in the economics department of a Wall Street bank. Surviving a recession, three takeovers, and a market crash over the span of 15 years, she worked her way up to Senior VP as an editor, writer, marketer of senior policy makers, and manager of writers and editors. One claim to fame was her introduction of Smith Barney, Harris Upham to desktop publishing. “The computer filled a small room!”

During this time, Nora earned an MA in journalism from NYU, and she wrote for several small financial publications. She also received post-graduate certification in Nonprofit Management from Seton Hall University, subsequently moving to the nonprofit sector to promote several educational, social services, and arts organizations. Two years ago, she retired as a Regional Director of the Alzheimer’s Association, but she continues to write and edit freelance, mostly for nonprofits around the country. She also volunteers for Meals on Wheels.

Nora writes in an office in her Pacific Grove home. She devotes some of her writing schedule to research, which entails quite a bit of reading—a crucial component to improving the craft of writing, she says. “Read anything and everything. Also, talk to other writers. Ask questions and listen to their answers. But when the words won’t come, I rearrange the furniture!”

Nora and her husband, Bob, moved to California in 2011. She joined CCW two years ago “around the same time I first admitted out loud that I was writing a book.” She currently holds CCW’s publicity chair position, and she’s working on a “contemporary mystery set in a museum with the opportunity to have my main character go on to other adventures.”

Nora appreciates the encouragement she receives from her fellow CCW members and looks forward to adding “book author” to her resume.

*Michelle Smith’s articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is [www.theebonyquill.com](http://www.theebonyquill.com).*







### CONTESTS, CONFERENCES, AND OPEN SUBMISSIONS

#### **The TulipTree Humor Contest**

**Deadline:** October 17, 2023

**Entry Fee:** \$20 per entry

**Website:** <http://www.tuliptreepub.com/humor-contest.html>

**Prizes:** **Grand Prize:** \$1000, Contributors/Honorable Mentions for each issue will be paid \$50.00 per acceptance plus publication in *Tuliptree Review*.

**Guidelines:** See website for guidelines. No restrictions on form, style, or content as long as it fits the requirement of finding humor in the work. Judging is done in two rounds. You may enter as often as you like with a \$20.00 fee per entry. All entries must be previously unpublished.

#### **The Ghost Story Supernatural Fiction Award**

**Deadline:** October 17, 2023

**Entry Fee:** \$20 per entry

**Website:** <https://theghoststory.com/>

**Prizes:** **First Prize:** \$1500 plus online Halloween publication, plus two Honorable Mention awards \$300.

**Judges:** The editors of *Ghost Story Magazine*

**Guidelines:** See website for Guidelines. Ghost stories are welcome, of course—but your submission may involve *any* paranormal or supernatural theme, as well as magic realism. What we're looking for is fine writing, fresh perspectives, and maybe a few surprises in the field of supernatural fiction. Story length should run between 1,500 and 10,000 words. Please be assured that we will read and carefully evaluate ALL submissions to The Ghost Story Supernatural Fiction Award competition.

#### **The 2023 Brooklyn Non-Fiction Prize**

**Deadline:** November 15, 2023, 11:59 PM ET

**Entry Fee:** Free

**Website:** <https://filmbrooklyn.org/nonfiction.html>

**Prizes:** **1<sup>st</sup> Prize:** \$500, all finalists will be invited to read from their writing and their entries will be included in the Brooklyn Film & Arts Festival's Brooklyn Nonfiction Collection of stories in an online anthology.

**Judges:** All entries will be judged by a panel of Brooklyn writers.

**Guidelines:** See website for Complete Guidelines. Submissions should be between 4 to 10 pages. (Up to 2500 words. We're seeking a nonfiction essay set in Brooklyn, about Brooklyn, and/or Brooklyn people/characters. We want compelling stories from writers with a broad range of backgrounds and ages who can render Brooklyn's rich soul and intangible qualities through the writer's actual experiences in Brooklyn.

