

Write Angles



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKELEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

President's Message

What Revs Your Engine?

-Tanya Grove

Although we live in the Bay Area's temperate climate, when many days in January are sunny and clear, we can still get the winter doldrums. Blame it on the lethargy that accompanied those extra pounds that found themselves around your waist after all that holiday eating. Or blame it on the post-holiday blues. Blame anything you want, but if you find that your mind is elsewhere when you sit down to research that article or revise your short story, maybe you need the writer's version of a shot in the arm.

When I find that I'm focusing more on my grocery list than revising my early-grade chapter book, I know that I need a boost. For me, attending a conference or workshop does the trick. Sometimes the workshop covers ground I'm already familiar with, or the conference has the same speakers I've seen before, but I can always find something to inspire me and get me back on track.

It's not necessarily the presenters or their advice that revs my engine—it's often the camaraderie among fellow attendees. When I decided to become a children's writer almost five years ago, I joined the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) to become part of a like-minded writing community. Now I recognize local kid-lit folks at regional events and enjoy sharing publishing stories.

But that's not all that workshops do for me. Sometimes I just need to focus on the *idea* of writing—away from home, work, and my daily life. I need to get in that mindset where I think of myself as a writer. It's too easy to get caught up in work deadlines, wonder what to fix for dinner, and spend all one's mental energy on a long to-do list that will never be completely checked off.

So I highly recommend taking a workshop or attending a conference, even if the exact topic doesn't sound like it's your particular cup of tea. At a SCBWI conference a few years ago, I almost skipped a speaker's presentation because she was an illustrator, and I'm strictly a wordsmith. But I'm glad I stayed because it was terrifically inspiring and also gave me insight to another side of children's literature, which I think is ultimately helpful to my writing.

Maybe you don't want to attend a three-day conference. There are still plenty of workshops and writing events out there to inspire, instruct, and remind you that you are, indeed, a writer. Find one that revs *your* engine.

February 2013

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Upcoming Events

2/2 – **Workshop:** Dave Sawle
"Developing Publishing
Platforms"

2/15–17 – SF Writers Conference

2/17 – **Meeting:** Kathleen Curtis
Wilson, "A Weaver's Path to
Publication"

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.

Be sure to check our website: www.cwc-berkeley.org

February Speaker

A Weaver's Path to Publication

—David Baker



How many of us can say that working at a loom led to our becoming writers? Kathleen Curtis Wilson, our featured speaker for the February 17 meeting, studied weaving at the Cranbrook Schools in Michigan. She set up a small textile mill in southwest Virginia, where she learned to appreciate the handicrafts of the region's early settlers—so much so that she exhibited their work, researched their history, and went on to write about them.

Early in her book *Textile Art from Southern Appalachia: the quiet work of women*, Wilson corrects the stereotype that Appalachia was “void of objects of art, creativity, and design worthy of special attention.” Coverlets showcased in *Textile Art* demonstrate that during the period 1830 to 1930, highly skilled Appalachian women wove beautiful objects, not out of economic necessity but “for their own pleasure, as gifts for family members, or in celebration of important events.” Their work was born of “artistry not poverty.”

Wilson based her conclusion on nearly twenty years of research, including interviews with lenders of the coverlets—primarily elderly descendants of the artists. From these conversations, she drew material for profiles of the 31 women whose works she featured in the book. Thus does a weaver become a cultural historian.

Readers can find the same combination of craft display and personal narrative in Wilson's *Irish People, Irish Linen*, “a magnificent history,” according to William R. Ferris, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, 1997-2001. The author even includes songs the Irish artisans sang.

Where might so much attention to the details of people's lives lead a weaver-historian? To fiction. Wilson is currently at work on *The Fabric of Wishful Thinking*, a novel set in early-twentieth-century Virginia and Tennessee. How did her respect for the people she studied in Appalachia and Ireland affect her approach to characterization? We'll have a chance to ask her that and a great deal more at the February meeting.

