



MAY 2021

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Southern California Writer's Association

May 2021

- **President Larry Porricelli's Message**
- **May's Featured Monthly Speaker: Catriona McPherson**
<https://www.southernwriters.org/meetings>
- **Craft Shop for May with Nancy Cole Silverman**
- **Hump Day, Every Wednesday**
- **Debby's Room, Wednesday 10:20 a.m.**
- **Such Good News!**
- **Highlights: Baron R. Birtcher**
- **SCWA Cookbook**



Have you subscribed?

Check out our new YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLrqSfwTMaCi139ISRV50KQ>

Through the 2020 challenges SCWA has risen to new heights with a wide range of talented presenters and programs who will inspire, educate, and motivate writers and readers alike through our online programs.

Our best and brightest authors and guest speakers' presentations have now been uploaded to our own YouTube channel. Our content includes the Hump Day Book Tours, Pub Shops with insights into book publishing and marketing, and our monthly author spotlights and workshops.

President's Message for May 2021 from Larry Porricelli

WHERE DO YOU FIND...

Q. Writers who care about each other as a family and are visibly changing the world to become a better place with our efforts?

A. SCWA

Q. Writers who give of themselves and their time to help each other with technique, style, mechanics, and do so in an encouraging and inspiring manner?

A. SCWA

Yes, in SCWA.

And in honor of that compassionate spirit that is the core of SCWA, we invite you to bring a friend to one of our meetings, and as we always did at in-person meetings, we offer your first-time guest a free attendance reservation for a monthly meeting of your choice.

SCWA is the servant of writers, and because of that, ultimately a servant especially of readers.

We have ideas for presentations and projects we feel that writers and readers would like to take part in to improve their craft and build their audience, even if you are just at the beginning or already well-established.

Please reach out to us. We need to hear your voice, your wishes, and your ideas, the bigger the better, and more exciting for us!

Within a month or two, we will add live meetings back to our events, and we will also continue events for our online family that has grown from coast-to-coast, and to Europe, Africa, and Australia.

Do you have family in other parts of the world? I do. And I reached a relative in Italy, where I found a cousin who has the largest pastry shop in Sicily. When I visit in the coming year, they will host and cater a meeting for Italian writers. They have watched us on Zoom and were so impressed they invited me to rewrite their menu!

Our dream is open to all. We are all one in the world today, and we are moving forward with phenomenal teachers and speakers for craft and inspiration with you as our biggest inspiration.

It is time. We want to have member writers featured every month on Hump Day and for Craft Shop to share your knowledge with the world.

We are on the web, on Facebook, on YouTube. We invite you to be integral to these efforts. You are members, you are writers, you are leaders.

Let ideas come to mind, and please let us know them. I can always be reached at lorenzo212@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing your voices. We are all together, we are all equal, we all have great things to share.

Let this coming year be a trip like no other: spectacular, phenomenal, amazing, to distant places of the world that is open to us.

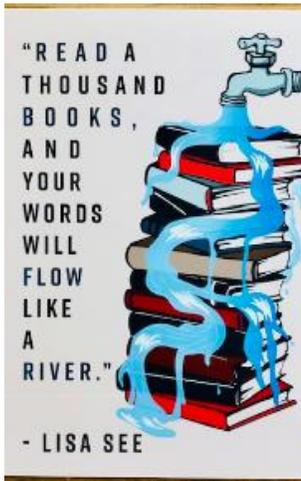
We will not only enrich writers from so many cultures, in the process we will be enriched beyond any measure.

Thank you, please let me hear from you!

Larry Porricelli

SCWA Events THIS MONTH: May 2021

- **SCWA Featured Monthly Speaker: May 15, 10 a.m. PDT.**
We are happy to welcome **Catriona McPherson** who will speak on Sewing the Seeds of a Killer Mystery.
<https://www.southernwriters.org/>
- **SCWA Craft Shop: May 25, 2021 4:00 p.m. PDT.** Nancy Cole Silverman will talk on Getting Rid of Your Saggy Middle.
- **SCWA VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR: Every Friday at 4:30 p.m. PDT** Join us with your funny stories and Spring Libations for good news and good cheer. Sign up on our website and we'll email you a link and password. <https://www.southernwriters.org/>
- **SCWA HUMP DAY BOOK TOUR:** You can access previous interviews on SCWA's YouTube channel or see it LIVE streaming on SCWA's Facebook group page at 10:00 a.m. PDT **every Wednesday in May (except May 12).**
- **Debby's Room:** Every Wednesday at 10:20 a.m. PDT following the Hump Day interviews, join Debby Chase and Dot Caffrey for casual conversation about the writing craft and anything that you wish to bring for discussion. Look for Debby's Room on the SCWA Facebook page.



