

# Write Angles



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

President's Message

## The World Is a Stage

-Tanya Grove

I have written poetry, a novel, a chapter book, short stories, songs, articles, and blog posts. Although I've adapted many novels and fairy tales for a musical theater class I taught, I only recently started writing for the stage.

At a friend's recommendation, I went to Monday Night PlayGround—a performance of six ten-minute plays based on the same writing prompt. I loved it. Afterward I decided that I could write a play. I submitted one, and the company offered me one of the fifteen spots for new playwrights.

Every month from October to April, the writers' pool of fifty is given a prompt and four days to write a ten-page play. I didn't make the cut in October, but in November, my romantic musical comedy, *Love Doctor, Heal Thyself*, was one of the six plays chosen. We had a ninety-minute rehearsal, followed by an 8:00 performance at the Berkeley Rep Theater. From prompt to applause in 11 days!

A few weeks ago the announcement of a playwriting class popped up in my inbox. I'd never taken a course in playwriting. I signed up.

Playwright Lauren Gunderson taught the class. While describing differences between plays and novels, she remarked that plays cannot *wander*. Every word needs a reason to be there. I had heard this before—in a *poetry* workshop. The idea always stuck with me: each word has to *audition* to be in the poem.

At the core of Lauren's class was Aristotle's notion of the dramatic arc. We covered stasis, anti-stasis, rising action, climax, and denouement. We discussed how protagonists need to have conflict and must undergo change to arrive at a new stasis by the play's end. Drama requires opposing forces.

This, too, sounded familiar. Not long ago, we had a speaker who discussed Gustav Freytag's Plot Triangle (or Freytag's Pyramid), which expanded Aristotle's formula to include novels.

One could argue that novels and plays are quite different. Indeed, characteristics vary among all forms of writing, making each one distinct. But at the heart of a play, book, or poem is a story. And to tell that story well requires good writing.

After class I had two opposing ideas: I learned steps crucial to storytelling *and* I already knew them. I was at once grateful for this course and also assured that my other writing experience will serve me well on this new path.

And that is when I realized that Aristotle's arc could be applied to life: In July I was in stasis. My burning desire was to publish my novel. While submitting manuscripts, I took a stab at writing a play (rising action) that led to my play being performed on stage at the Berkeley Rep to a full house (climax). My new stasis is being a playwright. Until another anti-stasis comes along...



## January 2014

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### Upcoming Events

**1/19/14** – Meeting Speaker:  
Kymberlie Ingalls, "Blogging & Branding—Why Aren't You?"

## Learn How to Present Yourself

—David Baker

Literary agents want to hear about our platform and expect to be directed to our blog. Should we conceive of one presenting the electrifying premise of our work, excerpts that stimulate the reader's curiosity, and laudatory comments submitted by reviewers? Yes, but Kymberlie Ingalls can help us do much more.



Obviously, Ingalls knows how to build tension. A literary agent would also see that she knows what she's writing about and takes her work seriously. After reading her concluding promise to "make those rock 'n' roll fantasies come true," the agent would sense as well that Ingalls loves music and treasures the connection between the DJ and the listener.

Ingalls, our featured speaker for the January 19 meeting, is a writer, freelance editor, and class instructor who has been blogging since 1997. She currently has several sites in operation. One of them includes a section titled "My Former Self," in which she recalls starting out as a disk jockey during her brief career in radio: "So many switches" on the mixing board—"big ones that lit up bright orange, small metal ones that did who the hell knows what." Only a few seconds left until. . . "I had to say something into that bulky microphone that would be heard by thousands of listeners. *Crap* was all I could think. The song was waiting to a close. Oh man! I'm up! Is this the right switch? Ah, hell, here goes nothing!"

