



Southern California Writer's Association

MARCH, 2020 Newsletter
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www.southernwriters.org

Southern California Writer's Association Mission Statement

The mission of the SCWA is to provide a forum for promoting the welfare, fellowship, spirit, education, information, and encouragement among published and unpublished writers in the Southern California area.

A Message from Our President

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Dear SCWA Friends,

Hello to all, and the opening words of Charles Dickens from *A Tale of Two Cities* came to mind in reference to the current day situation, and it brought a needed smile, as well as the thought—a writer's words are immortal!

Due to our deep concern over COVID-19 and the desire to keep our SCWA community and loved ones safe, we have decided to cancel our March 21 program meeting.

We currently are scheduled with the April Meeting at the new location—Mile Square Golf Course Banquet facility in Fountain Valley and should be fine to go with that meeting.

Anyone who prepaid for the March meeting, can use that credit at our next meeting. We will keep you apprised of future events.

In the meantime, we recommend you continue to follow universal health guidelines with regard to the COVID-19, which can be found on the website for [US Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov).

Additionally, if you get the *LA Times*, this Sunday there is a fantastic story about SCWA member, Lamb Lambert, and his story of being the first black policeman in Orange County. If any of you receive the *Times*, please save the story to deliver to Lamb at the next meeting.

We are all family. Stay safe and be well,

On behalf of our Board, Steven Jackson, Maddie Margarita, Don Westenhaver, Diana Pardee, Sharon Goldinger, Pam Sheppard.

Larry Porricelli

SCWA President

**Our Speaker for March 21st, 2020
NANCY COLE SILVERMAN
Has been CANCELLED**

**“How to Plan a Mystery Series
& the Expanding World of Cozies”**



We will look forward to scheduling Nancy for another date in the near future.

Stay Tuned!

Upcoming and Rescheduled events will be announced here on the website and on our SCWA Facebook page.

Highlights from February 15th, 2020 RAYMOND OBSTFELD



"All Fiction Plots Fall into These Six Templates"

Raymond Obstfeld, writer, college professor, and winner of numerous awards, boiled down a semester's (if not a year's) course on plotting and showed our SCWA audience that writing a novel with only plans for "next, next, next" won't be successful. Every story is about a character's trial by fire in which he/she must determine a leap of faith for solution—even though the character doesn't have enough information. For coherence, that leap of faith will fall into one of six patterns or templates.

Our speaker is the author of over fifty published fiction books in multiple genres, poetry, nonfiction, a dozen optioned screenplays, and a television show for Warner Brothers. Simultaneously, he's been teaching literature and creative writing at Orange Coast College since 1976.

Obstfeld says that when you're writing, what takes more time than anything else is getting the voice right for you. "It's all in the voice" and "hard to keep a good voice." He keeps the voice the same "whether a kid, a woman," etc. "Who do I want to hang out with?" "I also want some vulnerability."

Plotting: The "leap of faith" the protagonist must take to deal with his significant problem will be guided by his inclination to go with an **Orthodox view** of life or a **Naturalism view**. Each of these views breaks into three patterns/templates. Which one will develop this plot the most appealingly?

The **Orthodox** view involves a belief in God or a high power. So the protagonist makes a plan that's supposed to be beneficial for people if they follow orthodox teachings.

A. **Orthodox Drama**: After struggling to make this choice (the teachings or his own path), the character tries to solve the problem, but at the start he might even be a person who's lost his faith. The reward at the end of the character arch is either a boon or death. He could have made the wrong choice. In a good death, the character will be able to think, "I'm the person I thought myself to be" (or wanted myself to be). In a bad death, "the character is not happy with whom he's become. Examples are *Gravity* with Sandra Bullock and *Man on Fire* with Denzel Washington.

B. **Orthodox Tragedy**: The character will have some kind of warning that "if you do this (to solve the problem), you're screwed." He has to choose between following the teachings he's received, beliefs, religion or choose his own path. He picks his own path and decides what is good or evil for himself—not what the orthodox stands for. He will have ignored orthodox warnings by a minor character. He is punished by no boon or a bad death (physical or emotional). His illusion is broken of what kind of person he is. Example: *King Lear*.