Have you missed an SCWA event? Find the replay on SCWA's YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLrqSfwTMaci139ISRv50KQ>

where we will upload replays as they are edited and ready.

If you're interested in these and all SCWA events, please check out our website for membership details at:

<https://www.southernwriters.org/>

**Featured Monthly Speaker: May 15, 2021
Catriona McPherson
Sewing the Seeds of a Killer Mystery**

Join us Saturday May 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. PDT when SCWA welcomes **Catriona McPherson**

When: Saturday, May 15, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m. PDT

Where: Zoom, RSVP for your link at:

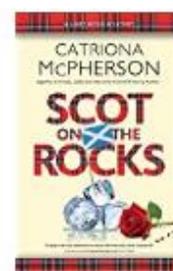
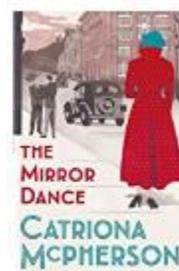
<https://www.southernwriters.org/meetings>

Cost: Members \$10.00

Nonmembers \$15.00



Do you hate stories where you can see the ending coming from a mile away? Are you looking for a way to set your books apart? Join us on May 15th at 10:00 a.m. when award-winning, Scottish-born author, **Catriona McPherson** with delight and confound us with her how-to guide, *Sewing the Seeds of a Killer Mystery*!



National-bestselling author, Catriona (kuh-TREE-nuh) McPherson, was born in Scotland and lived there until immigrating in 2010. She writes historical detective stories set in the old country in the 1930s. *The Turning Tide* (No.14) won a 2021 Lefty award and is nominated for an Agatha.

Catriona McPherson has won numerous awards, Lefty awards for humorous mysteries, multiple Macavity awards, and an Agatha award for best historical mystery. When she is not winning these and other major awards, she is dancing on their shortlists.

She also writes a strand of contemporary psychological thrillers, including the Edgar-shortlisted *The Day She Died*. After eight years in the new country, Catriona kicked off the comic Last Ditch Motel series, which takes a wry but affectionate look at California life and has won two Leftys for best humorous mystery. Her latest book, *Scot on the Rocks* (No 3.), is available now. Catriona is a member of Mystery Writers of America, the Crimewriters Association, the Society of Authors, a proud lifetime member and former national president of Sisters in Crime. www.catrionamcpherson.com



Getting Rid of Your Saggy Middle

Do you have a dynamite beginning and a killer ending—but a saggy middle? Does your book start off like gangbusters get stuck in mire of details and scenes that don't serve the plot and dilute your story lines?

Talented, multi-published author **Nancy Cole Silverman** will help you tighten up those saggy middles, maintain your momentum, and keep your stories revving until the end!

Who: Nancy Cole Silverman

When: May 25, 2021

Time: 4 p.m. PDT

Members: \$10.00

Nonmembers: \$15.00

Register: <https://www.southernwriters.org/>





If you can't join us, look for replays on the SCWA Facebook group page and on SCWA's YouTube channel.

Subscribe anytime at <https://bit.ly/2I890Db>

Recent Guests include:

Dr. Mary Hill-Wagner Joe Clifford Pamela Fagan Hutchins Dorothy McFalls
Shawn Reilly Simmons Nancy Cole Silverman Quan Huynh Wendy Hornsby
Kathleen Krevat David Putnam Mike Farley Lani Forbes Caitlyn O'Leary
Janelle Brown Mary Anna Evans Kaira Rouda Laurie Stevens Matt Coyle
Glen Erik Hamilton August Norman Tori Eldridge Ava Homa Dana Swift
Naomi Hirahara LA Chandler Greta Boris Joe Perry Thomas Perry
Suzanne Redfearn Chris Reich Baron R. Birtcher Dete Meserve
Anne Cleeland Cara Black Christopher Reich Kaira Rouda Dorothy St. James