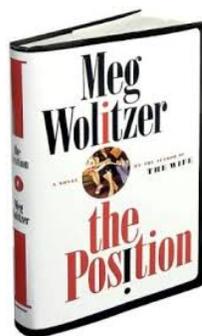
Introducing a different blog, "Stories in the Key of Me," she writes: "This is my playground, where I get to frolic with language, tease with words, and flirt with the reader's mind in the form of memoir, prose, and flash fiction." In another, "Neuroticity = Societal Madness," Ingalls takes aim at hypocrisy in present-day America. Her "Bay Area Collective" is a venue for local events, news, and stories that interest her.

What does it all add up to? Not only agents but potential readers want to know who we are as writers. At the January meeting, we'll find out how to present ourselves.

### **The Position by Meg Wolitzer**

Reviewed by John Q. McDonald

Growing up in an odd family can feel like a hangover from the oddities of childhood. The thing is, all families are odd in some way or another. This novel is about one such family, the four children of the two authors of a 1970s sex manual modeled on the infamous *Joy of Sex*. What would it be like to be those kids? Embarrassing, of course, and it would be likely to skew one's early understanding of sex and relationships.



It is 25 years after the publication of the book, *Pleasuring*, and the publishers want to put out a new edition. But the authors are long separated and don't agree whether it should be done. Their story closely parallels the history of *The Joy of Sex* and its later republication. The story of their children is more involved. We meet Claudia, Dashiell, Michael and Holly Mellow. Each has a different memory of the day

they discovered the book on their parents' bookshelf. Each of them has grown up with their own divergent lives and personal problems. One has bad-body self-image, another suffers from sexual dysfunction from the use of antidepressants, one resents the lack of guidance for gays in the book, and another is alienated from the family.

Wolitzer does a brilliant job describing characters with complex issues and unique sets of memories. Indeed, their stories are steeped in memory. The author is an excellent storyteller, weaving emotion and the immediacies of modern life. There is, of course, a lot of talk of sex in this book. But it is adult in the best sense of the word. Wolitzer is honest about the place sex has in our lives. Sex scenes are explicit without titillation. It is as if she is saying, "Look, let's be frank and sincere about sex, and here's a story about how it affects this cast of characters." There is a refreshing matter-of-fact tone to her writing, insightful and open. And like any good book, this one is about time, the passage of time, love, and the inevitability of change.

## CWC-Mt. Diablo Speakers Explain the Essentials of Editing

- Jing Li

The CWC Mt. Diablo Branch rivaled Berkeley Branch on Saturday, December 14, 2013. It swayed me to cancel my BB luncheon reservation to go instead to the Mt. Diablo luncheon workshop at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant in Pleasant Hill.

My positive experience offset my 63 extra miles of round-trip driving from San Francisco. Within the spacious and partitioned bar-restaurant with its tall ceiling was a welcoming and relaxing festive Christmas atmosphere. Smiling people dressed in bright holiday colors greeted the guests. The name-tag and check-in started at 11:15. A long line snaked smoothly through the crowded lobby till 12 noon, when people were free to choose their seating in the red-carpeted, bright dining hall. On each of the ten linen-covered round tables was a centerpiece of a gold-veiled pot of red Christmas flowers.

The theme of the day, "Why Editing Is Essential to Writing," included the following topics featured in the flyer:

- Why writers need editors;
- Different kinds of editing;
- What writers can learn;
- What editors don't do.

The panel was MC-ed in a Q&A fashion. After a brief introduction of each of the three editors about their

qualifications and credentials, 80 percent of the participation went to the audience. I was impressed with the participants, who were vocal, active, and orderly. From all ten filled dining tables, many people raised their hands to ask questions or tell about their experiences, both positive and negative, of working with editors.

The meeting concluded at 2 p.m., with still unanswered questions signaled by raised hands. Although I wasn't the lucky winner at my table to take the pretty centerpiece home, I did take something more valuable—new knowledge about the complex editing process and how to approach editors:

1. Don't expect an editor to be like an agent with access to publishing;
2. Don't expect an editor to rewrite your work or change your voice as a ghostwriter may;
3. Pay attention and respect your editor for their unbiased and honest suggestions;
4. Editors charge fees differently - by the hour, the page, and/or the minimum amount of work;
5. Interview first before you hire an editor to make sure the editor knows about your genre and context of your book, and is also a good match to your personality;
6. Model your own self-editing habit by reading a lot and paying attention to others' good writings.



