

Write Angles



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

President's Message...

Two years ago I began composing writing-related holiday poems. The first one I shared at CWC's holiday luncheon, and last year I published it in *Write Angles*. I would like to continue that tradition.

December 2012

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Upcoming Events

- 12/8 – Holiday Luncheon
- 1/15/13 – Fifth-Grade Story Contest opens
- 1/16/13 – Jack London's Birthday
- 1/20/13 – Meeting
- 1/26/13 – Workshop (TBA)

Holiday Submission Blues

– Tanya Grove

I went to a conference around mid-October where agents and editors said, "You have three months to send us your writing—we promise that it will be read." To surpass the slush pile? A guaranteed reading? The rules are so simple, it's scary. Simply mention the conference where you heard them speak and submit it by mid-January. Then Halloween came with its pumpkins to carve and of course children's costumes to sew. But no need to worry—I've still got ten weeks and two manuscripts ready to go. They *are* rather different so I should choose well which story I send out to where. One is a humorous early-grade reader; the other is middle-grade fare. But family is coming. I'm hosting Thanksgiving—so much food to buy and prepare! Clean up the guest room and get out the linens and somehow find one extra chair... As soon as I clear all the cups and the plates and the leftovers get put away, I hit the malls early to find the best bargains on retailers' big shopping day. Our family has not one, but *two* holidays to celebrate this year: Hanukkah songs and dreidle games will blend with Yuletide cheer. The menorah is in the window and the wreath is on the door. Neighbors will surely wonder at the mix of our d écor. Wrapping presents, frying latkes, going to parties and plays-- Every minute is taken up for twenty-seven days! And even when the tree's been placed, forgotten, on the curb, The kids are still at home and don't know *how* to not disturb. I had three months, but now I'm down to one week and a day. I can't allow this opportunity to slip away! If I can concentrate, I know that I can get it done. Maybe if, instead of two, I focus on just one. But which to pick? This has become a sort of Sophie's choice. Submit the one for younger kids or send the stronger voice? One has made the rounds already. I'll work on the other. But a twinge of guilt makes me feel that I'm an awful mother. Now to find the guidelines buried somewhere in my notes... In one of several binders inside one of many totes. Which bag did I carry to the conference on that day? Now I've missed the deadline, and all that I can say Is I can write on the hottest of days and revise when it is freezin'. But I can't seem to get *anything* done during the holiday season



Reacquainting with Old Friends

– Alon Shalev

Last month, [Three Clover Press](#) sent me the galley proofs for *Unwanted Heroes*. I was instructed to read through the manuscript carefully and pick out any light changes: spelling, grammar, word choice, etc.

Reading a galley proof is like preparing your kid for college (admittedly, I haven't done this, but I do work with university students—bear with me). It is a last chance to make sure everything is as you want it to be before you send them out into the big, wide world. You want to make sure they have everything they need, are prepared for every scenario they might face. It is the same with a book—a last chance to get everything right.

Well over a year has passed since I last read through the manuscript. The novel was written a couple of years before that, and since then, I have written four other manuscripts.

I have moved on, right? Wrong.

Over the next two weeks, I did not expect to feel the emotional rollercoaster that played out. Of course I remembered the plot. There are sensitive scenes that I have read, edited, reread, and reedited a dozen times...but that was back then.

So why am I getting teary-eyed as I read them again now? Why do I find myself rooting for the characters that I got so close to back then? Admittedly, my relationship with these characters continued into the sequel that I wrote last year and into the notes I have made for the third in the series, both of which are also emotional roller coasters.

When I am writing a novel, I become very close to the characters. They accompany me on my commute, in the gym, and I often dream about them at night. I worry for them, get frustrated with them, and just between us, I often argue with them.

This article was originally a blog post on Left Coast Voices (<http://leftcoastvoices.wordpress.com/>), reprinted with permission from the author.



I would like to tell you that I have control of these characters. What I type onto the computer decides their actions, attitudes, and destiny. But they and I know this is only partially true. They are part of the creation, part of the process, and an integral part in how the plot plays out.

Many writers claim that the plot defines the characters. That has always puzzled me and, I suspect, leads to either shallow characters or obvious stereotypes. The reader invests in characters. Given we all crave a twist or two at the end of the book, it is for the protagonist that we root, and our commitment to him/her is what sends us scurrying to buy the next book in the series.

This is why reading a galley proof is so much more than scanning for errors or word choices. It is reacquaintance with old friends, people with whom we shared so much, people with whom we laughed, loved, and cried. My characters stepped outside their comfort zone to try to create a better world. For them, we, the reader and author, bear witness.