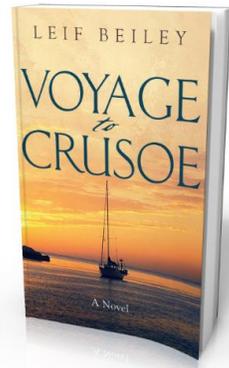
More to come: Every Wednesday on SCWA's Facebook group page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/southernwriters/events>

Don't forget! Join Debby Chase and Dot Caffrey Wednesdays at 10:20 a.m. PDT, after Maddie's amazing interviews for Hump Day. It's an informal get-together for a bit of writer-to-writer good old-fashioned conversation with people who understand and enjoy our world too.

Come and join us by checking the More button on the SCWA group page, and then Rooms for the JOIN button to Debby's Room (or copy and paste this link):

<https://www.facebook.com/groupcall/LINK:mhfmijxkzqkx/?nonce=cr6wv8imps5b>

CELEBRATE ALL THE GOOD NEWS!



Leif Bailey's *Voyage to Crusoe* has a published Kirkus Review that calls his story, an “exciting adventure with unexpected twists.”

Our fellow SCWA member, Barbara Howe calls it a “spellbinding book” in her book review blog:

<https://3no7.wordpress.com>

“Get it down.
Take chances It
may be bad, but
it's the only you
can do anything
really good.”

William Faulkner

Lillian Nader's *Theep and Thorpe, Adventures in Space* will participate in Read Locally: A Virtual Local Author Festival.

Find Lillian's book at: <https://www.ylpl.org/readlocally/>



SCWA Writers' Cookbook Call for Submissions

*****CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS*****

**Open to all SCWA Members
We Want Your Recipes. AND YOUR WORDS!**

We are still collecting your short 250 words or less stories and poems for our writer's cookbook.

Each entry must contain both the recipe and a story, in any of these categories: mystery, horror, sci-fi, cozy, humor, poetry, crime, mythology, or fable. This is a writers' cookbook so think of your recipe as your muse. We encourage your story to have a sense of connection with the recipe.

Please submit your recipes and related short fiction for our upcoming Southern California Writers Association story inspired cookbook. Submissions will be selected based on story quality, recipe quality, and the story's relation to the recipe.

Working titles include
Blame It on the Osso Bucco
Eat Your Words
You Have the Write to Eat

Needless to say, all title suggestions are welcome.

Due to limited space the **story/poem should be 250 words or less.**

The cookbook will be professionally published by SCWA and promoted with all the marketing might at our disposal. Proceeds will further help fund our events, speakers, scholarships, and publication of books, including this one.

We encourage all who want to join in to submit up to two recipes in a Word file along with their stories to Nancy Klann at klanncy@aol.com.

(Please put "Recipe" in the subject line.)

Members' Showcase: OPEN for your Submissions

Did you know SCWA will publish excerpts of your work in our MEMBERS' SHOWCASE on the SCWA website? Yes, we will.

We want to show your works-in-progress, excerpts from your published book, first lines, favorite paragraphs, and anything you would like to share in any genre, even a page of rants from your journal.

The range of creativity among our members is impressive. Take a look at some of the fine work our members have already shared and then share some of your own.

<https://www.southerncalwriters.org/members-showcase-2/>

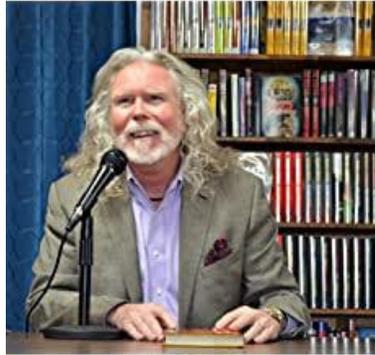
Here are the details:

- Send the work you'd like to showcase, for instance, first lines, an excerpt, an essay or a poem or something else (up to 1500 words). Include your byline (your name, the name of the book it is from, if applicable, and your website).
- All current SCWA members are eligible.
- You retain your copyright.
- Submit for free!
- Send to scwashowcase@gmail.com

Take a look at the Showcase entries by many of our members. It's a terrific way to get acquainted.