### We Can Be Connectors

"Be a connector." What a concept! I would love to claim credit for it, but in fact, it comes from a piece by Margie Yee Webb of CWC's Sacramento Branch. It appears on the Women's National Book Association, San Francisco Chapter's website (<http://wnba-sfchapter.org/>).

Margie begins with observations about making connections through social media, joining groups to meet people with like interests, and finding opportunities. We know this, though it bears repeating. But then she goes on to say that the groups we belong to and the people we meet can hook us up with whole new spheres of contacts and opportunities.

By extension, branches can kick things up a notch by emphasizing these exponential connections. Better still, we can include this possibility as a benefit when welcoming potential members - provided that after we promise, we follow through. Incidentally, Margie has a nice plug for the CWC in her post.

On a related subject, mark your calendars for the San Francisco Writers Conference, February 13-16, at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The California Writers Club is an official supporter of this major Presidents' Day Week-end event that offers four days of 60-plus sessions by prominent presenters, agents and editors, two key-note luncheons, breakfasts, an opening gala, and active participation by the CWC. Consider it well worth the trip as a chance to learn, to grow, and to connect. For details, visit [sfwriters.org](http://sfwriters.org).

Good luck and sail on,

- Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, PR director,  
[pr@calwriters.org](mailto:pr@calwriters.org)

## Poetry Page.

### Cages

Black streaks and circles:  
ink makes prisons on paper.  
A thought flies away.

- Anne Fox

## Calling for Submissions!

*Write Angles* is the Berkeley branch's newsletter, but it is also a way for members to get published. We're always looking for book reviews, articles about the publishing industry, humorous or serious pieces that relate in some way to writing, and poetry.

Editor will select pieces based on perceived interest to readership and quality of writing. Please proofread before you submit. Piece may be edited for space.

Submissions guidelines for *Write Angles*:

- send as an attached word document (doc, not docx)
- must be no longer than 425 words
- submit no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month
- should be in 12-point type, any easy-to-read font (can be single or double-spaced)
- write "submission" in subject line and send to [writeangles@gmail.com](mailto:writeangles@gmail.com)

Did you know that *Write Angles* is now up on our website?  
[www.cwc-berkeley.org](http://www.cwc-berkeley.org)

And if you've missed past issues, you can find them on Scribd at this link:  
<http://www.scribd.com/search?query=cwc.berkeley+Write+Angles>



## CWC-BB Celebrates Holidays with Luncheon

Over 30 people gathered at Spenger's, the site of CWC-BB's annual holiday luncheon for the second year. Members mingled as harp music played in the background until lunch was served. Our lovely hostess, Lucille Bellucci, told jokes, shared stories, sang a little, and even danced to keep members entertained between bites of crab salad and apple pie.



Those gathered took a few moments to remember members who passed away this year—Charlie Russell, Deborah Frisch, and Caryl Hansen. We will miss them.

President Tanya Grove read aloud her poem "Gifts for the Writers in Your Life," which was also printed in the December issue of *Write Angles*. Davie Simmons sang two songs from his current screenplay project, personalizing one of them to fit the occasion. And Vice President Kymberlie Ingalls read a touching holiday essay.

Lunch ended with a writing contest. Lucille instructed everyone to write a mini book review of a book of their choosing. Lucille will judge all the entries and present the winner with a prize at our January meeting. Good luck to everyone who entered.



*All photos on this page are courtesy of Kymberlie Ingalls.*

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.

