



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch
centralcoastwriters.org
December 2023

December 3, 2023 Annual Winter Holiday Party



Our annual winter holiday event will be held Sunday, December 3rd at the [Monterey Civic Club, 540 Calle Principal, Monterey, CA](#) from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Members are welcome to bring guests, and everyone is encouraged to bring a dish of goodies to share.

The CCW will supply paper plates/bowls, plasticware, napkins, bottled water, and holiday music. You supply the laughter and fellowship that comes from sharing our common passion for the art and craft of writing and, of course, Grandma's ghost pepper surprise brownies.

We're looking for assistance in setting up tables and decor at 11:30 on the day of the event. Let us know if you can help by emailing Barbara at barbara.siebeneick@gmail.com.

January 16, 2024 Writing Back-Cover Copy Shelley Adina



Your book cover gets your reader's attention, but your back-cover copy can clinch that sale. Back-cover copy is an art form and, whether traditionally or indie published, authors need to know how to write it well. In this hands-on presentation, *USA Today* bestselling

author Shelley Adina will break down the back-cover blurb, from shoutline to hook. Attendees will leave with a working draft of the copy for their upcoming book or query letter.

Shelley Adina is the author of more than 50 novels published by Harlequin, Warner, Hachette, and Moonshell Books, Inc. Find out more at www.shelleyadina.com or her store at www.moonshellbooks.com.

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Dear Fellow Writers,

Happy Holidays to all! And to those who also celebrate one or more of the following:

- Hanukah - December 7-15
- Bodhi Day - December 8th
- Christmas - December 25
- Kwanza - December 26

The holiday season can be a fertile ground for writers. Think of all the books and movie scripts that come out this time of year.

Speaking of Hallmark, this reminds me of a joke: As December approaches, let's take a moment to pray or think comforting thoughts for the ambitious, young businessman working in the big city who is about to lose his fiancée because she has returned to her home town to help her family, widowed parent, or beloved aunt with a struggling hotel or shop or farm or tractor company. There she meets a guy wearing a plaid flannel shirt who is a farmer, a logger, or an organic chef. After a certain amount of drama, she realizes he's the love of her life. (Thank you Lizzie Gabrielson for the joke.) BTW Hallmark scripts are not as easy as they look, and they won't accept any without an agent. (Unless you know somebody who knows somebody.)

On a more serious note, this season can be extremely busy with celebrations, visiting family, all of which can be pretty emotional. Family, feelings and festiveness can generate our creative juices. Whichever direction your holiday takes, may your writing sooth you, inspire you, and send you into the new year with a lighter step.

CCW invites you to our Winter Holiday Potluck, Sunday, December 3, 1-4pm. It will take place at the Monterey Civic Club, 540 Calle Principal, in Monterey. The club will provide water, coffee, tea, plates, napkins, cups and plasticware. Please bring a dish to share. If you wish to drink something besides water, tea or coffee, you should bring it. Members' guests are welcome!

NOTE: This party takes the place of our usual monthly meeting.

Sarah E. Pruitt
CCW President



Writing What Scares You

Although horror is listed as a separate category in bookstores and libraries, it actually crosses all genres, according to horror writer **Francesca Maria**. Because horror explores fear and how we respond to it, any writing that explores the nature of fear can be considered horror. Romance novels, for example, explore fears of loss and questions of will he/she or won't he/she? Science Fiction explores man's fear of powerlessness in the face of expanding technology.



Fear can be very subjective, Maria said, but there are some universal fears, such as death, illness, loss of a loved one, and losing control of your body and senses. "We write about fear to overcome it," she said, "and horror helps shed light on our fears." Maria grew up in a haunted house and the presence, whatever it was, targeted each of the children in the family with a specific type of terror. Because her parents never believed the children and didn't allow them to talk about the haunting, she needed a way to process her fear. She did this by writing a short story about a group of kids that stumble onto a haunted house. Writing that story gave Maria back a sense of control, allowed her to process her fears and—by writing her own ending—let her direct the narrative.