C. **Orthodox Romantic Comedy**: Boy meets girl. Girl meets girl, etc. This can also be a comedy between two buddies or relatives, etc. "When these two come together, they form a new identity of this union." "But we

can see they're headed for a fall. When will they get an epiphany?" Then boy loses girl because of ego, a corrupt official or relative who tries to keep the couple apart. Their separation is "usually overcome by deus ex machina [an outside event or person]. Some huge co-incidence brings them together." "If you have faith, it will show you the way. You re-open to the belief of true love." At this unexpected meeting, they have to prove they are worthy of each other—and perhaps undergo public humiliation to end up with the one he or she loves. Examples: *Fools Rush In*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*.

The **Naturalism** templates show variations of existentialism—the principle that the individual is a free and responsible agent determining his own development. "There is no Supreme Being, no Plan. You have to create your own teaching. We're on our own—trying to do the right thing—and have justice."

A. Naturalism Drama: There are three types of protagonists for this drama.

1. The *aesthetic* character chooses a path of solving his problem according to his own needs, usually to please his senses (alcohol, food, drugs, sex, etc.). While it sounds "freeing" (or the easiest), "it's the most enslaved" because the character is a servant to senses and desires.

2. The *ethical* character chooses according to rules and values of society. However, although he is embracing the ethical, he may turn his back on society or parts of it because what society is doing is not right to him. Examples: Jesus, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King. The punishment may be isolation from others or from oneself.

3. The *religious* character will choose a path based on religious values/belief system or what he believes is right. During his struggles he can lose faith but then return later to the belief system of what is right for a person or society. Why does the character lose faith in his chosen path to solution? Show all the character's changes and what he thinks. The reward is either a boon or a good death. "Good death," whether emotional or physical, means he was the person he wanted to be.

B. Naturalism Tragic Comedy: In this type, the protagonist struggles with the aesthetic, ethical, or religious choice but ultimately makes his own unique choices. Minor characters advise him to follow the teachings, but he chooses his own path, which is Bad Faith wherein he either denies who he is or denies his ability to change from his current path. "It's too late for me." His punishment is isolation from others (they don't want to be around him) and isolation from the self he wanted to be. This can also be emotional death. He doesn't have the courage to do what he wants to do—which might involve going against society's pressures. Example: the film *Manhattan*.

C. Naturalism Satire: Satire begins with humor and laughable scenes that make fun of orthodoxy. As it progresses, the humor slides over to the dark side. Someone has big problems unless he goes back and does more missions and follows the standard teachings. But his path leads to failure or destruction. Examples: *Catch 22*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Dr. Strangelove*.

After Obstfeld's presentation and lunch, Program Director Maddie Margarita interviewed him on related topics. She asked how he teaches students to write sex scenes. He asks the students to consider if those senses are necessary. He himself writes those scenes "more like poetry." The dialogue before and after are the most effective because the people's character comes out. "If these are written well, they seem better than real life." "The point is to create stakes and suspense for the characters."

As to creative nonfiction, which does not necessarily have a traditional way, rule number one is "Be entertaining—regardless of your message." In fiction, he "gets hung up on the plot." He said, "Experience only

tells me I can do it—not that I will do it.” Obstfeld said that halfway through a book, he wonders what he’s doing. He strongly complains to his wife: “I can’t do this!” His wife’s response: “You always say that. Shut up and write!” He’s also learned that he can’t get all of his research into his books, especially westerns.

This is Obstfeld’s writing routine: Get up, take daughter to school, write for two-three hours, play racquetball (to not think about writing), write again for a chunk of time, pick up daughter, do errands, and take the dog for a walk.

Raymond Obstfeld’s final comment to SCWA: “It’s so good to come to a group who needs to write and to be better—and thinks about the pleasure of the readers. It feels ‘safe’ to be here.”

President Larry Porricelli presented our speaker with a bottle of wine while the packed room [the biggest audience this reporter has seen] boisterously clapped. Porricelli then announced the name of the wine: Melodramatic Red Wine. Another burst of applause.