**Submission Call:** Tales from the Moonlit Path-Spec Fiction

**Payment:** \$10 per story up to 2000 words

**Deadline:** October 13, 2023. See website for guidelines.

**Website:** <https://talesmoonlitpath.com/submissions/>

## What's on your Nightstand?

Barbara Siebeneick



What are *you* reading now? What book has moved or engaged you in a special way? Share it with the other CCW members. All genres will be accepted. Please send your review to [Barbara.siebeneick@gmail.com](mailto:Barbara.siebeneick@gmail.com). Remember to add: Name of book, author, publisher, date of publication and your name. Tell us what the book is about (without giving away any spoilers), your reaction to it and why. This month's review is from *Mike Latta (MichaelLattaBooks.com)*.

### ***A writer with a unique voice.***

When was the last time you fell enthralled with an author of over five dozen novels and their various Hollywood adaptations? Been awhile? Well, meet this standout.

My years long favorite leisure/bedtime author is Robert B. Parker. He wrote the "Spenser" PI series (among others, including Westerns) and I love every one of them. To me, his writing style is akin to Hemingway's. What Hemingway did for novel writing, Parker did for the noir Private Eye genre (if not novel writing in general.) Or as one reviewer stated:

"Crackling dialogue, plenty of action and expert writing . . . Unexpectedly literate—[Spenser is] in many respects the very exemplar of the species." —*The New York Times*

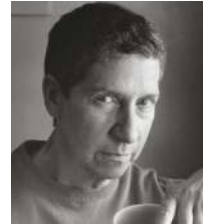
A prolific writer, I highly recommend you read any and all of his 30 or 40 "Spenser" PI novels, plus the "Jesse Stone" and "Sunny Randall" series. And if, like me, you're a Louie L'Amour fanatic, check out his Westerns. Each book manages to be an entirely new, convoluted, witty mystery that you can't put down until your eyes drop.

Sadly, Robert Parker died a few years ago and other writers now continue his work, but it ain't the same. Read him. I guarantee you his writing style will ruin your here-to-fore ability to put up with the overly erudite and generally overwritten Pulitzer stuff.

Enjoy!

*MichaelLattaBooks.com*





I wonder why the month of October is often referred to as “the scary month.” Halloween isn’t until the end of the month, close to November’s Day of the Dead. What makes it “scary” for me is that it seems to be the month of change. Autumn begins in September, but it feels established in October. So, when trying to think of a spooky subject for this month’s column, I found one: audiobooks.

At a publishing conference I walked up to a well-known indie publisher and asked, “Do you do audiobooks?” The woman, dressed in smart-casual business attire, was smiling a second ago. Her smile faded. “Oh, no, we don’t.” And she walked off.

Honestly, I got that reaction more than once from multiple publishers.

Okay, I get it. Audiobooks are expensive to produce and they yield a fraction of print and eBook royalties. Though you don’t have printing costs, you do have to pay the voice actor, unless you take that on yourself. Perhaps, if it were a memoir or nonfiction, I’d think about doing that. But fiction is more like a movie production. If you’re lucky, you’ll find a great voice talent that can handle all your characters, as the price increases with each actor, just like a movie production would.

Then there is the post-production: consider a print or eBook’s “post-production” of designing, editing, and proof-reading. That has to be done with audio, too. (I guess you’d call it proof-listening.) And, yes, I listened to the whole thing, making note of the exact time where edits were necessary.

My full experience would take more pages than I have here, but one thing I learned is that, yes, people do listen to books. I’ll dispense with the philosophical question of, “Is that reading?” Another time, perhaps.

I had mixed feelings about the final product of my audiobook. As the author, I’ve been living with these characters for a few years and the voices in the audiobook weren’t exactly the ones I’d been hearing. But I realized, just like when someone reads a book, each reader will hear and see their own versions of the characters and scenes, no matter how well you describe them.