Reading the galley proof is so much more than scanning pages of words.

Is Email Writing?

— Sasha Futran

I was once hired to redo a video by a dentist who had a travel dental kit to market. As things evolved, he decided that redoing the complete video was too expensive. Instead, he decided I should write a new script, and we would produce a new audio to accompany the existing video. Telling him that wouldn't work because his mouth would be moving one way and the words another didn't seem to be making an impact. So I decided to write him a memo about the problem.

There was, however, an additional issue: the malfunctioning keyboard on my computer. It didn't really matter what I wrote because he wouldn't be able to read it anyway. Note: I've cheated here and given you a few more letters than he got so you can puzzle things out.

What can you expect from a dentist who had a giant smiling tooth waving a toothbrush chained to the front door of the office? It was wonderful and highly entertaining, though, for the short time it lasted. He took me out to lunch every day and to his tailor for suit fittings, and the whole staff went salsa dancing and he was quite good. I played the video he had already made for friends at home and got a lot of mileage out of it. My best friend actually fell off the couch.



Clearly, this was not going to be a long-term way to pay the mortgage, but it did keep me funded and laughing while continuing the job hunt.

I have dreams of writing a memoir. I've had a number of weird job experiences and also ended up becoming a political activist *and* exercising that activism on the job, media jobs. Those didn't exactly end up in promotions, but did make for more stories to tell.

It also explains why I had to resort to earning a few dollars from a dentist with a large smiley tooth.

Of late I've been suckered into serving on radio station boards--first KQED and now KPFA. I'm still mulling over the possibility of a sitcom treatment for the latter, but in the meantime what I write is email about KPFA's problems. Long, well-thought-out, analytic ones. Short, pithy, pointed ones. Others are just plain sarcastic. Many break accepted format and have odd beginnings and endings that finally tie things together. When I think about my email, I think of it as writing, but is email ever really *Writing*?

Sasha Futran is a troubled soul about to be released from doing six years of hard time on the KPFA board. If you want to know who to vote for in the KPFA board election, it's guaranteed she'll Write back. sfutran@pacbell.net

Let's Meet Up!

— Kymberlie Ingalls

Great things are coming to our branch of the California Writers Club!

We always encourage our authors to dive headlong into the world of social media—this is what drives the Marketing Group that meets each month before our Speaker Events. We have been working to expand the web presence of the club with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and of course our spectacular website.

On the list of to-do's is a YouTube channel designed to feature past speakers, member book trailers, and

author readings. Also coming soon, in time to launch for the new year, is a page on Meetup.

Meetup.com is a social website that hosts thousands of groups across the country. Membership is free and easy. Just go to the site, type in your interest and zip code, and up comes a list of groups and events. Our goal is to help create a sort of personal calendar for you, enabling you to easily keep up with and RSVP to our various events, such as monthly meetings, workshops, and social events like the upcoming annual holiday luncheon.

Keep your eye out for these great features. Hope to see you soon on the web!



CONFESSIONAL POETS II: Theodore Roethke

—Alysa Chadow

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963) was a contemporary of Robert Lowell (see November *Write Angles*) whose work not only won the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Awards, but influenced a generation of poets, including Sylvia Plath. Roethke was born in Saginaw, Michigan, and spent much of his childhood working in his family's greenhouse. This experience, along with his uncle's suicide and father's death from cancer infused much of his poetry.

Roethke earned an A. B. and M. A. in English from the University of Michigan and taught in several colleges in Pennsylvania and Vermont before joining the faculty at the University of Washington. He died of a heart attack in a friend's swimming pool on Bainbridge Island. The pool was eventually filled in and is now the site of a Zen rock garden.

W. H. Auden and Stanley Kunitz were just two of the poets who praised Roethke for his austere yet lyrical style. "The Waking" was published in 1953 and contains his signature natural imagery.

The Waking

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.