To see the books Obstfeld has published, see Amazon.com or

<https://www.thriftbooks.com/a/raymond-obstfeld/232056/>.

Glenda Brown Rynn, Reporter

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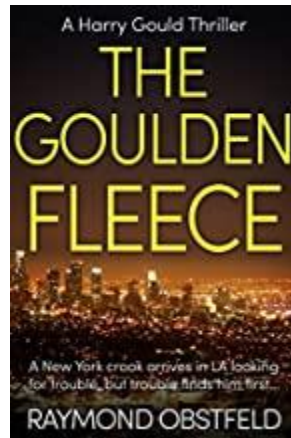
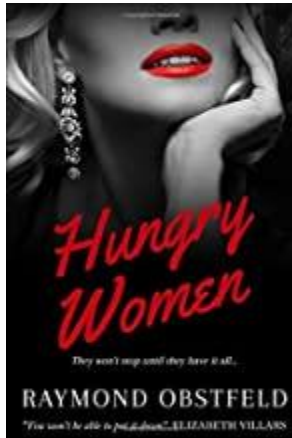
Raymond’s BIO:

Raymond Obstfeld is a multi-time NY Times Bestselling author of fiction, non-fiction, and graphic novels. His works cross genres from crime fiction, to YA fiction, black history, essays and thought, television, film, and much more. Raymond has probably helped, taught, and inspired countless writers become writers with his week-long seminars, ongoing classes, and summer-long literary sojourns to Cambridge University in England. Raymond is a recognized expert on theme, plot, setting, and character, and is a regular writer in the green room for the tv show Veronica Mars.

Raymond Obstfeld has taught literature and creative writing at Orange Coast College since 1976. He's written over 50 published books of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. He's written a dozen optioned screenplays and recently sold a television show to Warner Bros.

He’s co-authored several non-fiction and fiction projects with basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He co-authored a graphic novel about Mycroft Holmes and was a writer on the reboot of Veronica Mars. Currently, he is writing two history documentaries for A&E.

Plotting is one of the most difficult aspects of writing. Understanding these six theme-based plot templates will help an author ask the right questions when plotting their story. It's not just about what they do, but about why they do it.



Lit Up for Tuesday March 24th

(CANCELLED in compliance with the city of Anaheim)

Watch for new schedule soon.

Lit Up! Orange County welcomes you at Bardot & Bars

in Tustin at 662 El Camino Real

In the Camino Real Shopping Center in Old Town Tustin.

Easy location off Newport Avenue just north of the 5 freeway.

You'll find Bardot & Bars tucked in the far left corner near the Encore Theater.

Join us for an evening of lively, caffeinated discussion.

Check SCWA on Facebook, Here in the SCWA newsletter, and Meetup.com
for the dates of LitUp's monthly meetings.

Discover new writers!

Bring your friends and meet other readers and writers. Enjoy the casual vibe along with
delicious coffee, ice cream and a light food menu.

SCWA Members' New Releases and Works-In-Progress

BIG Congratulations to SULAN DUN – Winning an Honorable Mention in the Q4 2019 Writers of the Future Contest. A steppingstone to the next prize!



Maddie Margarita has found another way to entertain us!

For readers and writers who crave compelling characters. Readers searching for their next favorite author. Writers interested in character development.

“**Character Floss**” offers a sneak peek into unique, relatable, compelling characters-- and the writers who create them.

Maddie’s most recent podcast, February 26, [Wendall](#) Thomas and [Maddie](#) talk DROWNED UNDER, the ups and downs of writing humor, and the importance of good underwear when jumping out of helicopters!

Find Maddie’s podcasts on www.soundcloud.com/authorsontheair and search Character Floss to find all her interviews. Another Link: <https://soundcloud.com/authorsontheair/sets/character-floss-with-maddie>

Links for Writers

21 Creative Markets Open for Submissions! Essays, Memoir, Narrative Essays, and other genres for fiction, reviews, poetry, scripts and more. Several will pay.