Nonfiction Critique Group Starting

CWC-Berkeley is starting a new critique group for nonfiction writers. Founding members of the group will determine where to meet, how often to meet, and how to distribute submissions. We'll also talk about positive and effective critiquing.

If you are interested in this nonfiction group, please email me at barbaragilvar@earthlink.net by January 31st. I'll send you details about the first organizing meeting. Even if you signed up at the Sunday meeting, please email me again because I could not decipher some of your email addresses.

The nonfiction group will not include memoir because in our experience memoir is a separate genre.

Barbara Gilvar
barbaragilvar@earthlink.net
 (510) 705-1905

The Berkeley Branch meets on the third Sunday of each month (except July, August, and December) at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley C. Walters Community Room of the Main Library in Oakland at 125 14th Street ([View Map](#)). Enter on Madison Street.

Free street parking is available, and it is a short walk from the Lake Merritt BART station.



Pen Points**A Gathering of Writers**

-Karren Elsbernd

The Monterey Peninsula with its natural beauty was a destination for many artists and writers. Monterey, a town integral to California's history, had Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Amateur Emigrant*, 1895) and Richard Henry Dana (*Two Years Before the Mast*, 1840) writing in residence. To the west along the coast, Pacific Grove existed as the idealistic retreat and intellectual community, with the Pacific Coast branch of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle from 1879 to 1926, while to the south just over the hill, an artist colony was conceived early in the twentieth century in the village of Carmel.



As I've always loved the beauty of a tide pool, I was acquainted with Ed Ricketts (*Between Pacific Tides*, 1939; *Sea of Cortez*, 1941). Yet when I learned that he was more than a "mere" marine biologist but was "Doc," and he, along with a series of other local characters, was written into a fictionalized neighborhood near Cannery Row in the city of Monterey, I went on a marathon reading of John Steinbeck's novels set there in the Depression of the 1930s (*Tortilla Flat*, 1935; *Cannery Row*, 1945). The connection between these two men was later to reappear after my reading a biography of Joseph Campbell (*A Fire in the Mind*, 1991). Together, this trio of inquiring minds, Ed, John and Joseph, all then unpublished, found themselves matched in a creative spirit and in a friendship built upon overlapping intellectual and philosophical pursuits. They became a gathering of writers, or "a world of my contemporaries," as cherished by Campbell.

On my visits to the Monterey Peninsula, between my encounters with fellow tourists, I look for reminders of those days, of those writers who lived there, remembering their inspiring friendships while appreciating the surrounding natural beauty.

Berkeley Branch Gets Google Group Membership Has Its Benefits

It's 2013, and our branch has finally set up and kicked off a chat group for members. Once we get used to using it, this group will be a wonderful tool for members to

- find other writers with common interests, concerns, issues
- ask questions about the club and club events
- share information that is helpful to other writers
- invite other writers to subscribe to your blog, etc.
- discuss club-related issues and events
- make announcements of interest to club members
- arrange car pools to member events
- whatever else we need

We ask members NOT to use this group to share blog posts, forward every little bit of writing info (just the good stuff), critique work (although we do encourage writers to share and critique work off-list if they desire), or publicize (that's what Member News is for). The list is currently unmoderated, so we simply ask all members to support one another, ask for support, and keep it friendly.

Remember: membership in this group is optional, and membership in the club is required. It's like a club within the club.

All current members were invited by email, but you can also send a request to Membership Chair Kristen Caven at kbc@littlepig.com.

See you online!

Kristen Caven

Membership Chair, CWC-BB

www.cwc-berkeley.org



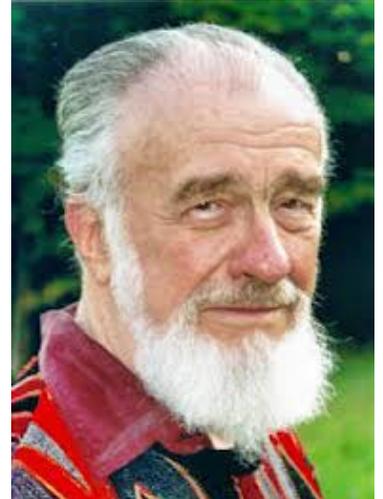
Poetry Page

FEATURED POET: W. D. SNODGRASS

-Alysa Chadow

William DeWitt (W. D.) Snodgrass (1926-2009) was another one of Robert Lowell's students whose Confessional poetry (Snodgrass personally disliked the term) won him numerous awards, notably the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1960.