Posting in the Member showcase is always Good News for our newsletter as well as for Facebook. We look forward to waving a flag for your books!

HIGHLIGHTS: Featured Speaker for April 2021 Baron R. Birtcher Creating Conflict in Your Story



Creating Conflict in Your Story

with Baron Birtcher

Baron Birtcher is an award-winning author who is known for his hardboiled mysteries such as his Mike Travis series (*Roadhouse Blues*, *Ruby Tuesday*, *Angels Fall*, and *Hard Latitudes*), the Ty Dawson series (*South California Purples*, *Fistful of Rain*--the 2019 Best Book of the Year), and more. However, when VP of Programming Maddie Margarita requested that he speak on creating conflict, he was excited but also caught by surprise. Incredulously, he'd never before analyzed how he creates this foundational element. With a big smile, he thanked Ms. Margarita for the topic.

Not a "pantser," Birtcher says he "doesn't give structure [much thought] before writing." He outlines his story in a freeform way. He compared the branches of his outline to those of a Christmas tree. One branch reveals why this character is here; another indicates why the character is speaking "Words are [the] decorations."

However, Birtcher works instinctively while he considers the internal, interpersonal, environmental, manmade, accidental conflicts, and "hundreds of more variations. All serve a different purpose in the story." They can fill "a lull in the narrative, a cull de sac [no forward movement] in the writer's story." His advice and practice are to fill any cull de sac by "revealing something about all your characters. Show, not tell."

Birtcher likes conflict to start in the setting itself because you can always "lean on it." "What's going on in the town? Separated factions?" Because he likes the setting to be "sort of a sonic wallpaper," he crafts conflict into the setting and into the narrative as he goes. These "bread crumbs" get sprinkled into each of the characters' dialogue.

Our speaker says to expose the protagonist with more brevity by setting up an expository scene within some conflict. His response should cover the character's inner motivation and can even reveal a villain. These situational scenes provide foreshadowing which is helpful near the end of Act II when you have a similar, but larger situation.

"I love things that are important later," says Birtcher. Even a one-page scene can expose a character's inner self—"all in the action of what he did or did not do." This weakness will rise again at a critical point. "Perfect characters are boring and don't exist in real life." But if a character has made a mistake while dealing with the central plot, "only a foolish main character would make the same mistakes again and again."

Birtcher says each of his characters has a particular area of expertise, his "superpower," which can be a redeeming characteristic. But a protagonist has personal flaws he's aware of and those he's "unaware of." A secondary character can remind the main character that he's completely out of step." He repeated: "Perfect characters are boring and don't exist in real life."

This award-winning author finds it difficult to portray a character's time or spell of self-reflection. He says he accomplishes the same benefit by illustrating a character's "getting himself slapped around—the big fall/stumble in his learning of self."

Birtcher says his protagonist Mike Travis creates his own conflict because he's not empathetic to the people closest to him. Thus, he sometimes winds up creating his own trouble. "Even when we learn about our own personal flaws, we don't always fix them."

Asked when he gets to know his characters, Birtcher said that a character just reveals himself to Birtcher and also turns up to have vulnerabilities this author didn't first perceive.

Our speaker referred to the current PBS series about legendary author Ernest Hemingway, whose descriptions and styles he loves. He commented that Hemingway's style will sometimes demonstrate that "the things that go unsaid in his stories—such as angst—are the most important." Hemingway purposely doesn't express what all the readers are thinking.

Baron Birtcher's pet peeve of any story is "a murky middle." "FIX IT!" he stresses. "Reveal, reveal, reveal." When editing, fix a murky middle by having your characters follow through.

Warning: To avoid chaos, Birtcher says to be sure you keep a list of the conflicts you've put into your novel and how they all relate. "Track your characters, even the walk-ons so in Act III you can organically show the resolution."

Birtcher's joy of life and of writing clearly emanate through his open manner and enthusiasm. He does suggest one caution, however, to all Beta readers whom authors trust more than regular readers: "Be careful. [The author] can't *unhear* things. Don't say arbitrary things to writers."