The Covid pandemic was the first time since childhood that Maria felt the same level of visceral fear she'd experienced growing up in a haunted house. Like many during that time, she felt anxious, completely powerless, and fearful of getting sick, dying, or losing loved ones. She processed those fears by writing a horror anthology, *They Hide*. "I would invite you to consider exploring more of your fears in a conscious way when writing," said Maria. "Think about what scares you and tap into visceral emotions as you write."

When asked how to make a scene or story scary, she suggested writers remember times they experienced personal fear and work with those authentic feelings. Put yourself into the character's body, get into their senses, and have them experience fear through bodily reactions. You can also use suspense, which involves fear of what will happen next and is closely related to horror. "Describe a character without power who's grieving a murdered loved one and fearing she's next," Maria said, "and contrast that with a villain who has no emotion and keeps upping the threats."

Maria didn't set out to write horror and is often asked why she writes it. "The rise in popularity of slasher movies in the 1980s put horror into a small box that it's still fighting to get out of," she said. "Horror is just the way my fear comes through."

Announcements

New CCW members

Please welcome new members Jennifer Murphy, Cynthia Carroll, Kim Parker, Rudy Munox, and Terre Short .



Next Writers Roundup

Editing and Copyediting with Joyce Krieg and Nancy Middleton
Saturday January 27, 1-3pm
The Little House in Jewel Park, next to the Pacific Grove Library

Sunday Salon

December 17, 1-3pm
Juice n Java

Member Congratulations

On Sunday, December 10th, from 1pm to 3pm, ten local authors will be signing their books at a holiday open house at River House Books in the Carmel Crossroads. A perfect time to round out your holiday shopping! CCW members are: **Nicki Ehrlich**, **Brooke French**, and **Terre Short**. They will be joined by Kathleen Ambro, Clarissa Bell, Kathryn Gualtieri, Fran Lozano. S.A. Lunamir, Julie Tulley, and Anna Vandenbroucke.

New CCW Website

Check out the new [CCW website](#). Thanks go to Gary Parker and Francie Soito (our designer and November speaker) for putting in the hard work for the design and transition. The website will be a work in progress for some time. If there's something missing that you'd like to see or a correction please let the new webmaster, Jennifer Schmidt, know at ccw.branch.webmaster@gmail.com. Our thanks to the outgoing webmaster Ken for his hard work over the years at keeping us up to date.

Our new website has a section for member profiles. If you would like to have your profile added to the website, email us a headshot photo (resolution greater than or equal to 72 dpi) and a 100-word (or less) text that describes your background, genres, published titles if you have them, and URL to send interested viewers to your website. Send the photo and 100-word limited text to ccw.branch.webmaster@gmail.com.

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.



“Take Risks for Your Muse”

Lee Allan Sanders

Lee Allan Sanders has been writing for 40 years, which includes daily journaling he began as part of a year-long 12-step program. During an educational visit to a large Tokyo bookstore in 1983, Lee discovered an entire section dedicated to Haiku poetry. From then on, he knew he’d found his writing form—English language 17-syllable 5-7-5 style Haiku—inspired through his practice of journaling.

Lee earned a teaching credential from Arizona State University along with minors in Art and Photography. He also studied at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Case Western Reserve University, and Kent State University. At expert project manager level, he coordinated large scale product and art events on a global basis. Currently, he works as an online gallery manager, exhibit and classroom coordinator, and delivery truck driver, providing support to Saori Santa Cruz Studios (www.saorisantacruz.com) and its artists-in-residence who showcase and sell their art through online retailers.

A resident of Zayante, a census-designated area in Santa Cruz County of about 760 people in the San Lorenzo Valley, Lee often encounters folks who share concerns about their community. At the behest of his muse’s leadership, he writes in his third floor loft whenever his community (or the world) needs his words. “My muse decides which concerns I write about.”

Previously deployed to the Korean demilitarized zone as Korean Counter Agent Company liaison for night ambush patrol radio communications with the US Army, Lee thinks writers should aspire to the concept of living as a “master spy.” A master spy promotes leadership, self-motivation, personal integrity, inquisitiveness, observational skills, and composure, earning the designation “Village Spy.” He also emphasizes the importance of getting adequate sleep, staying healthy and physically fit, being spiritually attuned, and remaining “coherent and inspired.”