Born in Pennsylvania, Snodgrass served in World War II before being admitted to the prestigious University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop, where Lowell was teaching at the time. After earning a BA, MA, and MFA, Snodgrass spent the next four decades teaching at Cornell University, the University of Rochester, Syracuse University, and Wayne State University, as well as publishing several books of poetry.



Snodgrass won the Pulitzer for *Heart's Needle*, a collection describing his separation from his daughter during his divorce from his first wife. While Lowell initially disliked Snodgrass's poems from the years preceding this collection, he came to admire them greatly. As for *Heart's Needle*, the collection is considered by many to be Snodgrass's best work.

HEART'S NEEDLE

1

Child of my winter, born
 When the new fallen soldiers froze
 In Asia's steep ravines and fouled the snows,
 When I was torn

By love I could not still,
 By fear that silenced my cramped mind
 To that cold war where, lost, I could not find
 My peace in my will,

All those days we could keep
 Your mind a landscape of new snow
 Where the chilled tenant-farmer finds, below,
 His fields asleep

Go to www.poetryfoundation.org and www.poemhunter.com for the rest of the poem; the title is taken from a line in a Middle Irish romantic poem, "An only daughter is a needle in the heart."



A New Way to Beat Writer's Block

- Sasha Futran

SOOOO Simple! Why didn't I Google "writer's block" ages ago? The perfect solution was right there on the page as soon as I got past the nonsense of those other websites. The first website actually laughed out loud at me when I clicked on it. I also dismissed a batch of tedious ones that did things like list types of writer's block complete with descriptions as well as solutions, such as advising one to determine a writing schedule. Duh.

Finally, there it was in all its glory and discriminating taste. The ultimate website for writer's block. No *heehaw* when I first clicked on the page. Instead it offered solutions that spiced up my thinking. For someone who doesn't want to get too intense, there was a category that promoted a lighter touch. The descriptions on this website grabbed my attention in their discussion of the need for balance, good integration, and texture, along with the complexity of varietal characters and the important role of finishes.

This website was, in a word, approachable. A word it repeated a bit too frequently for my own taste as a writer, but other than that, well, it was...delicious. I'm referring, of course, to... [Steele Wines](#) and their line of Writer's Block Wines. No kidding. They sell everything from Writer's Block Petit Sirah (2010) to Writer's Block Roussanne (2011).



Isn't Google wonderful? Here I thought I would be writing about my own particular issue of the moment, which isn't exactly writer's block but rather the need for deadlines, and instead found myself planning the next CWC event by identifying the obvious beverage of choice. (Is there a volunteer for dealing with the food?)

I also first tried Googling "writer's deadlines." That offered up a bunch of contests (and I still wasn't ready to say "I'll drink to that") and an intellectual discussion of the difference between a "deadline" and a "goal." Some hoey about the origin of "deadline" stemming from prison guards being allowed to shoot prisoners who crossed a line, whereas a goal was something we are trying to reach. It all got embroiled in psychobabble about issues of control and emotional divides between thinking *goal* or *deadline*. I shouldn't be so judgmental, as this is the Bay Area and some of you may like all that.

However, I just did some online shopping and stuck my Christmas present from my daughter on the kitchen counter in anticipation. This is the most magnificent battery-operated wine bottle opener imaginable, and I'm ready to toast my finishing this column on deadline!

And since I have 17 words left (450 is my limit), let me ask for your suggestions for someone who spent a career writing on deadline and can't seem to get going without one. (Oops, that was 35 words.)

Despite a growing body of evidence to the contrary, Sasha Futran is a nonalcoholic, retired journalist working on a memoir.