## Tidbit

The McGee-Spaulling District ("The Heart of Berkeley") exhibit at the Berkeley History Center, focusing on the leftist movements that began there in the 60s, continues until late March 2014. See reference to **Therese Pipe**'s participation in Member News. For information, call the Berkeley Historical Society at 510-848-0181.

## Member News

**JoAnn Smith Ainsworth**'s historical western romance, *The Farmer and the Wood Nymph*, Book II, has been released from Whiskey Creek Press in e-book version on Amazon, and along with the print version will be available through Barnes and Noble.

**Therese Pipe** assisted with the history of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic schools in the McGee-Spaulling District exhibit at the Berkeley History Center, 1931

Center St., Berkeley—[www.berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org/](http://www.berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org/) (See also Tidbits above.) **Therese** is currently working toward completion in 2014 of several unpublished oral histories about the Berkeley Co-op.

*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](mailto:writefox@aol.com) no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.*

## Marketplace

**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. [storyeditor@att.net/](mailto:storyeditor@att.net)

**Thomas Burchfield** offers editing and proof-reading services for fiction and nonfiction books by CWC Berkeley members. For details, visit his webpage, e-mail him at [tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net), or call 510-817-4432.

**Anne Fox**, *Write Angles* copyeditor, offers copy-editing services for all levels of fiction and nonfiction. References available. [writefox@aol.com](mailto:writefox@aol.com)

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

*Berkeley Branch members are welcome to advertise their writing-related services. Please write "Market-place" in the subject line and send to Anne at [writefox@aol.com](mailto:writefox@aol.com) no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.*

## Write Angles

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Founded 1909

## CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

**BERKELEY BRANCH**

***Sunday,***  
**January 19, 2014**

**2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

**Bradley C. Walters  
Community Room  
Oakland Public Library  
125 14th Street (94612)**

*Entrance also on Madison St.,  
between 13th and 14th Streets.  
Wheelchair accessible*

Our monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Each month we typically feature a speaker and an author event.

Find out more about our contests, workshops, writing groups, and more at  
[www.cwc-berkeley.org](http://www.cwc-berkeley.org)

*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.*

# Blogging & Branding — Why Aren't You?

*with*

**KYMBERLIE INGALLS**

Yes, an author's work should speak for itself, but authors are as important a character as any we create. In today's pop culture, people want to know more about the artist behind the work. If you want your work to be seen by a larger audience, making a splash is essential, and being personable is key. Blogging has become such a widespread trend that it's hard to find a starting place. Once you do, driving traffic there is even harder. We'll talk about creative ways to make your site one readers will want to find.

Kymerlie Ingalls has a long history with words. She earned her comedic chops at a young age by putting characters in very pre-carious situations. From there she found herself desperately scribbling out poems filled with angst. Thinking everything had to have structure, she floundered, trying to squeeze her chaotic life into that box.

At the age of 16 Kymerlie won entry to a workshop with an award-winning poet and found her freedom. Writing became more reason than rhyme, but it wasn't her passion. Acting, comedy, and radio broadcasting all called to her, but eventually she came back to the written word.

With her first blog appearing in 1997, she garnered a small following. Kymerlie moved into the exciting arena of short track stock car racing in 2003, creating a highly successful community website uniting fans with drivers. Her current network of blogs began in 2009, featuring personal essay, memoir, opinion, and short fiction. She writes in themes of love, loss, humanity, and her struggles with amnesia, all from her little corner of the world. A memoir novel is in progress.



Learn more at  
[www.WriterOfTheStorm.com](http://www.WriterOfTheStorm.com)  
[www.neurotic.com](http://www.neurotic.com)

### *Meeting Schedule:*

- 1:00 p.m. Library doors open, Marketing Group Meets, Meeting Setup
- 2:00 p.m. Refreshments & Networking
- 2:30 p.m. Business & Announcements
- 2:45 p.m. CWC Featured Author
- 3:00 p.m. Featured Speaker

*Come write with us!*

The Oakland Public Library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of meetings or meeting room users.