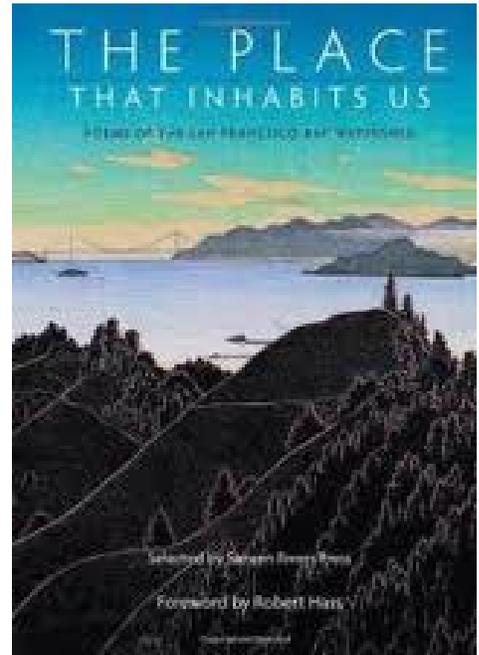
Book Review**The Place that Inhabits Us:
Poems of the San Francisco Bay Watershed**

edited by members of Sixteen Rivers Press

– John O. McDonald jqmcd@earthlink.net

"Place" has become a catchword for a certain kind of writing. Environmental, architectural, nature writing and memoir, all are enhanced by a strong sense of Place. There probably is no place that is not a Place if looked at in the right way. The San Francisco Bay Area, of course, has a grander sense of place than many others. Its natural beauty, connectedness to the environment, the setting of its cities, all contribute to a uniquely attractive region that has drawn people for centuries.

Sixteen Rivers Press, named for the number of rivers and tributaries to the bay, has compiled this outstanding volume of poetry. Each piece connects in some way to San Francisco and the Pacific Coast. Here also is a broad spectrum of poets, from relatively unknown writers, to prize winners like Czeslaw Milosz, and famous names back to Kenneth Rexroth and Walt Whitman. It is a fine collection, touching on the beautiful setting of this place, but also on love, loss and death, the usual realms of poetry. It is all organized in this volume behind an insightful introduction by Berkeley's own Robert Hass, with a cover featuring a stunning print by Tom Killion and an overarching tone familiar to people who know and feel connected to the San Francisco area.



The term "watershed" in the subtitle implies a focus on the natural setting, but the collection is broader than that. To a reader who knows the Bay Area, the book can be a compelling, warm, and inviting journey. To others, it might be less engrossing, but there is enough extremely fine poetry in this collection to warrant any discerning reader's attention. At the very least, it is an introduction to Sixteen Rivers, an artful and productive local poetry collective.

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.

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



PUB BYTES

– NL Fix

Speed Writing and NaNoWriMo

Where else can you find free food, visit different venues, talk with writers, and do so while binge writing 50,000 words in one month. The annual Nanowrimo, started by Chris Baty in 1999 with 21 participants, has experienced exponential growth, and by 2010 over 200,000 people had participated in National Novel Writing Month. The annual November event provides forums for writing advice, information, criticism, support, and an opportunity for "collective procrastination."

My second year of joining Nanowrimo, I decided to visit a number of writing venues in the San Francisco Bay area and engage with fellow Nanowrimos to see how they approach the art of speed novel writing.



At Berkeley ShareSpace, I found myself in Lap-
toplandia, where groups of students, mystery
writers and Internet bloggers cloistered to write
the next big novel. Almost everyone was wearing
earplugs and seemed to be experiencing altered
states of consciousness, pausing long enough to
replenish their appetites, gurgle down oversized
cups of free coffee, and rush off to the restroom.
In this pervasive atmosphere of penmanship, a
writer suddenly jumped up and yelled, "20,000
words—I just hit the mark," and then calmly sat
down to reactivate the keyboard.

*She was giving pep talks to the writers
and from time to time hollered, "Keep writing!"*

At an East Bay college campus, I encountered Stan, a writer who bucked the wave of keyboard junkies and wrote with a pen and paper. He mentioned that although he used his laptop device to store and distribute his writing, he was still wedded to the old writing platform when doing his "outlining and imaginative" work. As he put it, there was something expressive about using an old-fashioned fountain pen and paper where the ink showed his emotional states: ennui, transcendentalism, or pure unadulterated wickedness. He didn't know if he was going to make the 50,000-word goal, but he didn't really seem to care.



Pub Bytes continued

At the San Ramon restaurant, I met Ixy Pixy, the liaison for the East Bay Region. She was in a group of Nanowrimos huddled around a table in the middle of a busy restaurant. She was giving pep talks to the writers and from time to time hollered, "Keep writing!"

At the table were ongoing discussions about publishing, character development, and popular novels. Tim said that he had finished his first novel, the epilogue, and was ramping up for the start of his second novel, a book of poems that he wanted to sell on Amazon. We congratulated him with applause.

Veronica mentioned that she wanted to write her cousin into her work. She described him as a despicable, dishonest cheat once sought by the FBI for money laundering. She had repeatedly tried to write him into her science-fiction novel but after awhile stopped because she thought no one would believe someone could be such a dark character—even for a vampire.