Monthly Writers' Contest

March's contest is any kind of poetry. Entries should be no more than 32 lines. Please send to Lynne at writeangles@gmail.com with "WA Writers' Contest" in the subject line. Entries are due no later than February 15. Congratulations this month go to John Q. McDonald for his winning entry, "Proof of Love."

Proof of Love



"A card. How nice."

"Don't you like it?"

"Sure, it's a nice card. I like the picture of the flowers. But..."

"But what?"

"That's all?"

"It says what I needed to say, doesn't it?"

"*Violets are blue. I love you. Do you love me, too?*"

"Three little words are all we need to say."

She gazed at his eyes, searching for something there she didn't find. "Well, yes, I guess so. But this is our third Valentine's together. Surely..."

"I don't need four hundred and fifty words to tell you I love you."

She paused. "I suppose not." She looked down at the card again, his illegible signature. She couldn't even be sure it was he who signed it.

"Look, I love you, OK?" he said. "I don't need some corporate card to tell you that."

"I don't know," she said. "I don't need objects for you to prove it to me. But this..."

He was quiet. He looked away. Outside, on the sidewalk, a girl walked by in black yoga tights. He stifled a lustful groan.

"What?" She had just heard him.

"Nothing," he said.

"You're mad at me now?"

"No, honey. I love you. It's Valentine's Day. Let's go get us a nice dinner."

"Are you sure?" she said. "The card's not enough?"

He looked at her. For just a second, he tried to see what she saw here. For just a second, he felt entirely inadequate.

She peered at the card. "Is that Liquid Paper?" she said.

"What?"

"Holy crap! This is a *used* Valentine's card!"

She glared at him. He blushed and looked out the window again. Now, a homeless man stood there, looking at the ground.

He tried the sheepish approach. "Look, I'm sorry," he said. "I forgot and didn't have time. Come on, let me take you to a nice dinner. I do love you." This *was* love, wasn't it? This overwhelming feeling of inadequacy, the fear that she would leave him, the knowledge that she would, eventually. That she would soon enough deny him the wonderful mystery that was *woman*.

Her look softened. "You're pretty pathetic, aren't you?" Sheepish had worked. A little. He ventured a smile. She held hers back. The homeless man outside was down on one knee, scratching something off the pavement. She followed his gaze and sighed. "We need a better world," she said.

She started gathering her things and sighed. "Dinner?"

He felt tremendous relief.

As they stepped out of the café, she turned to him. "Wait a second. Who was that card for? What's the name under the Liquid Paper?"

He felt a sinking in his stomach. He handed the homeless man a dollar and walked.

- John Q. McDonald



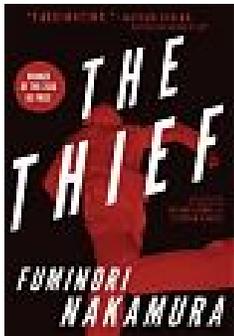
Pub Bytes

Found in Translation

– NL Fix

In a time, long, long ago, I found myself on a remote island where Anton Chekov had penned his novel, *The Island*. One of the few English speakers in the region, I was asked to edit translated articles for the regional newspaper. This was far harder than I had imagined because as I started reading I found that one sentence would run on for a page or two, and it was not uncommon for a six-page article to contain a mere four sentences. The period had been dismissed, and, as with a puzzle, the reader could spend an hour or two simply trying to unscramble the jumble of subject and verb combinations, connect them with random descriptors while identifying footnotes that had been absent-mindedly inserted in the text when the feeling was right. It seemed that all Russian writers had been trained to follow in Tolstoy's footsteps.

From then on, I began to appreciate and respect the hard work of translators who could comprehend the language of the author, pull out the essence of the writing, and communicate it accurately in another language so that the original meaning stood intact and the feeling and experience shared.