A CCW member since 2021, Lee’s publications include corporate articles in multiple languages, online content for UC Santa Cruz, and a Haiku poem published in CWC’s 2022 *Literary Review* (p.129). He hopes CWC will create a funding source to support annual publication of the *Review*. “I need that window to remain open as motivation for me to write.”

Lee’s poems, some of which derive from the original Basho form of Haiku (though not limited to nature), are found at www.pripensi.wordpress.com. “Let your muse bring stories to you then write them better than anyone else can,” he says. “Find and develop your voice and use it. Be honest. Be accurate. Love your muse wholeheartedly and take risks for her.”

Michelle Smith’s articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is www.theebonyquill.com.





CONTESTS

The Lascaux Prize in Short Fiction

Deadline: December 31, 2023

Entry Fee: \$15

Website: <https://lascauxreview.com/contests/>

Prizes: **1st Prize:** \$1000, a bronze medallion and publication in *Lascaux Review*, **Finalists:** \$100 plus publication in *Lascaux Review*

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. Writers may enter more than once. Length should not exceed 10,000 words. All genres and styles are welcome. Judges are the journal's editors. Writers retain all rights to their work at all times.

The 5th Annual Story Foundation Prize Writing Contest

Deadline: December 15, 2023 Midnight PST

Entry Fee: \$25

Website: <https://www.storymagazine.org>

Prizes: **1st Prize:** \$1500 plus publication in the Summer 2024 edition of *Story Magazine*. All entrants receive a one year subscription (3 issues) of *Story Magazine*.

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. Enter a story of your choosing up to 10,000 words. Multiple submissions and simultaneous submissions are welcome, but you must pay a separate fee for each entry and withdraw the piece immediately if accepted elsewhere. Entries must be previously unpublished. All entries will be considered for publication at our regular rate. Previous winners of the Story Foundation Prize are not eligible. All entries will be judged by the editors of *Story*.

The 14th Annual Gemini Magazine Poetry Open

Deadline: January 2, 2024

Entry Fee: \$9 for up to three poems

Website: <https://gemini-magazine.com/poetry-open-contest-2024/>

Prizes: **1st Prize:** \$1000, **2nd Prize:** \$100, **Four Honorable Mentions:** \$25

All six finalists will be published online in the March/April 2024 issue.

Guidelines: See website for Complete Guidelines. Any Subject, style or length allowed; all poems must be unpublished. Poems on personal blogs are OK. All judging is blind.

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

University of Dayton Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop April 4-6, 2024

"When humor goes, there goes civilization." Erma Bombeck

Location: University of Dayton, Curran Place 1700 S. Patterson Blvd, and the University of Dayton Marriott Hotel, Dayton, Ohio

Deadline: When sold out. 50 seats left.

Website: <https://udayton.edu/artssciences/initiatives/erma/index.php>

Fees: \$524. The room block at Marriott Univ. of Dayton: \$145 per night until sold out.

Details: See website for complete details, speakers, panel and workshops. This is the place to learn about writing humor. You're guaranteed to laugh a lot.

What's on your Nightstand?

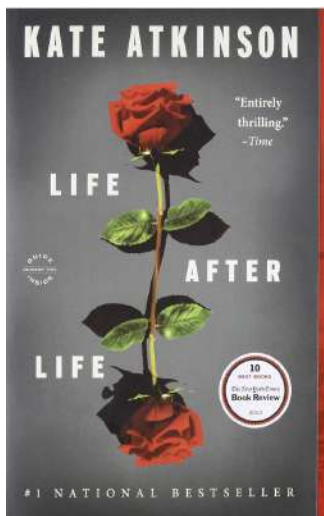
Barbara Siebeneick



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. 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 *Barbara Siebeneick*.

Life After Life, by Kate Atkinson, Little, Brown and Company, 2013

A character in *Life After Life* states that "Life is a palimpsest" (a manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing but of which traces remain). The heroine of the story, Ursula, lives several lifetimes where she relives pivotal moments to provide a more favorable outcome.