<https://www.authorspublish.com/21-creative-nonfiction-markets-open-for-submissions-now/>

From ERIKA DREYFUS' Resources, Where to Publish Your Work:

If you're primarily interested in publishing short fiction, poetry, essays, and/or book reviews, you'll find the following resources especially helpful.

- [Where to Publish Flash Nonfiction/Micro-Essays](#)
- [Where to Read \(and Publish\) Work on Jewish Themes](#)
- [Calls for Submissions](#) (Facebook group)
- [Creative Writers Opportunities List](#) (Yahoo! Group)
- [Entropy's "Where to Submit" updates](#)
- [NewPages.com](#)
- [Poets & Writers Literary Magazine Database](#)
- [Ralan.com](#)
- [Trish Hopkinson's "Where to Submit" resources](#) (for poetry)
- [Jessica Piazza's "Journals That Pay for Poems" resource](#)

FEELING AMBITIOUS while sheltering in place? Here is a spreadsheet with 300 places to submit - both paid and unpaid: Check dates and deadlines.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1RQpwe31zRjYv9Fstg1A2KYhqQ2stTF1BKKMK01eYvpl/edit#gid=0>

SCWA Active Member Benefits

Active members receive a 30% discount at every SCWA meeting.
SCWA provides scholarships to members who attend writer's conferences.
SCWA members receive a free review and 30-minute consultation from Sharon Goldinger for 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, which is held twice annually in San Diego and Orange County.

SCWA Critique Program – see below.

SCWA Critique Program

We have some exciting news on the critique front. One of our members received a critique, and he credits that critique with getting him a two-day response from an agent, who wants to see the entire manuscript. We love it when that happens.

Critique requests should be sent to Steve Jackson at steven@stevengjackson.com. If you have not received a response to a previous critique request, please resubmit (without any fee if you've already paid) to Steve. Steve will direct your sample (up to 15 double-spaced pages) to one of the Board members once we receive your payment. Payments (\$20.00 for members and \$30.00 for nonmembers) should be directed to Don Westenhaver.

- Check payable to SCWA: mail to Don at 5391 Fox Hills Ave., Buena Park, CA 90621
- Credit Card: advise Steve that you will pay by credit card. He will have Don send you an invoice with instructions on how to pay through the SCWA Square account.

Have a Question about a Publishing Contract?

Contracts involving publishing matters can be confusing if you're not familiar with all the language. What does something mean? What questions should I be asking? Do I have any other choices? If you're not sure what you're reading, what a term or section means, or if you should be signing the contract at all, SCWA is offering a new benefit. SCWA member, publishing consultant, and book shepherd Sharon Goldinger is offering a free review and thirty-minute consultation for any publishing contract to any SCWA member. You can reach her directly at pplspeak@att.net.

"Will Write for Food" Contest

The "Will Write for Food" contest is a monthly blind competition. Winners are selected by a literary agent. First prize includes publication in the SCWA Newsletter, a certificate, and a \$25 cash prize.

You may write on any subject. Stories have a maximum of 1000 words. The winner will be announced at the next SCWA meeting.

To enter, email your story to lorenzo212@gmail.com.

There are no limits to the number of times you can win. Join the fun and earn some rewards.

Monthly Meeting Information and Map

PLEASE NOTE NEW LOCATION: Mile Square Banquet Center, 10401 Warner Ave, Fountain Valley, CA 92708



| Reservation Type | SCWA Member | Student | Others |
|------------------|-------------|---------|--------|
| | \$25 | \$15 | \$35 |

SCWA Board of Directors

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- Vice President of Membership Steven G. Jackson
- Vice President of Finances and Couthernalwritermmunication Don Westenhaver
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- Newsletter Editor Pam Sheppard
- Newsletter Speaker ReporterGlenda Rynn

Mailing Address: PO Box 47, Huntington Beach, CA 92648
Membership: Yann Jackson, ykj3678@gmail.com
Meeting Reservations
 Online at www.southernwriters.org
 Also to Larry Porricelli at
 714-580-5072

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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.