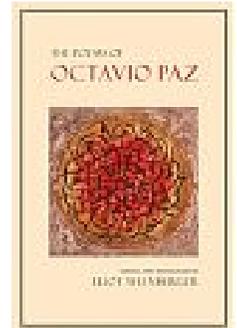
The work of translation has often been overlooked because assumptions are made that the original work simply required word-per-word translation. Those who have used mechanical translation software soon realize how valuable translators are and how they can masterfully use prose and approximation,

retrieving the main points of the work while reproducing the writer's style. Even *Google* cannot match the precision of a seasoned translator.

To understand the hidden work of a translator, imagine that you have been tasked to translate Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or Edgar Allen Poe's poems in a second language and told to retain the original meaning and various rhyming schemes, meter, alliteration, line lengths, and aural techniques. Artful translation is no easy task.

Some of the most famous translated works include *Andersen's Fairy Tales*, *The Little Prince*, *The Odyssey*, *Don Quixote*, *The Tale of Genji*, Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, and the Bible. Without the work of creative and skillful translators, some of the best books of our time would never have been within our grasp and comprehension.

In 2012, Three Percent published the best translated books of the year. They include *Stone Upon Stone*, *Spectacle & Pigsty*, *The Poems of Octavio Paz*, *Down the Rabbit Hole*, *The Thief*, and *A Muslim Suicide*. Not only do these works provide a world of wisdom and revelation but showcase excellence in translation.



For those interested in the craft of translation or learning more about translating literary works, there are a number of organizations, including the Center of Literary Translation, PEN America, Words without Borders, and the local San Francisco Center for the Art of Translation. Writing opens minds, and translations open doors to the world.

In Remembrance: Natasha Borovsky Dodds (1924-2012), Paris-born longtime member of CWC Berkeley Branch, used her translation skills on behalf of the CBS *Listening Post* during the war, and her authorial skills to create two major historical novels—*A Daughter of the Nobility* and *Lost Heritage*—as well as several poetry collections. She is survived by her husband Stuart Dodds, retired from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, artist daughter Malou Knapp of Santa Cruz, and son John Alexander Hidalgo of Berkeley.



Member News

Berkeley Branch members are encouraged to send us writing-related news. Please write "Member News" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Lucille Bellucci's story "Him, Her, Us" will appear in Issue 12, "Popular Culture," of the online magazine *Hobo Pancakes*.

Vicki Hudson reports on current and upcoming publications: short story "Captain Harper Says Good-bye" and poem "Stone Upon my Heart in the winter issue of *Bay Laurel Journal* online (www.baylaurelonline.com/2012/12/winter2012.html); a forthcoming narrative profile, "Dr. Dominatrix," accepted by *Bluestem Literary Magazine* for the next issue (www.bluestemmagazine.com/); narrative essay, "War Cats," a finalist in the Women and War contest ("A Tribute to Adrienne Rich" issue), sponsored by the *Adanna Literary Journal*. (<http://adannajournal.blogspot.com/>)

Risa Nye's Craft piece in *Hippocampus Magazine*, January 2013, highlights the value of lists for writers as inspiration, organization, and expectation. For writers, a new kind of exercise.

Charlotte Cook has again been chosen as the head judge of Fiction for the international Next Generation Indie Book Awards. In addition, Writer's Digest University has extended Charlotte's contract to provide more tutorials in 2013, following the designation of her tutorial "8 Things First-Time Novelists Need to Avoid" as #1 WD Tutorial for 2012.

Marketplace

Berkeley Branch members are welcome to advertise their writing-related services. Please write "Marketplace" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Charlotte Cook offers story editing, prepublishing services, and workshops for writers of fiction, creative non-fiction, and screenplays. Also available is office/retreat space for classes and meetings. www.adaptingsideways.com or charlotte@adaptingsideways.com.

Tatjana Greiner offers developmental editing for all genres of fiction and nonfiction. Email her at workshop@mac.com. More information at: <http://tatjanagreinerwordshop.com>.

Anne Fox, *Write Angles* copyeditor, offers copyediting services for all levels of fiction and nonfiction. References available. writefox@aol.com

Thomas Burchfield offers editing and proofreading services for fiction and nonfiction books by CWC Berkeley members. For details, visit his webpage, e-mail him at tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net, or call 510-817-4432.

Write Angles

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