In order to find out what other people thought about the recorded book, I put the audiobook on NetGalley. If you’re not familiar with NetGalley, it’s a review site where you allow readers to read (or listen to), an ARC (advance reader copy) of your book in exchange for an honest review. Scary.

The first review I received looked like what we are afraid AI is doing to writing. Again, scary. It praised the story and writing, and the voice actor’s talent, but the reviewer’s own writing was fraught with spelling and punctuation errors, misused words, and run-on sentences. But what this reviewer revealed changed the way I thought of audiobooks. She saved the reveal for the end. I think she did it on purpose. The reviewer was blind.

Why had it not occurred to me that the blind would (OF COURSE), listen to books? I paused; I stopped breathing for a moment. I shed a tear. Or two. I wasn’t scared anymore. I was humbled, and thrilled.



Prompts challenge hesitant writers to start the process of writing, put down the germ seed, put “butt in chair,” and draw us into a world to be created from our minds. The column is meant to be a lectern, displaying writer’s notes. ***Please send your prompts to Scribbles % Michael Beck [pregnev001@gmail.com](mailto:pregnev001@gmail.com).***

In August, CCW had its annual summer picnic; thus the prompt.

### This ain’t no picnic

Tiny’s great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and brothers had all been in the army. It was Tiny’s fate to follow suit, though he was small for his age. He had heard tales, lore handed down through the generations, of life in the army and its daily grind. Marches that ran into days, over all sorts of terrain, rain or shine, impediments confronted and overcome, sometimes overwhelmed by the sheer force of bodies thrown at the obstacle.

The dream of unheard riches, accidentally discovered, always sent the army into a craze, surging forward to carry away the booty, mingling with soldiers moving toward the front while robbers funneled their loot back to the rear. The fatigue of unending marches dissipated as each foot soldier saw riches pass by on their way back to base camp. These were not the sad refugees passed daily in their march.

To be so lucky, Tiny dreamed, marching in an unending cadence, one foot in front of the next, a fellow soldier in front and one behind. Today, the sun shone clear, bright and warm. The air force sent fliers ahead to scout sights, sending back glowing remarks of unbelievable treasures. Tiny felt a surge course through the column, anticipation of what lay ahead urging them forward.

He was unprepared for the defenses thrown at them, when they finally appeared on the scene.

A squad ahead of him disappeared before his eyes. Yet the column still advanced, onward to the treasure, hunger and greed driving them on, their years of training keeping them on mission. All their senses were alive now, sending out feelers to circumvent the next impending catastrophe. Suddenly, a roar sounded overhead, a thunder clap of impending doom.

**Damn Ants!**

The CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB is a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit, dedicated to educating members and the public-at-large in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

## The Last Word Christine Sleeter



### Split Screen

I'm lying on my back, looking up at a large lamp. Around me is an assortment of people talking, shuffling about, busily working with equipment I can't see but I can hear.

I'm still lying on my back, but the lamp has disappeared and I'm looking at ceiling tiles. Where did it go? There are still people around me talking softly, but they seem fewer in number and the voices are different. How was one set of people exchanged for another set without me hearing anyone come and go?

Not a stitch of time between what I was seeing and hearing just seconds ago, and what I see and hear now.

Ahh, I get it. The surgery is done.

### Christine

## CCW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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**Scribbles** is published by: Central Coast Writers, Post Office Box 997, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

### Editorial Staff

Christine Sleeter	Editor
Nicki Ehrlich	In So Many Words
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Patricia Watson	Contests and Workshops

### CCW Website

[centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

Click **Scribbles** Newsletter for archived copies.

### For anything Scribbles related:

Contact **Scribbles** editor Christine Sleeter

[csleeter@gmail.com](mailto:csleeter@gmail.com)

### Not yet a member of CCW?

You can join at a monthly meeting or online at:

[Centralcoastwriters.org](http://Centralcoastwriters.org)

### NorCal Group of California Writers Club

[cwnorcalwriters.org](http://cwnorcalwriters.org)