Jim asked if anyone had planned the flow of the novel before starting. Most responded negatively, and writing resumed. I left after two hours and felt inspired by this group of Generation X who came out on a stormy Friday night to participate in a community of writers.

In week three, I decided to do all-nighters and typed into the wee hours of the morning. Sitting in front of the window, I watched a slew

of characters wandering through the backyard. There was the random pack of raccoons that bounced and bounded over the porch scavenging for food and [plant](#) material. As they disappeared from the scene, a feral cat crept by on its daily sojourn to pilfer leftover food from the cat bowl. Most unusual and unexpected was the appearance of a solitary creature with a long white snout that lurked around the porch furniture, emitting clicking sounds as it grazed for seeds and scraps. For the first time in my life I saw a possum close up, and I realized he, too, had come out of his comfort zone to befriend another nocturnal creature to experience Nanowrimo.

National Novel Writing Month is the perfect event to pull individuals out of their nomadic world of creative writing and to experience writing as a collaborative and social activity, where the mission is not simply to write 50,000 words but enjoy the process with fellow creatures. Writing connects us all.



Monthly Writers' Contest

Unfortunately, we received no entries for November's contest. We're going to try again with a new theme. So if you're interested in entering December's contest, the theme is "The Cliff."

Entries should be 450 words or fewer and can be any genre. Please send your entry to Lynne at writeangles@gmail.com and write "WA Writers' Contest" in the subject line. Entries are due no later than December 15.

Monthly Writers' Contest December 2012

THEME: THE CLIFF

Participate in the Club

We're waiting for you to author that article, poem, story, or cartoon.



For the Club

Contribute to the Club newsletter and join the merry band of writers.



For your Writing Life

We're all in this together. Writing will improve you and give you something to reply when someone asks you what you do and where.



For the Reward

The work you do will be noticed. In fact, there could be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow or most likely a gift to cherish because you won the monthly writing contest.



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.

Thomas Burchfield's Dracula novel *Dragon's Ark* has won Runner-up for Best Horror Novel at this year's Halloween Book Festival. This marks the third award *Dragon's Ark* has won this year.

Jeff Kingman was a national finalist this fall in the Midwest Writing Center's poetry contest, with two poems published in their journal, *Off Channel*. Another poem of Jeff's was published in issue #4 of *lo-ball*.

Risa Nye debuts as Ms. Barstool in the NOSH section of *Berkeleyside*—
<http://www.berkeleyside.com/2012/11/14/raising-the-dead-at-revival-bar-kitchen/>
Tempting tips on tasting and tipping.

JoAnn Smith Ainsworth will join other historical romance authors for a chat on 12/13/12 (1 p.m. Eastern) at the Samhain Café. They will chat about writing and post excerpts. (<http://groups.yahoo.com/adultconf?dest=%2Fgroup%2Fsamhaincafe%2Fmessages>) Public invited.

Alon Shalev's *Unwanted Heroes* (Three Clover Press) is now available on Kindle and Smashwords. The paperback is to come out in January. For more on the book, please click [here](http://www.alonshalev.com). See Alon's blog on page 2 of this *Write Angles*. <http://www.alonshalev.com>

Deborah Frisch's story, "Isaiah's Inauguration," will appear in the January/February issue of *Skipping Stones*, a many times honored multicultural children's magazine. The publication coincides with President Obama's second inauguration.

Tidbit

It was a small but lively gathering at the last Hangin' Out with Writers at the Berkeley Marina. Cliff Hui and his crack team of story starters penned the first paragraph of a fictitious novel, and those of us who gathered to hear it offered possible titles. After Cliff wrote down all suggestions, we voted on the one we liked best. For Kymberlie Ingalls's winning title of *I Scream, You Scream*, she became the proud owner of half a toilet seat, one that looked suspiciously like the other half of the that one Mary Luersen won at an earlier Hangin' Out with Writers.



Photo courtesy of NL Fix



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 nonfiction, 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.



For Sale: A great computer for a writer! iMac G5 running OS 10.5.7 ("Leopard"), loaded with Microsoft Word, Notebook, and other great programs. Available online for \$450; for sale to a Club member for only \$300. Many good books were written on it (and a lot of Club business done!); it will definitely bring you luck. In good condition with memory upgrades, working CD burner/DVD player and a new power supply. Writing software plus installation CDs are included. Call Kristen at 510-534-1415 or write kbc@littlepig.com with questions.

Write Angles

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