Don't we all want a "do over"? A beloved brother dies in the war. Maybe we can change the course of history to save him. Why not prevent the war in the first place? These are only two of the possibilities that Atkinson presents in her book.

I found the premise intriguing, but the novel confusing. The book jumps from scene to scene and year to year with barely time to enjoy the current life. She dies, she doesn't die. Sometimes the same occurrence happens three or more times...with different outcomes. Is Ursula aware of each change? Why does this happen? Does anyone around her realize that this sense of déjà vu is a remembering of actual events? While the questions and premise are intriguing, overall I did not enjoy slogging through the 529 pages, hoping for some clarity.



For me, the changing weather, shorter days, and early evenings make the holiday season a time of nostalgia. Perhaps more than other seasons, it brings back memories, mostly fond, of slower, more contemplative times. In years past, it seemed the world stopped, snow fell, and all it took was a cup of hot chocolate to warm our hearts.

My father's birthday fell in December—as do the birthdays of many a gifted writer: Jane Austen, Willa Cather, Joseph Conrad, Emily Dickinson, Ann Patchett, George Saunders. My father chose to be a doctor, not a writer, though he always talked about writing, and kept an old German typewriter in a closet. As a child, I often opened that closet door to search out the machine, even though I didn't know how to put together the letters and foreign symbols to make words, sentences, stories. His handwriting was unreadable, like many doctors' scripts seem to be, but his printing could have been a popular font—uniform but organic and distinctive. Often out of the house early, late to dinner, and delivering babies in the middle of the night (a family doctor in a small town in the '60s, was always available to his patients), he'd sometimes print short poems and leave them with small gifts by my bed as I slept. I wish I had kept those poems.

My parents were avid readers, subscribing to the Book-of-the-Month Club. Yet I recall every month when a new book arrived, my mother would gently beg my father to please unsubscribe. A floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, almost full, covered a wall in our family room. On the bottom shelf sat a complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica—the internet of its time. I understand now the fancy hard-bound red books with gold lettering rested on the bottom shelf because they were heavy volumes. But at the time I believed they were placed in easy reach for us children. Maybe both were true. My sister and I pored over the thin pages of those books, sometimes for school projects and sometimes just for fun. But we never failed to discover something new.

My parents have been gone now for many years, but their love of books, reading, and writing has been, and is still, ever-present in my life. I celebrate that fact and, since we don't have booksellers coming door-to-door these days, I think I'll do most of my holiday shopping at my favorite local bookstores: Riverhouse Books (Carmel Crossroads), Pilgrim's Way Books (Carmel-By-The-Sea), Olivia & Daisy (Carmel Valley), Downtown Book & Sound (Salinas), Bookworks (Pacific Grove), Barnes & Noble (Gilroy).

If you must shop online, many of your local bookstores have an online ordering system. Also, [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org) and [Indiebound.org](https://www.indiebound.org) allow you to pick a local store from which to buy.

Whatever your gift-giving preferences, I recommend giving yourself a gift this holiday season—the gift of time and contemplation. Ponder, reminisce, read, and don't forget the hot chocolate.

The Last Word Christine Sleeter



Howard Zinn Book Fair

There are a lot of book fairs throughout the year. On December 3, I will be participating in the [Howard Zinn Book Fair](#) in San Francisco, talking about my new nonfiction book, [Critical Race Theory and its Critics](#).

Howard Zinn was a well-known historian and intellectual. He is best known for his book [A People's History of the United States](#), which narrates history from the perspectives and experiences of “ordinary” people rather than those with wealth and political power. The theme of this year’s Book Fair is Against Amnesia. Speakers, panels, and workshops will push back against the book bans and other forms of censorship we see so prominently these days.

The Book Fair is free and open to the public. So if you are in the vicinity of San Francisco (or wish to be), come! And bring your credit card or check book because LOTS of vendors will be selling books. You might even get your Christmas shopping done there!

Christine

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You can join at a monthly meeting or online at:

Centralcoastwriters.org

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