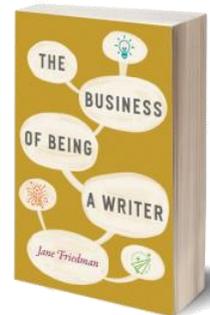
Glenda Brown Rynn, Newsletter Speaker Reporter

grynn@cox.net

RESOURCES FOR WRITERS

How do you find your way through the ocean of resources available online for writers like us? Check out this sampling of what we have found to be of interest. Links are included so you will be able to investigate further.

MOST RELIABLE: www.janefriedman.com Jane has a long history in all areas of book publishing and has a solid reputation for being the best go-to for writers of all levels.



Are you without an agent for your book? Look through an extensive list of publishers accepting unagented work, review the guidelines, and consider submitting!

<https://publishedtodeath.blogspot.com/p/publishers-looking-for-authors.html>

WRITERS HELPING WRITERS: www.writershelpingwriters.net has many one-of-a-kind tools and resources for writers. Newsletter available.

Authors Publish, A Magazine for Writers. <https://www.authorspublish.com/>
Here's a list of major trade publishers who are open for submissions, among them Workman, Gibbs Smith, Harlequin, Andrews McMeel, and others. It will be best if you go to their websites and look at their current catalogs to assess the suitability of your submission to the kind of books they publish.

Publishing ... and Other Forms of Insanity, the newsletter for the website **Published to Death**, sends a monthly list of writers' conferences, fee free contests, and agents for all genres who are looking for submissions.

For the month of May, the blog compiled an extensive list of the following opportunities for writers:

- 3 New Agents Seeking Science Fiction, MG, YA, Memoirs, Literary Fiction, Nonfiction and more.
- 15 Science Fiction and Fantasy Magazines accepting submissions NOW. These are Paying markets.
- 14 Paying Markets for Humor.
- 12 Mystery and Thriller Publishers Open to Submissions—No Agent Required.

Explore these lists every month at: <https://publishedtodeath.blogspot.com/>

Details of what agents are looking for and how to reach them will give you a head start for your submission process. Check the website every month for up-to-date information and resources.

Note: Always check the agency website and agent bio before submitting. Agents can switch agencies or close their lists, and submission requirements can change.

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Benefits of SCWA Membership

WELCOME, WELCOME, WELCOME!

- ❖ Active members receive up to 60% off admission to SCWA meetings.
- ❖ Members are eligible for a free 30-minute consultation from book shepherd Sharon Goldinger on any publishing contract.
- ❖ Discounts are available for active SCWA members for registration for the La Jolla Writer's Conference and for early registration for the Southern California Writers' Conference.
- ❖ Access to professional network of publishing, business consultants and editors.
- ❖ Participation in SCWA marketing platforms on **southernwriters.org** and SCWA social media platforms.



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 At-Large..... Steve Jackson

Mailing Address: PO Box 47, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Membership: Karen Walker

Email: Karen.walker@mac.com

Southern California Writer's Association

www.southernwriters.org

TERMS OF USE AND CONTENT INFORMATION DISCLAIMER

The SCWA encourages open, respectful communication between individuals interested in the craft of writing through a variety of social and traditional media, such as Facebook, SCWA website and emails. Any individual using inappropriate language, discussing inappropriate topics, or commenting in a disrespectful way will be removed from access to any future SCWA communication methods.

The SCWA communication sites should only be used for dialogues related to the craft of writing. Non-writing related topics should be done via other forms of personal communication. Please review the content disclaimer located in the newsletter via the SCWA website www.southernwriters.org or on the About page of the SCWA Facebook page. The SCWA does not endorse individual opinions placed of any of its sites.

The SCWA receives information on various services, writing contests, and events. As a courtesy, we will forward the information to our members. Unless otherwise indicated, the SCWA does not discourage, encourage, or recommend any of the services, contests, or events. Many of these services, contests and events cost money; therefore, we recommend that you evaluate the opportunities based on your individual situation and interest. Because of our membership email protection policy, please do not forward information to the general membership directly. **We request that all members forward any information to the SCWA President for approval and forwarding to the membership.**

SCWA members wishing to share appropriate writing-related information and resources are welcome to do so via the SCWA Facebook page. The SCWA Board members and Newsletter Editor will determine the information to be contained in the SCWA on-line newsletter, which is primarily used for official SCWA information.